

Course Introduction

by Laura Tlaiye

Ms. Laura Tlaiye is currently the Sector Manager of the Environment & Social Sustainable Development Division in the World Bank Institute. Previously, she held positions as Sector Leader, Senior Environmental Specialist, and Environmental Specialist in different divisions of the World Bank. She gained her Master's degree in Public and Private Management from Yale University, majored in finance/economics/accounting and economic development, and her Bachelor of Science Degree from Universidad de Las Americas (MX), majored in Chemical Engineering.

On behalf of the World Bank Institute, I would like to welcome you to the distance learning course on strategic environmental assessment (SEA).

I would like to briefly introduce WBI, our environmental program in China, and then move on to the introduction to this course.

WBI is the training arm of WB, which focuses on capacity enhancement of Bank's client countries through knowledge sharing, training and other means of communication.

WBI's training covers a wide range of themes such as governance, public sector management, education, health, finance, infrastructure, and sustainable development. In particular, the division I lead is in charge of capacity enhancement programs on environmental management, rural development, social development and water.

Now, let me briefly describe BIEN's environmental training activities in China.

WBI, together with operational units of the Bank and State EPA of China (SEPA), launched a multi-year environmental training program in 1999. The program is demand driven, focusing on assessing training needs, developing good training materials, training of trainers, and fostering partnerships and local training network.

The program has developed partnerships with key institutions in China, including SEPA, the China National School of Administration, the Environment and Natural Resources Committee of the National People's Congress of China, China Ministry of Construction (MOC), and a number of Chinese universities.

Through local partners, the program has delivered a large number of training activities benefiting over 1000 participants each year in China. The existing training courses include environmental economics and policy, sustainable urban development and management, and project analysis.

Meanwhile, we have been assisting SEPA in its annual training program for local environment directors and working with MOC and CNSA to develop urban planning course.

In response to a new request from SEPA, we began to assist SEPA in developing and delivering this Strategic Environmental Assessment course for China in early 2003.

Strategic environmental assessment as a tool for the development policies, programs and plans has drawn great deal of attention from international development agencies, governments, NGOs and stakeholders. In the recently adopted EIA law of China, environmental assessment is a requirement for development plans. The World Bank Vice President Mr. Ian Johnson and Chinese environmental leaders have already highlighted the importance of SEA, so what I'd like to do here is cover the objectives, contents, and methodology of this course.

The course had been developed by the World Bank and SEPA with significant contributions of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA).

This course has three main objectives: first, to raise decision makers' awareness about SEA and its importance; second, to enhance the knowledge and skills of practitioners for SEA preparation; and third, to introduce latest international and domestic SEA experiences and good practices.

The content of the course consists of two parts. The first part provides SEA overview and international experiences. This part is composed of three modules, which cover the basics of SEA, how to conduct SEA, and international SEA experiences and case studies. This part can be widely used for SEA trainings in other part of the world. The second part of the course is specifically designed and developed to address SEA applications in China. It also includes three modules which cover the context and development of SEA in China, China's Environmental Impact Assessment Law, and related case studies of environmental impact assessment in China.

We have developed course materials which include videotapes and a textbook. Over 30 international and Chinese experts have been invited to pre-tape 30 hours of presentation for the course. A textbook will be published for the course, which includes presentation scripts and slides, reading materials, and discussion questions.

So, how do we deliver the course? We have designed the course in a way that multiple teaching and learning approaches can be combined to meet different training needs and maximize the impact. The delivery modes of the course include two-way interactive video conferences, face-to-face lectures, video playing, in-class group discussion, reading materials after class, and quizzes.

It is our hope that the course will be helpful to the implementation of the China EIA law and it will help promote SEA and the course of sustainable development in China.

I hope you and your facilitators will find the course challenging and helpful. We would very much appreciate receiving your comments and suggestions on how to improve the course so that we better meet your learning needs.

I wish you a very fulfilling experience and I hope the course will encourage you to learn more on this or other development topics.