International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

Preliminary Draft

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PREFACE

IAIA is developing this guidance as a resource to support the energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy through the use of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) to address the challenge of climate change and reduce carbon emissions in energy generation. It is hoped that the guidance will be useful to many different users and interests. The guidance initiative is being undertaken in three phases over several years: (A) launch (scoping the contents), (B) development (preparing draft guidance) and (C) implementation (testing through voluntary application).

During Phase B, the guidance is being developed through several stages. The materials presented here represent a proto draft - a starting version (a work in progress) presented for initial review to help guide their further development. The chapters are by no means complete. They do not necessarily cover all that should or could be included. Gaps remain to be filled and additional materials will be added. IAIA welcomes comments, suggestions and inputs.

This preliminary draft will be presented in Kuching at IAIA23, the annual conference of IAIA in May 2023, and will be available on the IAIA website for comment. Following this, it is aimed to complete a full first draft by July 2023, incorporating received comments, and preparing a working draft by October 2023 which will be circulated for wider discussion and testing.

This document is presented in three parts with introductory materials, 12 chapters and various annexes. Consequently, it has many pages. It is presented in full in this format as many users will wish to have the whole document available as a reference source of information to support their work. IAIA also plans to convert the contents to a searchable online web-based resource and expand it as a rolling information base on environmental and social issues associated with renewable energy development, augmented by related information, case studies, videos, etc.

Thank you for taking the time to review this document. We very much look forward to your comment, perspectives and inputs and hope to see you at IAIA23!

Signed
Name
President of IAIA
Date

ABOUT IAIA

The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is the leading global network on best practice in the use of impact assessment for informed decision-making regarding policies, programs, plans and projects (www.iaia.org). It was established in 1980 with a voluntary membership comprising professionals involved with impact assessment, including both environmental, social and health impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment. The association promotes the application of integrated and participatory approaches to impact assessment, conducted to the highest professional standards.

IAIA has 1100 members from 110 countries and membership is open to anyone. It has affiliate organisations in over ten countries, including Cameroon, Canada (multiple affiliates: Ontario, Quebec, Western and Northern Canada), Germany, Ghana, Iran, Italy, South Korea, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Zambia.

IAIA publishes *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal,* a quarterly journal comprising peer-reviewed research articles, professional practice articles, and book reviews of recently published titles, and also publishes a newsletter and other downloadable documents. IAIA's primary activities are its annual conference which is hosted by different countries and regularly attracts over 700 participants, and regional symposia.

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- Kate Lazarus (International Finance Corporation)
- Emma Marsden (Asian Development Bank)
- Bryony Walmsley (IAIA Board and Southern Africa Institute for Environmental Assessment - South Africa)
- David Annandale (Consultant, UK)
- Arend Kolhoff (Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, and IAIA climate section)
- Gaby Factor – President of IAIA (2022-2023).

It is aimed to expand the membership of the TAC to include additional experts, particularly on different types of renewables.

The materials in this guidance build on and draw from many sources including existing SEA guidelines from many countries and organisations. A starting point for the discussion of key issues for particular energy sub-sectors (in Chapters 5 -10) were narratives developed for a regional scoping report for a SESA of the Energy Transmission Mechanism in SE Asia (ADB 2022).

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Rolling list – to be added to

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALARP	As low as reasonably practicable
CBD	Convention of Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
EC	European Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EMS	Environmental Management System
ES	Environmental Statement
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
ESQOs	Environmental and social quality objectives
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GIS	Geographical information system
GLOF	Glacial Lake Outburst Flood
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
I&AP	Interested and Affected Parties
IEC	Independent Expert Committee
IFC	International Finance Corporation
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
LPG	Liquid Petroleum Gas
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEA	Multi-lateral Environmental Agreement
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	Policies, Plans and Programmes
RE	Renewable Energy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SESMP	Strategic Environmental Management Plan
SESMP	Strategic Environmental and Social Management Plan
SOE	State of the Environment Report
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United National Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organisation

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Rolling list - to be added to

Agenda 21: A comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally, and locally by organizations of the United Nations' system governments and major groups that was agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janerio in 1992.

Baseline data: Data that describe issues and conditions at the inception of the SEA. Serves as the starting point for measuring impacts, performance, etc., and is an important reference for evaluations.

Benchmark: A standard or point of reference against which things can be compared, assessed, measured or judged. Benchmarking is the process of comparing performance against that of others in an effort to identify areas of improvement.

