

# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) AND LAND USE PLANNING IN LEBANON



## Mission:

To integrate environmental, social & economic considerations into public policies, plans & programmes, through the application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in order to alleviate major problems facing national sustainable development.

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## WHAT IS STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)?

SEA is a decision-support tool which promotes a systematic approach for mainstreaming environmental sustainability in public decisions & undertakings.

## HOW DID THE SEA CONCEPT ARISE?

- Several international initiatives have prepared for the adoption of the sustainable development concept, namely the UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972), the UN Conference on Environment & Development (1992), the Millennium Declaration (2000), & the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002).
- Locally, the Framework Law for Environmental Protection no. 444 dated 08/08/02 (articles 21 & 22c) constitute the major legal basis for SEA application in Lebanon.

## AIM OF THE PROJECT

The project serves the following objectives:

- Develop a regulatory, institutional & procedural framework for implementing SEA in Lebanon
- Strengthen concerned public institutions & build relevant capacities in public administrations, & the civil society (professional groups; NGOs & private consultants, etc.)

- Apply the proposed SEA framework for developing environmental directives to be applied in land use planning
- Undertake a demonstration activity in the field of land use management.

## PROGRESS

### Draft Decree

Discussions on the draft SEA Decree are still ongoing with stakeholders & partners from the public as well as the private sector & civil society. Feedback has been so far positive whereby most respondents have stressed the importance of integrating sustainable development in public planning & decision-making.

In summary, the proposed characteristics of the SEA framework are:

- MOE will assume the role of the competent authority & is responsible for **overseeing & evaluating the process performance** alone or in collaboration with the National Council for the Environment upon its establishment.
- A conceptual framework is provided to assist the proponent in **screening** potential strategic actions requiring SEA. Moreover, there is an option to submit a screening form for requesting MOE feedback in this respect.
- As per the requirements of the Framework Law for Environmental Protection (Law No. 444 of

2002), SEA applies to plans or programmes likely to affect the environment due to their nature, size, scope or anticipated activities. As such, the **coverage** of SEA encompasses strategic initiatives related to water & wastewater management, energy, transport, solid waste management, land use planning, tourism, industrial & agricultural development, & environmental & resource management.

- The **scope** of the assessment encompasses environmental as well as socio-economic impacts likely to affect environmental sustainability. It will be defined by the proponent, who can also submit a scoping report for MOE guidance. It is advisable to involve MOE at an early stage to avoid idle work & insure that only significant aspects are included in the assessment.
- The **assessment** can be undertaken by either the proponent authority or pre-qualified consultants outsourced for this purpose.
- The analysis of **alternative plan/ programme** & the **environmental management strategy** options are integral to the analysis. The latter is expected to incorporate relevant mitigation & monitoring strategies.
- SEA **review** will be undertaken by MOE technical staff or outsourced private consultants. MOE reserves its right to collaborate with other concerned public authorities upon need.
- There are no restrictions to **consultation & public participation**, which can be initiated as early as the scoping stage or prior to decision-making. Partners & stakeholders that may play an important role in this respect include concerned public administrations as well as syndicates, professional associations & NGOs.
- The **final decision** will be taken by the Council of Ministers. SEA & MOE feedback on the proposed strategic action are expected to promote "more informed" & environmentally sustainable decisions.

#### **Mainstreaming with other Public Administrations - Projects in the Pipeline**

- The SEA Project has secured from UNEP the necessary funds for the implementation of the project entitled "Capacity Building for Integrated Assessment & Planning for Sustainable Development". The project will be executed by the Ministry of Economy & Trade in association with MOE. It will focus on the assessment of the

European Neighbourhood Policy. The project also entails the preparation of an action plan for mainstreaming the application of the Policy in Lebanon.

- CDR has expressed its interest in evaluating its Inland Water Resources Protection Programme using SEA methodology. The relevant TORs were prepared & the project will be launched as soon as financial arrangements are settled.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- A consultation meeting for discussing feedback on the draft SEA Decree will take place in January 2005. Invitations to stakeholders & partners will be disseminated in due time. If interested, please contact the Project Team at the address noted below.
- The SEA of the National Reforestation Plan, jointly prepared by the Service of Conservation of Nature & the SEA Team, is under review & will be available at the Project's website once approved.
- The schedule of the training sessions on SEA application for both public & private sector representatives will be confirmed in due course. Please visit the Project website for updates.
- The SEA training manual is in print & will be available for dissemination during the training sessions.

#### **RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS**

The following list outlines resources & publications issued by the SEA Project; documents can be accessed at the Project's website.

- Framework Note on Environmental Priorities
- Public planning - SWOT analysis
- Socio-economic guidelines
- Advocacy brochure
- Draft SEA Decree

#### **OUR NEW CONTACT DETAILS**

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**This newsletter will be circulated every four months. It intends to inform interested parties about the progress achieved to-date on the Strategic Environmental Assessment & Land Use Planning Project, & discuss the latest outputs.**