

ESCAP note on capacity building

Our principle to capacity development support on environment statistics is the *need* in terms of demand from users and environmental concerns at the country level that drives the focus of the support, which could be specific areas of underlying environment statistics guided by the FDES and/or implementation of the system of environmental-economic accounting. In terms of the SEEA, therefore, our approach has been to strategically link its implementation to national policy priorities and key environmental concerns through *inter-departmental engagement* both at the policy and technical levels. We find that establishing *high-level support* at the beginning of the process is crucial to ensuring shared understanding of the need for integrated statistics for integrated decision-making. We also find that a *technical working group* involving statistical offices, data providers and users is instrumental in strengthening coordination for SEEA implementation with a focus on specific priority accounts. In the implementation, we place emphasis on both *process* and *results* to ensure that capacity that is built is retained in the national statistical systems.

We initiated a series of *subregional workshops* on environment statistics in 2016, bringing together government officials from national statistical offices, environment ministries or other relevant ministries, and planning/finance departments for initial self-assessment, introductory training and work planning. We have already conducted the workshops in four of out five ESCAP subregions (the Pacific, South-East Asia, South and South-West Asia, and East and North-East Asia) and we plan to organise the last subregional workshop for North and Central Asia later this year. We use the *Diagnostic Tool* for self-assessment and determining national policy priorities to be addressed. We also use the *Inventory Template* for documenting key datasets. The original country self-assessment presentations as well as presentations on the Diagnostic Tools and the Inventory Template are on the ESCAP website (see the links to the sub-regional workshops).

When we receive requests for technical support from countries, we conduct a mission to hold a stakeholder workshop to validate/deepen the assessment, set priorities, identify expertise, provide additional training and develop a *short-term work plan*. We normally set to visit the countries again in about 6 months to *review and advise on the compilation results*. Specifically, countries that we have been working closely with include Bangladesh, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Palau, the Philippines, Samoa, Thailand, and Vanuatu.

So far, we have 35 *self-diagnostic assessments* that we plan to publish after verification by countries. We also develop *introductory training materials* covering FDES, priority accounts in SEEA-CF and SEEA-EEA which we also plan to publish on the ESCAP website.

ESCAP welcomes the participation of other organizations in the provision of technical assistance to countries in Asia and the Pacific, as well as in the continuous elaboration of available training materials.

In terms of planning in-country collaboration, we note that the *ownership and initiative* by countries are imperatives for in-country assistance to lead to sustainable results. And, in order to fit the assistance well with available staff and other resources in countries - *great flexibility* is needed on the side of international organizations in terms of approach and timing. We

therefore for example do not think that a set time plan at the activity/country level is feasible as a coordination tool at the global level.

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