Capacity assessment: A structured and analytical process whereby the various dimensions of capacity are assessed within a broader context of systems, as well as evaluated for specific entities and individuals within these systems.

Capacity development: The process by which individuals, groups and organisations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organise their systems, resources and knowledge - all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives.

Civil society organisations: The multitude of associations around which society voluntarily organizes itself and which represent a wide range of interests and ties. These can include community-based organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations and non- government organisations.

Competent authority: means the designated regulatory body charged with monitoring compliance with the national statutes and regulations regarding a country's SEA system.

Cross-boundary impacts – see Impacts

Cumulative effects/impacts – see Impacts

Decision-makers / decision-taker: Policy-making, planning and decision-making and decision-taking systems vary and the meaning depends greatly on national or agency circumstances and procedures. A decision maker or taker may be (i) an official responsible for broad-scale or sectoral development plans or (ii) an elected Councillor or Minister.

Direct impacts – see Impacts

Environment: Mostly used in an ecological sense to cover natural resources and the relationships between them. But, social aspects (including human health) are also often considered part of "the environment". Issues relating to aesthetic properties as well as cultural and historical heritage (often in "built" environment) are frequently included.

Environmental assessment" (EA): The umbrella term for the process of examining the environmental risks and benefits of proposals. Interpretations of the scope of EA also vary, particularly regarding the social dimension. It is usual to consider the physical/biological impacts of development on directly affected groups (e.g. impacts on downstream water supply, displacement, and local communities or vulnerable groups). But many institutions routinely include consideration of social impacts that are mediated by the environment (such as the human impacts of water pollution). Some agencies undertake "environmental and social assessments" or separate "social assessments" to identify adverse social impacts and promote other social goals, such as social inclusion or poverty reduction. The relative importance of the different dimensions varies depending on the issue involved. In the case of a dam, for example, it is increasingly routine in EA to consider both physical/ecological and social impacts.

Environmental clearance means a decision, usually issued in writing by a competent authority, to authorise a project to proceed from an environmental perspective. It may include terms to ensure that the project is managed in an environmentally sound and sustainable way.

Environmental Impact Assessment is a process, applied mainly at project level, to improve decision-making and to ensure that development options under consideration are environmental and socially sound and sustainable. EIA identifies, predicts and evaluates foreseeable impacts, both beneficial and adverse, of public and private development activities, alternatives and mitigating measures, and aims to eliminate or minimise negative impacts and optimise positive impacts. A subset of tools has emerged from EIA, including social impact assessment, cumulative effects assessment, environmental health impact assessment, risk assessment, biodiversity impact assessment.

Environmental security: A condition in which a nation or region, through sound governance, capable management, and sustainable utilization of its natural resources and environment, takes effective steps toward creating social, economic, and political stability and ensuring the welfare of its population.

Environmental and social quality objectives (ESQOs): are specified targets/aims agreed during an SEA for environmental and social quality (e.g. prevention of loss of biodiversity, improved job opportunities) that should be met when implementing a policy, plan or programme. ESQOs and associated indicators form the core element of the monitoring component of a strategic environmental and social management plan (SESMP).

Environmental statement*:* means written documentation produced after evaluating the environmental consequences, including cumulative impacts, of a proposed policy, plan or programme. It may be a separate report or part of a proposal.

Ex ante assessment: An evaluation of the environmental and social impacts of a PPP undertaken during its formulation phase, by looking at the expected or intended results of the PPP and predicting and extrapolating its potential significant impacts. It is a way of assessing whether a proposed project is feasible and leaves the opportunity to consider alternatives and adjust the plan, programme or policy to avoid or enhance the results.

Ex post assessment: An evaluation of the environmental and social impacts of a PPP undertaken after implementation has begun- effectively examining the results of PPP implementation. It provides an opportunity to adjust a PPP to avoid, minimise or enhance the results.

Good governance: Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority necessary to manage a nation's affairs. Good governance is characterized by participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness, equity, etc.

Impacts: (can be environmental and/or social)

> ***Direct impacts*** are caused as a direct consequence of the PPP or of a component of the PPP or of downstream projects during PPP implementation. For example in the case of roads, by road building processes such as land consumption, removal of vegetation, and severance of farmland. For example, the removal of gravel material from a borrow pit, for use in surfacing the road, is an obvious direct impact of road construction. In this case, the land area in which the pit site is located has been directly affected by activities associated with the road project.
>
> ***Indirect impacts*** (also known as secondary, tertiary, and chain impacts) are usually linked closely with the PPP or with components of the PPP or downstream projects, They may have more profound consequences on the environment than direct impacts. Indirect impacts are more difficult to measure, but can ultimately be more important. Over time they can affect larger geographical areas of the environment than anticipated. Examples include degradation of surface water quality by the erosion of land cleared as a result of a new road, and urban growth near a new road. Another common indirect impact associated with new roads is increased deforestation of an area, stemming from easier (more profitable) transportation of logs to market, or the influx of settlers. In areas where wild game is plentiful, new roads often lead to the rapid depletion of animals due to poaching.

