

Technical Review Meeting
An Operational Manual on Integrated Policymaking for Sustainable Development

Summary

UNEP convened a meeting in Geneva on 14-15 May 2007 to review the first draft of "An Operational Manual on Integrated Policymaking for Sustainable Development" (IPSD). UNEP commissioned this work to the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKY SPP) at the National University of Singapore in September 2006. The manual was intended to provide guidance to a range of policy actors on how sustainable development objectives - in their environmental, economic, social dimensions - could be integrated in public policies. The review meeting's objective was to exchange views on the manual's first draft and propose revisions.

About 15 people attended the meeting, including representatives from inter-governmental agencies, national governments, think tanks, and civil society. Within UNEP, the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (through the Economics and Trade Branch) hosted the meeting and the Division of Regional Cooperation (through the Regional Office for Europe) and the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (through the Post-Conflict Branch and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre) participated in the meeting.

The meeting started with UNEP's brief introduction, which emphasised the manual's intended use within UNEP before promoting it for wider acceptance. The rest of the meeting proceeded with the LKY SPP team highlighting each chapter's key elements followed by discussions.

The meeting welcomed the initiative to integrate sustainability considerations throughout the public policy cycle. It considered this effort as an extension from the sustainability-related assessment work. The participants also appreciated the insights from the public policy sciences, in particular regarding the agenda-setting and policy implementation components of the policy cycle. They commended the LKY SPP team for having laid down a substantive intellectual foundation in the draft.

To improve the manual, the participants discussed various points along the following clusters, including points received from reviewers not present at the meeting:

Audience and style

- There are 2 broad levels of audience: senior policymakers who need to be convinced of IPSD's value and policy practitioners who need guidance to implement IPSD. For senior policymakers, an executive summary (and other promotional materials to be prepared by UNEP and others) would be useful.
- The manual should have a more accessible style (from the recipients' viewpoint, active voice) and give better orientation to its users ("how to"): more examples, tools, and tips such as checklists, recommendations for different types of policy actors and problem-solving, references and further readings at the end of each chapter, and good overview and signposting of the argument and organization of the manual.
- This is expected to be a living and flexible document. Its users should be able to adapt it or directly access different parts of the manual (aided with cross references). The diverse nature of policymaking in different societies precludes a "cookbook" approach. It is also not advisable to use a modular format, given the need for coherence among the different chapters.
- The size of the document could be brought down to around 60 pages by taking out whatever is not orienting the users. It would also be clearer to name this a "guide" or "reference/resource manual" rather than "an operational manual". When completed, the manual could be made available on a CD ROM with some e-learning aids, such as slides for a 30-minute presentation.

Sustainable development

- "Poverty reduction" is not the equivalent of the social dimension (which focuses more on equity issues) in the concept of sustainable development and "environmental protection" is not the equivalent of the environmental dimension (which includes both conservation and sustainable use). It is important not for this manual to trigger debates on the concept of sustainable development.
- The manual is about a process that should enable integrated policymaking for sustainable development. As a generic, normative document, it is not supposed to push forward specific integrated policy agendas such as mainstreaming the environment into a particular development policy. Those agendas should come from specific IPSD processes.

- The relations among the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development as presented in the draft manual should better reflect the high degree of economy's and society's dependence on the environment. The articulation of sustainable development should be based on the most commonly accepted understanding of the concept.
- In analysing the effects of policies on sustainability, depending on the level of policy in question, one could use either aggregate (including e.g. using the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare or economic valuation of environmental assets) or disaggregate indexes or their combinations. It is important to note that subjectively assigned weights are embedded in aggregate indexes.
- Broad sustainability criteria should cover the three dimensions of sustainable development, but these dimensions should not be presented in a compartmentalised manner. Specific criteria and indicators should not be labelled as belonging to a particular dimension, as this would reinforce the "disintegration" tendency in policymaking.
- In addition to the three dimensions, there could be other sets of criteria such as the effectiveness or functionality of policy and political feasibility (the latter should mainly be assessed at the policy screening/formulation stage). As for indicators, this manual should not develop indicators, but could use existing ones as examples and discuss their relevance and limitations (in a box).

