

## **Proposal by IAIA for a workplan activity**

Activity: [Contribution towards] IAIA update of the International Study of the Effectiveness of Environmental Assessment (1996)

Objective(s): [To undertake] [To contribute towards the undertaking of] a plus 10 year retrospective review of trends, issues and progress in environmental assessment practice, thereby updating and extending the 1996 study

Method of work (sub-activities): Solicited contributions by individual experts, working groups and partner organizations, providing critical analyses of the effectiveness and performance of environmental assessment systems, processes and elements of approach (including tools and methodologies) based on examined national and international experience

Organizational arrangements: Lead by IAIA, with contributions from countries, international organizations and specialist institutions

Expected outcome: Publication of an update of the effectiveness study in 2009

Time schedule: 2008-2009

Budget: [Financial and] in-kind contributions

### **Effectiveness Study Plus 10 Update**

#### *Background:*

- 1) This study will be taken forward under the auspices of IAIA as an updated version of the earlier work. As far as possible, we will look to engage again many of the partner organizations involved in the original study, as well as other interested parties and the IAIA membership at large.
- 2) Unlike last time, it is probably not realistic to expect that a central partner will be found to assume the level of funding and secretariat support generously made available by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA), although we do not rule out the possibility of one or two partners providing such a commitment. This time around, as the title suggests, the study will be on a smaller scale than the original, less data intensive but also requiring more specialized inputs to capture the wider scope of EA-related practice (e.g. sustainability assessment) and the greater diversity of arrangements, diagnostic tools etc.
- 3) In terms of depth of coverage, much will depend on the financial commitments and other resources that are secured. At a minimum, we intend to update the original reports, using them as a baseline against which to analyze key trends and issues of the last decade. (Note that this will require permission of the holders of the copyright to the major reports, which lie with CEAA (Final Report), Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (SEA) and Australian Department of Environment (EIA). There are also several other companion reports with copyright assigned among other participating institutions).
- 4) IAIA itself is not in a position to fund the update study and we look to develop a consortium of sponsors-cum-supporters to provide a sufficient or at least a 'shoestring budget'. As before, the study will operate as a virtual organization on a 'hub and spoke' arrangement; the hub being an integrative framework (under development) and the spokes being the components of the work

programme (to be undertaken on a commissioned basis by IAIA teams or in-kind contributions from EA agencies and international organisations undertaking parallel or supporting initiatives).

### *Study parameters*

5) The purpose will be to undertake a 10 year retrospective review of trends, issues and progress in EA practice, thereby updating and extending the 1996 study. It will incorporate critical analyses of the effectiveness and performance of EA systems, processes and elements of approach (including tools and methodologies) based on examined national and international experience.

6) A framework for analysis will be drafted to guide the study as a whole and the components selected for in-depth probes. This will be based on the 1996 to provide continuity but will be modified to take account of critical review and developments in the intervening period (work has started on this component).

7) As before, the study team(s) will take the form of a 'virtual organization', working separately, connected by email and meeting occasionally or when and as resources allow. It is expected that much of the specific work will be undertaken in leading countries and will have 'stand alone' value as well as feed into the international study

8) This time around NGO and individual involvement likely will be greater, and much will depend on the initiative of IAIA affiliates and branches and on small, specialized working teams to pull materials together. Many of the same tools used last time will be relied on to gather and analyze information and distill the lessons of experience of the last decade. The approach might include:

- a) survey of IAIA members and specialized constituencies to benchmark progress and status of EA legislation, procedure, methodology and practice
- b) trend and issues analysis to identify and compare key developments over the last decade, internationally and for selected countries
- c) taking stock of the pros and cons of experience with EIA/SEA processes and their application in selected countries
- d) effectiveness and performance review of quality of ES, direct and indirect contribution to decision-making processes and the linkages to environmental outcomes, societal benefits and policy and institutional adaptations (system-wide check or case-specific)
- e) work on key weaknesses and means of procedural and methodological improvement, eg 'whole process' quality assurance, assessing and mitigating cumulative and large-scale effects
- f) foresight process on the prospects for and pragmatics of designing and applying integrated approaches, structurally (eg EA/planning linkages), substantively (economic, social and environmental considerations), methodologically (tools and rules), procedurally (technical/participative)
- g) use of IAIA annual and section meetings to develop themes, provide insights and inputs to the extent possible

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