Induced Impacts - Induced impacts (a type of indirect impacts) result from activities that occur in response to socio-economic opportunities associated with new development: e.g., as a result of: opening up access to previously remote areas and untapped resources; creating potential for employment and/or enterprises to service new settlements. Induced impacts may be attributable to a project's facilities and activities, or to "associated facilities" that are not funded by the project, but without which the project would not be viable. Induced activities are not part of the project scope, design or objectives and may not be essential for it to operate. In effect, they compound impacts from a project and associated activities and result in cumulative impacts (Source: IAIA).

***Cumulative effects/impacts*:** Are combined or additive effects (positive or negative) on the environment or social conditions over time or space when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions. The effects/impacts may seem insignificant in isolation, but collectively they are significant.

Synergistic impacts – another term for cumulative impacts

Cross- or trans-boundary impacts – impacts which caused as a result of a PPP or its component or downstream projects and occur beyond the boundary of the area in which the PPP is focused. Boundaries can be at different scales: administrative areas at local to national level, protected areas, national borders.

Indicator: A signal that reveals progress (or lack thereof) towards objectives: provides a means of measuring what actually happens against what has been planned in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness.

Output indicator: An indicator that measures the direct output of the plan or programme. These indicators measure progress in achieving plan or programme objectives, targets and policies

Significant effects indicator: An indicator that measures the significant effects of the plan or programme.

Contextual indicator: An indicator used in monitoring that measures changes in the context within which a plan or output programme is being implemented

Indirect impacts: – see Impacts

Irreversible Negative Impact: An impact that cannot be undone in time using reasonable means.

Iterative: The act of repeating a process usually with the aim of approaching a desired goal or target or result. Each repetition of the process is called an "iteration" and the results of one iteration are used as the starting point for the next iteration.

Lead agency: means any Government Ministry, Institution, Department, Parastatal, State Corporation or Local Authority, in which any law vests functions of control or management of any element of the environment or natural resources or social service.

Limits of acceptable change: Extremes in environmental or social quality beyond which society would find further change unacceptable. LAC relates to a level of environmental quality (usually biophysical) or social quality that is either desired or would be tolerated by society (often a qualitative value).

Mainstreaming/Up-streaming: Integrating environment into development planning processes.

Mitgation: Measures to avoid, reduce or offset significant adverse effects on the environment or social conditions.

Mitigation hierarchy: avoid, minimise, rectify, reduce, restore/rehabilitate, and finally offset or, failing that, compensate for impacts using appropriate measures.

Monitoring: means a programme of systematic, objective and quantitative measurements, observations and reporting of projects that may have environmental impacts.

Plan: A purposeful, forward-looking strategy or design, often with coordinated priorities, options, and measures that elaborate and implement policy.

Policy: A broad statement of intent that reflects and focuses the political agenda of government and initiates a decision cycle. A general course of action or proposed overall direction that a government is pursuing or intends to follow; a policy guides ongoing decision-making.

Policies, plans and programmes (PPP): have different meanings in different countries according to the political and institutional context. Here these terms are used generically. ***Policies*** are broad statements of intent that reflect and focus the political agenda of a government and initiate a decision cycle. They are given substance and effect in ***plans*** and ***programmes*** (schemes or sets of usually linked actions designed to achieve a purpose). This involves identifying options to achieve policy objectives and setting out how, when and where specific actions will be conducted.

Policy reform is a process in which changes are made to the formal 'rules of the game' - including laws, regulations and institutions - to address a problem or achieve a goal such as economic growth, environmental protection or poverty alleviation. Usually involves a complex political process, particularly when it is perceived that the reform redistributes economic, political, or social power.

Programme: A coherent, organized agenda or schedule of commitments, proposals, instruments, and/or activities that elaborate and implement policy.

Project: A project is a set of tasks that must be completed in order to arrive at a particular goal or outcome. In terms of environmental and social assessment, it refers to a development activity or initiative (including those that involve construction).

