

GPGC/ ENRTP - UNEP Project

Capacity building for environmental data sharing and reporting in support of a shared environmental information system (SEIS)

Background and context

A rapidly-evolving knowledge-based society requires building up capacities to source, organize, interpret and communicate environmental data and information in an effective way in support of decision-making.

In line with the principles of Shared Environmental Information Systems (SEIS), there is a recognition of the need for making available national data from credible sources in a meaningful way and in a format suitable to inform environmental governance. But in order to be meaningful and informed, environmental governance needs to be supported by integrated environmental assessment (IEA) processes and reporting on the state of environment.

The development and use of numerous databases and knowledge portals that are poorly connected and difficult to find (because they are not linked to any centralized repository) is an obstacle in making environmental information readily accessible for reporting and to assessment practitioners and other interested users, both an national and regional/global levels. There is a need for strengthening the knowledge base of IEAs and reporting on the state of environment by linking relevant data and information and making it easily accessible in line with the principles of SEIS.

In parallel, there is also a need to build countries capacities on the use of this knowledge base, on environmental monitoring and indicator development, data sharing, and on reporting on state and trends in the environment. Many countries face a huge reporting burden under Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and lack technology and tools to make this task more efficient and improve reporting compliance. In addition, countries also need to coordinate their data sharing processes to report on the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Project summary

This project is being funded by the European Union (EU) through the GPGC-ENRTP instrument. The expected outcome of the project is that the capacity of countries is developed for data sharing by Ministries and other relevant national agencies to support state of environment reporting and other assessment and reporting processes.

This project will develop capacities in 20 countries in 3 regions – Central Asia, Africa, and Asia-Pacific (Annex I) – to support national data management and reporting needs, including the production of national state of environment reports (SoERs), regional and global integrated assessments, MEA reporting, reporting on national, regional and global environmental goals (NEGs, REGs, and GEGs) and on the environmental dimension of the SDGs. Guidelines and standards produced by UNSD on environment statistics will be made available to countries, and technical support will be provided to countries efforts to share environmental data online through national and regional portals. In addition, focal point networks and institutional strengthening will be supported to sustain the project outcomes.



Depending on countries needs and priorities UNEP will provide interested countries with access to a variety of data sharing and visualization tools, methods and technologies for the establishment and/or improvement of online SoER web-platforms and online portals on environmental indicators. This may include geo-referenced mapping tools based on official UN Cartography, tools for producing charts and infographics based on environmental data, approaches for interpreting technical data and translating it into non-technical language, programming interfaces connecting different data sets and platforms, as well as tools for visualization of interlinkages between environmental goals, targets and indicators related to different reporting obligations. UNEP will also make available to interested countries UNEP's Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS). The IRIS technology will be transferred to countries wishing to use it to improve sharing and use of environmental data and reporting on MEA obligations. Support for IRIS implementation at both the national and regional scales will include the adaptation of the IRIS technology to national needs and workflows.

The project will also enable interested countries to link national datasets and publish data in UNEP Live global platform if they wish to do so, increasing visibility and discoverability of country data by sharing it with a global audience. Data sharing agreements will be prepared with countries based on the core principles of SEIS to cater for regular updating and sharing of data. These activities will be complemented as appropriate by technical support on the production of environmental statistics for national reporting on the environmental dimension of the SDGs, which will be leveraged in terms of resources and expertise with another UNEP project involving UNSD and the UN Regional Commissions.

It is expected that project activities will contribute to improved sharing of environmental data and streamlined reporting in 20 countries in 3 regions. As a result of the project, more countries will be able to share data between Ministries and other relevant agencies within a country and will be able to share national environmental data and information on open portals in a sustained manner. The project will also help build capacity of regional networks of national focal points for exchanging knowledge and lessons learned on sharing and using data in support of reporting and integrated environmental assessment processes, and on reporting on the environmental dimension of the SDGs. For each region a report on lessons learned on sharing and using data in support of reporting and assessment processes will be developed and published to capture project results and further support the development of the knowledge base of reporting and assessments.

Central Asia context

The ministers of the environment from the pan-European region present at the Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011) committed to establish a regular process of environmental assessment for the pan-European region based on SEIS – an approach that, with the support of modern technologies such as the Internet, would link all existing data and information flows relevant at the country and international levels to build a sustainable knowledge base in support of a regular environmental assessment process.

