

## **Module 1: Basics of SEA**

# **What is SEA? - Terminology**

**David Hanrahan**

**The World Bank**

# Strategic Environmental Assessment

- “**Strategic**” means that it happens at an early enough stage in the decision making process that it can have a significant influence on key decisions
- It is “**environmental**” in the broad sense, not just bio-physical. May also include related social aspects.

# Variety of SEA Approaches

- There is not one simple methodology
- SEA can be considered as a “family” of approaches: there are individual differences but there are basic characteristics that make them all part of the same concept.

# Purpose and Objectives of SEA (1)

The main purpose of SEA is to ensure the early consideration of environmental and social aspects in decisions about policies, plans and programs (PPP).

# Purpose and Objectives of SEA (2)

It is an **integrative** tool to support cross-sectoral approaches, which are needed to achieve long term **sustainability objectives**.

# The Spectrum of Approaches ...

One version of SEA derives quite closely from EIA methodology:

- Formalized methodology;
- Assessment of impacts of specific proposals;
- Structured opportunity for feedback to decision makers.

## ... is quite broad

The other end of the spectrum is based on policy analysis thinking:

- Timing and form of input depends on the decision process;
- Interventions are made before proposals are finalized;
- Tries to influence the overall process.

# Some Key Principles

- Fit for purpose
- Objectives led
- Sustainability driven
- Comprehensive scope
- Decision relevant
- Integrative
- Participative
- Cost-effective

# Related Instruments

There are a number of instruments which are similar to SEA although they vary in use and application, for example:

- Sustainability Analysis (SA)
- Strategic Environmental Analysis (SEAN)
- Country Environmental Analysis (CEA)
- Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA)

# When is the Right Time for SEA?

- In a formal SEA process, there is a specific time and place for SEA in the decision cycle.
- In less structured approaches, there is no scheduled time and the process does not stop for the SEA
- Many decision processes are cyclical.

# Remember This:

- Why SEA? Opportunity to add value
- Different approaches, depending on the context – fit the tool to the problem
- Difficulty and unreliability of prediction, at an early stage, requires flexibility and iteration

# The Final Word

The ultimate objective is to make development more sustainable.