Responsible authority: The organisation which prepares and/or adopts a plan or programme subject to SEA

Scoping: The process of defining the extent and detail of a SEA, including the identification of key and strategic issues.

Sectoral guidelines: means all guidance documents, including codes of best practice, published by government ministries or agencies.

Sectoral strategy: A policy framework, for the long- and/ or medium-term, which has been adopted by a government as a plan of action for a particular area of the economy or society.

Stakeholder: Those who may be interested in, potentially affected by, or influence the implementation of a PPP. Stakeholders may include government (national and local), local communities, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and, in the context of development cooperation, donor agencies.

Steering committee: a broad-based, multi-stakeholder committee for the SEA to: provide oversight, advice, support and guidance; facilitate access to critical information; review reports; build ownership of the SEA process amongst key actors; and advocate for the uptake of its recommendations,

Strategic Action – refers to an action taken to implement a policy, strategy, plan or programme.

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA): A range of analytical and participatory approaches that aim to integrate environmental and social consideration (and their relationship with economic concerns and drivers) into policies, plans, and programmes.

Strategic environmental and social management plan (SESMP) – sometimes called a Strategic Environmental Management Plan (SEMP**)**. A plan (either stand-alone or sometimes as a section of a SEA report) that presents strategies and procedures to enhance positive, and prevent, minimise or mitigate adverse environmental and social impacts associated with a PPP and projects or activities likely to arise during implementation of a PPP. These procedures should include measures to ensure

compliance with relevant safeguards. The SESMP should set out: (a) the roles and responsibilities of different jurisdictions, authorities and actors in implementing the SESMP; (b) a simple performance monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the environmental and social impacts of the PPP and subsequent development projects/initiatives, with monitoring indicators and a corresponding evaluation procedure and methodology; (c) steps required to enhance benefits or to remove or reduce risks and negative impacts; (d) a stakeholder consultation procedure for the monitoring and evaluation mechanism; and (e) guidance and recommendations for project level EIAs.

Sustainable development goals: An intergovernmental set of 17 aspiration Goals with 169 Targets - contained in UN Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015. They cover a broad range of sustainable development issues, including ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests. The SDGs replace the former Millennium Development Goals.

Synergistic impacts – see Impacts

Target PPP: the particular policy, plan or programme that is the subject of the SEA.

Threshold: Levels that should not be exceeded; points at which irreversible or serious damage could occur, either to ecosystems and/or to social systems (health, safety, or wellbeing).

Tier: A layer or ranking in a hierarchy, as in policy, plan, or programme.

Tiering: addressing issues and impacts at appropriate decision-making levels (e.g. from the policy to project levels).

AIM OF THE GUIDANCE

For most countries, the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy for energy generation will not focus on a single type of energy source or technology. It will inevitably involve a balance of different renewable sources and will, at least for the foreseeable future, continue to derive energy from non-renewable sources (fossil fuels) to meet a significant proportion of energy demand – especially given continued population growth, rising demand, and geopolitical uncertainties. The process will not be easy and will not be completed in the next few years, more likely over the coming decades.

This guidance addresses the application of SEA to the renewable energy sector and associated energy sector restructuring – notably the early retirement of coal-fired power plants, changes to intermediary coal-based supply chains and associated closure of coal mines. In the future, it could also cover the transition from liquid or gas fossil fuels as well.

There are many generalized SEA guidelines published by governments and organisations. A survey of existing guidelines undertaken during Phase A of this IAIA initiative identified 142 guidelines – available at: https//www.iaia.org/pdf/hot-topics/inventory-of-SEA-guidelines.pdf. Some of these address individual renewable energy sub-sectors (e.g., hydropower, wind), but none are currently available that cover the entire renewable energy field.

This guidance fills a critical gap in the field of SEA guidance and aims to promote sustainability in the energy transition to renewable sources. They particularly aim to promote a common approach and best practice, based on internationally accepted principles and good practices for SEA. The key target groups for the guidance include:

- SEA practitioners;
- Government ministries, departments and agencies, particularly those responsible for energy planning and development and environment agencies responsible for national SEA systems/regulations;
- International organisations focused on renewable energy development;
- Financing organisations (including multilateral development banks and bilateral donors) that support the transition to renewable energy and which require due diligence to be carried out and environmental and social safeguards to be complied for both private and public sector investments in renewables;
- UN and other international organisations which promote the transition to renewable energy and which provide advice and support to governments;
- NGOs with an interest or mandate covering renewable energy;
- Private sector energy companies and renewable energy developers with interest in moving to the use of renewable energy or securing their projects and minimizing planning related risks, and
- Other stakeholders with an interest in or likely to be affected by the energy transition to renewable energy.