The UNECE Committee for Environmental Policy (CEP) has been overseeing the efforts taken in the pan-European region to establish a regular environmental assessment process and to develop SEIS. In particular, monitoring, development and operation of the pan-European SEIS is overseen by the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA). Project interventions in Central Asia will complement ongoing work under the scope of the WGEMA and also of the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (JTFEI) in support of SEIS implementation.



At the sub-regional level in Central Asia, project activities will build upon the results of the EU funded MONECA (Environmental Monitoring in Central Asia) project component, which was implemented by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), the Austrian Environmental Agency (UBA) and Zoï Environment Network (ZOI) with support from the European Environment Agency (EEA). This recently concluded project provided support to Central Asian countries in their efforts towards SEIS, including support to the implementation of UNECE JTFEI recommendations regarding the production and sharing of environmental indicators, and the development/improvement of national webpages aimed at promoting public sharing of environmental data.

Building upon the results of the MONECA project, project activities will support the population of country webpages (established under MONECA) with environmental indicators agreed under the scope of UNECE JTFEI. In Central Asia, project activities will also aim at supporting the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD) in the development of its ECOPORTAL¹, in response to the request made by ICSD² to UNEP in representation of all 5 Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – for support to the development of its ECOPORTAL. For this, UNEP will involve the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (SIC-ICSD) in relevant project activities, also with the aim to promote the long-term sustainability of project interventions. UNEP will also ensure close cooperation with the EEA in order to articulate project activities with work promoted by the agency in this sub-region. For this, continued dialogue with the EEA will be maintained throughout the project thus ensuring that synergies between the project and the agency's work are adequately identified and explored.

Finally, project activities will also help to build capacity on environmental statistics in the Central Asia region, in line with results of the Global Assessments (GAs) of national statistical systems in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) countries that UNECE uses to determine statistical capacity building needs in the region.

Project Governance and Implementation Structure

Project governance and implementation is structured in such a way as to have the relevant UNEP Regional Offices (ROs) and Sub-Regional Offices (SROs) leading the coordination and implementation of project activities in each region, while ensuring the project management team has the proper technical and strategic support from UNEP headquarters.

UNEP Regional teams (RTs): the regional teams at UNEP ROs are responsible for coordination and implementation of project activities at regional and national levels, including engagement of regional/national partners. The regional teams are responsible for reaching out to and promoting high-level buy-in of relevant governmental agencies. Regional teams are also responsible for identifying relevant regional and sub-regional organizations and networks and engaging them in the project. Regional teams plan and undertake country visits, establish project focal point contacts at country level, and promote collaboration with national stakeholders.

National focal points (NFPs): Ministries of Environment (MoEs) and National Statistics Offices (NSOs) engaged as project partners will be invited by UNEP to designate national focal points (NFPs) to act as interface with UNEP RTs throughout the project. Ideally the designated NFPs will also be responsible for (i) coordinating/bringing together data and information from different national sources,

¹ <http://ecoportalca.kz/en/>

² Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of Central Asia (ICSD)'s ministerial-level meeting held in Ashgabat on 16-18 June



(ii) making that data available for reporting and assessment processes, and (iii) representing their countries in project activities and in relevant national and regional fora aimed at fostering the sharing of environmental information and exchange of lessons learned.

Regional networks and partners: project activities in Central Asia will ensure the necessary connections with the UNECE WGEMA and JTFEI processes which are key to the implementation of SEIS in the pan-European region. Regional organizations will also be engaged as project partners in selected country activities as relevant, and invited to participate in the Regional Environmental Information network (REIN) Conferences to be convened by UNEP to support exchange of lessons learned and dissemination of project results. In addition to the engagement of UNECE and EEA, the project will engage SIC ICSD, the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission (SIC ICWC) and also CAREC as well as ZOI.

Annex I

Geographical scope of the project:

The proposed geographic scope of the project comprises 3 regions – Central Asia, Africa and Asia-Pacific – and 20 countries from the Official Development Assistance (ODA) list of the OECD DAC, eligible under the GPGC thematic programme:

- **Central Asia region:** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in a total of 2 *Upper Middle Income Countries and Territories (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan)*, 2 *Lower Middle Income Countries and Territories (Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan)*, and 1 *Other Low Income Country (Tajikistan)*
- **Africa region:** Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda and Zambia, in a total of 1 *Upper Middle Income Country and Territory (Mauritius)* and 8 *Least Developed Countries (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia)*
- **Asia Pacific region:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, and Samoa, in a total of 1 *Upper Middle Income Country and Territory (Maldives)*, 2 *Lower Middle Income Countries and Territories (Mongolia and Samoa)*, and 3 *Least Developed Countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal)*

