



for environmental governance

Capacity Development News

No. 2 December 2005

Greetings from the Global Support Programme for capacity development, a facility of the GEF, UNDP and UNEP to coordinate GEF support for national capacity assessment and development. Our shared goal is to strengthen countries' management of global and national environmental issues.

This newsletter aims to inform everyone involved in GEF, UNDP and UNEP capacity development initiatives about what is happening in and around the programme.

The last quarter of 2005 saw a flurry of increased activity, following the inception of the Global Support Programme; new countries initiated their National Capacity Self Assessment process; a series of regional exchange workshops were held in Asia and Africa; the first countries started to design NCSA follow-up projects; and the GEF gave a renewed expression of support for national capacity development.

2006 is going to be a critical year for the NCSA and follow-up programmes. Over the next 12 months, more than half of the countries in the NCSA programme are expecting to complete their needs assessments and start to implement their follow-up plans for capacity development.

Support and contacts

UNDP and UNEP are the main GEF Implementing Agencies for the NCSA, and provide the first line of administrative and technical support through country and regional offices and headquarters in New York and Nairobi.

The Global Support Programme was launched in August 2005 as a joint facility of the two agencies and the GEF, to organise additional support on capacity assessment and development for environmental management, and to monitor and provide a learning mechanism for the GEF Strategic Approach and NCSA programme.

NCSA project teams should keep in regular contact and provide copies of reports and plans to their Implementing Agency and the GSP. For any enquiries or further information on the NCSA or GEF capacity development initiatives generally, please use the contacts below.

Please provide copies of your NCSA reports and plans to the GSP for review and posting on the Web-site.

Continued GEF support for national capacity building

In its November 2005 Council Meeting and December Replenishment meeting, the GEF noted the enthusiastic engagement of countries in the NCSA, and overall progress in implementing the Strategic Approach to enhanced capacity building. The meetings stressed the importance of the initiative to GEF's mission and applauded the continuing efforts.

The GEF Strategic Approach, endorsed in November 2003, proposes four pathways of support for national capacity development to address global environmental issues:

- Pathway I: National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA)
- Pathway II: Strengthening capacity development components in regular GEF projects
- Pathway III: Targeted capacity building projects
- Pathway IV: Country programmes for Least Developed Countries and Small Island States (LDCs & SIDS).

NCSA Tools

All NCSA project teams and Implementing Agency offices can sign on to regional list-serves to keep in e-mail contact and exchange questions, ideas and resource materials. Eight list-serves cover participants in Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa, Arab States, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe & CIS.

An NCSA Website (<http://nrsa.undp.org>) is maintained by the Support Programme and covers all NCSA countries. Currently, you can view 11 Stocktaking reports, 43 Thematic assessments, 8 Cross-cutting analyses, 6 NCSA final reports, and 12 Action Plans. The NCSA Resource Kit, workshop reports, and an array of useful references are also available.

A new version of the NCSA Resource Kit was released in September and is available on the Web-site at http://nrsa.undp.org/site_documents/NCSA_resource_kit.pdf. It provide guidance and advice on tools and techniques for project teams to organize the NCSA efficiently and effectively.

NCSA Programme

Pathway I has been operational since 2001, and over 150 countries are now engaged in the NCSA programme. As of December 2005, over 70 countries are still formulating proposals for GEF NCSA funding, or just starting the self-assessment. About 40 countries are at the mid-stage of the stocktaking and assessment process, and the remaining 40 countries have reached the final stages of assessment and planning, or have already completed the process.

The overall NCSA programme will come to fruition in the next year. By December 2006, 70 countries are expected to be engaged in the main phase of detailed needs assessment and planning activity, while over 80 countries will be completing the final NCSA stage of preparing an Action Plan in the form of a national capacity development strategy, or will be starting to implement the strategy through the follow-up programmes.

Capacity Development Programmes

The NCSA Action Plan is intended to lead on to a programme of capacity development actions in each country. Individual CD projects and activities may be supported by national or local governments, NGOs, the private sector or aid agencies.

The GEF will provide an additional programme of support for capacity development through the three linked Pathways (II, III and IV) outlined in the Strategic Approach. These follow-up Pathways to the NCSA will be further defined in 2006.

Draft guidelines for Pathway III support for stand-alone capacity development projects are being used currently by nearly 30 countries to develop proposals for GEF funding under the GEF-3 budget. The concepts under development are based on their NCSA findings, and include:

- Strengthening policy and legislative frameworks; mainstreaming global environmental priorities into national policies and programmes;
- Improving national convention institutional structures and mechanisms; and
- Strengthening financial and economic instruments in support of the global environment.

NCSA Global Survey

A survey was conducted in the second half of 2005, to review the status of the global portfolio of NCSA projects, and to identify progress being made and challenges faced by participating countries. Forty-five (45) countries participated in the survey. Main findings include:

- NCSA project implementation takes longer than expected. On average, countries spend 24 months to complete the assessment - planning process, compared to the original idea of 12-18 months.
- Difficulties faced by NCSA teams include: (i) the complex assessment process; (ii) engagement and coordination among multiple diverse stakeholders; (iii) limited knowledge of/ guidance from Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); (iv) limited understanding of capacity for environmental governance and management.

- Benefits experienced by NCSA participants include: (i) increased awareness of MEAs and of capacity issues; (ii) enhanced multi-stakeholder involvement; (iii) integration of environmental management and social and economic development; and (iv) initial capacity development through the NCSA project itself.

Regional Workshop Series

Regional Workshops supported by the GSP, UNEP and UNDP are being used by NCSA project teams to build knowledge and skills, review and evaluate NCSA processes and outputs, and promote information exchanges among countries. Three workshops were organized in the last quarter of 2005:

- Hanoi workshop - October, for advanced or completed NCSA teams from 8 Asian countries;
- Colombo workshop - November, for 7 Asian countries at early stages of NCSA implementation; and
- Nairobi workshop - December, for the 17 countries of East and Southern African region, at all stages of NCSA formulation, implementation or completion.

The GSP is hoping to organise a series of extended workshops in 2006, to introduce lessons learned from the first half of the NCSA programme, to NCSA teams in all regions.

Key lessons from advanced and completed NCSAs

The 2005 Report from the GSP included an initial review of the outputs from advanced and completed NCSAs. Some of the key lessons drawn from the review are as follows:

- The NCSA's main stage of Thematic Assessments should be strongly based on the series of prior and current national assessments, strategies and other GEF Enabling Activity reports that have been prepared in each country, under each GEF Focal Area and MEA.
- Additional guidance and training for NCSA Action Planning would be valuable. The NCSA should plan a strategic action programme that will systematically strengthen capacity for environmental governance in the country.
- The goal is to strengthen governance and management of priority environmental issues. Proposed capacity development actions need to be justified in terms of their expected contribution to specific environmental objectives.
- The Action Plan should aim to build the systemic capacity required to address the country's priority environmental issues most effectively and efficiently. It should not be limited to "cross-cutting" capacity development; the priority issues may concern either single or multiple MEAs.