The guidance will also be of considerable interest and help to private sector companies aiming to invest in renewable energy development. They set out the key environmental and socio-economic issues likely to arise when developing various renewable energy options. These issues will need to be addressed in the development and operation of facilities in relation to overarching policies, plans and programs for renewable energy development.

The guidance will also be of value to researchers and academics working in the field of renewable energy and to students studying impact assessment, climate change and the energy transition in its many forms.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE

This guidance is framed in three main parts.

Part A – the why, what and how of SEA. It provides generic information that will be common to all SEAs undertaken in the renewable energy sector. Chapter 1 gives a background to SEA, explaining how it differs from EIA and discussing issues such as benefits of SEA, objectives, costs, stakeholder engagement and institutional arrangements. Chapter 2 sets out the legal requirements and commitments for applying SEA. Chapter 3 describes the key stages and steps in the SEA process and methodologies.

Part B focuses on overall energy PPPs (Chapter 4) and individual renewable energy sub-sectors (hydropower, wind, solar, bioenergy, geothermal and tidal) (Chapter 5-10). It also includes a chapter addressing the retirement of coal-fired power plants and closing coal mines (Chapter 11) as this will be a key element of the transition to renewable energy will for many countries.

Each of chapters 5 – 11 are presented in a common format:

- A discussion of existing guidelines/guidance for the sub-sector;
- Global installed capacity;
- A brief background to the sub-sector (e.g., types of technology in use); and
- A discussion (the main part of the chapter) of the key environmental and social issues likely to be associated developing energy generation facilities. For each sub-sector, the likely risks of negative impacts occurring (assuming no mitigatory measures[1] are implemented) and the potential opportunities to generate benefits/positive impacts are summarised in tables. Each individual SEA will need to make its own assessment of such risks and opportunities.

Part C addresses other issues, providing guidance for institutions involved in planning, managing or investing in the energy transition, and likely to have a role to play in commissioning SEAs.

A range of annexes provide additional information and details pertinent to SEA.

The guidance is comprehensive and intended to be updated and improved on an ongoing basis. To facilitate this, they will be made available through an online information portal on the IAIA website where new and additional materials can be added.

Part A will be particularly helpful for those practitioners with limited previous experience of SEA, enabling them to draw on international experience and good practice when designing and conducting SEA processes. Part B will provide a useful for resource on known key environmental and social issues which will be valuable as a guide for scoping of key environmental and social issues in each renewable energy sub-sector.

[1] This includes: where existing environmental and social safeguard policies, regulations and guidelines are fully and effectively implemented and enforced; and effective measures to avoid, mitigate, minimise, restore or offset potential impacts of development are implemented.

BACKGROUND TO THE IAIA SEA GUIDANCE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVE

The challenge of climate change and why SEA guidance is needed for renewable energy

Climate change is arguably the most critical existential challenge faced by the world today. The evidence for immediate urgency to take steps to address this issue has been presented in periodic reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The most recent report - the Sixth Assessment Report, released on 18th March 2022, states that, *"in 2010-2019, average annual global greenhouse gas emissions were at their highest levels in human history, but the rate of growth has slowed; and that without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, limiting global warming to 1.5°C is beyond reach."*

Through various UN agreements reached at Conferences of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), countries have committed to address climate change by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and to support the Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) which requires the retirement of coal and other fossil fuel power facilities and movement towards renewable energy (RE) supplies (wind, hydropower, solar, tidal, bioenergy & geothermal).

To support the energy transition, some countries are developing national energy plans and sector specific plans, whilst multilateral development banks and others are providing financial support for ETM activities.

But such plans and implementing the ETM will not be benign. They may also give rise to environmental and socio-economic impacts (some positive, many potentially negative if not well managed and mitigated). The opportunities can be enhanced, and the risks minimized by applying impact assessment tools, particularly environmental and social impact assessment at the individual project level (e.g., the retirement of a coal-fired power station, the closure of a coal mine, or the development of individual renewable energy generation facilities – including their associated infrastructure). At the higher planning and program levels to move energy generation away from fossil fuels to renewable sources, strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is the most appropriate tool to support ETM planning and decision-making to respond to environmental and socio-economic concerns.

There has been very limited application to date of SEA for renewable energy development. Guidance for its application in this context does not exist but are critically required by practitioners and decision-makers. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for capacity strengthening and outreach, beyond the development of guidance, to explain to planners and decision-makers and decision-takers in the energy sector and others how SEA can help: what is its role and key steps, how it can benefit energy transition, the decisions that need to be made, and how to engage in the planning process.

Traditional environmental impact assessment (EIA) conducted at the individual project level has proven to be insufficient to deal with the bigger picture beyond project level impacts, to address cumulative impacts from multiple projects/developments and to protect the public interest. A more strategic approach is required to support policy-making and long-term planning by public and private actors in the energy sector. SEA is now a well-established procedure that supports such planning by ensuring that relevant alternatives are assessed, that all environmental and social effects are evaluated, and that all stakeholder interests are balanced. It has been adopted by about 100 countries, nearly all high-income countries and an increasing number of low- and middle-income countries. In those countries without SEA legislation, the tool is voluntarily applied and supported by IFIs and/or bilateral donors. As the global renewable energy sector is expected to expand significantly in the coming years, there is an immediate and pressing need for guidance to deal with siting issues, the overall lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework and increasing public concerns about the over-saturation of renewable energy projects in the landscape. These concerns can only be addressed at a strategic level, not at the individual project level.

A partnership approach to developing the guidance

Recognizing the necessary shift required towards the use of more renewable energy, the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) launched a three-phased initiative in February 2022,to:

- ***Develop guidance*** (building on relevant existing initiatives) for the application of SEA to policies, plans and programmes for renewable energy development – focusing initially, on the hydropower, solar, wind and bioenergy sub-sectors and subsequently expanded to include geothermal, tidal and coal fired power plant and coal mine closures;
- ***Establish a learning platform*** to share experiences with a broad group of stakeholders using the guidance and other platforms;
- ***Promote application of the guidance*** in selected countries to strengthen capacity and raise awareness (with training and coaching of stakeholders), to implement an outreach plan, and to gather experience - supporting SEA case applications of the guideline, and
- ***Launch a help desk team*** of experienced experts in the field of SEA and energy planning facilitated by respective practice organizations in this field.

IAIA is recognised as the leading international body for environmental assessment professionals and is well positioned to take a leading technical role in developing this SEA guidance for the renewable energy sector. But preparing such guidance is only one step. Securing practical application of the guidance will be dependent on the interest and commitment of a range of actors with responsibilities for SEA application, renewable energy development and financing the transition to renewable energy. Thus, IAIA is developing the guidance as a partnership initiative with the renewable energy sector, international and UN organisations, international finance institutions, bilateral donors, civil society representatives and other organisations. A partnership approach will be required to apply and test the guidance during Phase C of this initiative (described in the Preface).

INITIATIVE PHASES

- **A: Launch Phase** (January - June 2022):
    - Development of a draft outline of the guidance;
    - Establishment of oversight through a ‘Partners Council’ and ‘Technical Advisory Committee’;
    - Preparation of an Inception Report on how to proceed in Phases B and C.

- **B: Development Phase** (January – December 2023):
    - Preparation of proto, full and working drafts of the guidance;
    - Securing financial support for follow-up to the project (implementation of the guidance, lessons learning, training, etc);
    - Establishing expert focus group inputs/sessions, and developing case studies.

- **C: Implementation/roll-out Phase** (2024 – 2027 onwards):
    - Test application of the guidance to renewable energy plans and programs in various countries by governments and others on a voluntary basis;
    - Regional and other workshops (piggy-backing on already planned events) to build awareness and provide training on the guidance and use of SEA in the renewable energy sector;
    - Dissemination of guidance;
    - Development of case studies documenting applications of SEA (using the guidance) for different renewable energy facilities.
    - Revision of the guidance, where needed, to incorporate lessons learned from their application;

Initiative governance

Three bodies have been established to provide for oversight, technical review and engagement in the process of developing the guidance:

Partners Council - to

- Review project documents (e.g., the Concept Note; Inception Report, Draft Guidance);
- Monitor progress of the initiative;
- Advise and assist on securing sources of funding and support;
- Advise on opportunities to pilot/apply the guidance;
- Recommend possible additional members of the Council;
- Advocate for uptake and application of the SEA guidance for renewable energy, and
- Plan for implementation of Phases B & C.

Technical Advisory Committee - *to*

- Provide technical support and guidance on the process of developing the guidance, and review draft guidance materials;

Reference Group – a larger group of all interested individuals and organisations that are interested in the guidance initiative - to;

- Engage in broaden debate and information/experience gathering and build support for the initiative and its outputs, and subsequent uptake of the guidance, and
- Share experiences and engage in dialogue on associated issues.

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