Synergies and Trade-offs

- The manual should not give the impression that one dimension of sustainability could be traded off against another. This point is particularly important when discussing the rate of substitution and the use of cost-benefit analysis. "Trade-offs" is better articulated as among different policy alternatives, not among the three dimensions of sustainability or the related criterion
- The manual should emphasise synergies among the three dimensions. It should provide a framework for the users to seek synergies. At the policy formulation stage, the focus should be on the search for *synergistic* problem solving. We also need specific examples of the synergies, though this manual, being a normative one, should not define specific synergies per se.

Relations with assessment work

- IPSD should build on existing sustainability-related assessments. This manual should articulate the links with (and make references) to such assessment work (e.g. a box on OECD DAC SEA guide, World Bank work on institutions, UNEP-ETB's trade assessments). In Introduction, the manual should identify the problems (limitations?) faced by existing assessment approach and how they would be addressed in IPSD.
- SEA is a decision-support system whereas IPSD is a policymaking system. IPSD provides a broader view of policy process and includes more strategies on "political management". But the "assessment" sections of IPSD (i.e. policy formulation and decision-making) are closely linked and consistent with existing SEA methodologies, which IPSD could draw upon.
- There is a request to demonstrate the links between the manual and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), which was released in 2005. The MA provided an analytical framework, which links policy and institutional "indirect drivers" to human activities, which are labelled as "direct drivers" that cause changes in ecosystem services, which in turn affect human well-being.

Norms and realities

- The manual is a normative piece and should be explicit about this. It is also acknowledged, however, that policymaking in reality is not linear or sequential. In many developing countries, policymaking may be fragmented. Each chapter could start with a description of how current reality departs from the norm and how the deviation could be addressed through IPSD.
- The manual should give guidance on different entry points for different actors (not always in the public sector) in realistic policy situations (point of departure, information and knowledge needed to influence agenda setting and engage others, frontloading institutional setting and capacity building, links with other initiatives). Each chapter has capacity-building elements to cover.
- The need to deal with data constraints and the need for better information and communication should come out more strongly in the manual. In addition, there is also a need for guidance on rapid policymaking to deal with crisis situations with inadequate information (e.g. post conflict and disaster reconstruction calling for an integrated approach)

- Different governance structures impose different constraints on IPSD. We need to be realistic and operate under the existing constraints. But we should also attempt changes to existing norms. The manual should make a typology of the “gaps” between the old and new norms at the country level and reflect on capacity building strategies (drawing on examples from Aceh and the Netherlands).

Types of policies for IPSD to focus on

- In the Introduction, the manual should lay out a typology of different IPSD applications and their scopes as well as audiences. It should illustrate different levels of policy issues (e.g. from national level strategy-making to site-specific problem-solving). Ideas for IPSD applications cover trade policy, organic agriculture, special economic zones, and post-tsunami reconstruction.
- The manual should equip its users to deal with “single-issue” (i.e. compartmentalised) people to broaden the issue with needed knowledge. In this regard, it may not be a bad idea to use a “single” environmental issue to illustrate how it has generated integration. Ozone depletion is such an issue. Other timely examples include climate change and ecosystem services. The use of such examples may contribute to the up-take of IPSD.
- Sector policy is considered the major target for IPSD application. An example is found in policymaking regarding large-scale infrastructure projects, which affect many sectors transversally. This would be a good example to motivate willingness to adopt IPSD.
- The manual should help the users to “find themselves” in an IPSD process. It should imagine an actual situation, such as one in which a sector policy needs to be broadened for integration. The user could be a coordinating ministry or an official from a sector ministry working on an inter-ministerial task force. The manual should enable that user to remove the blocking factors.
- Another situation is when there is a policy window to shape an agenda that affects different sectors. Guidance is also needed to enable sector people to effectively engage in an IPSD process. In general, the manual should map specific recommendations at the end of each chapter, if possible for different actors.

Political and participatory dimensions

- Political support is critical for IPSD, but behind it lies public participation (including networking, coordination, democratic governance), which should be highlighted as a consistent theme throughout the manual. It is also acknowledged, however, that these processes come with costs and should be prioritised. This consideration should also be highlighted in the manual.
- The draft manual provided tactical advice on how to influence agenda setting. This could be viewed as political manipulation. The revision should consider modifying the related language. Also, for many countries, external agencies or events have a great influence in setting national agenda. These external factors should also be integrated with national policymaking processes.
- There are multiple ways and actors to define problems. The manual should suggest creative ways to define problems in order to facilitate integrative solutions. There is also a need to mobilize information and advocacy as tools. In addition, the manual should guide on how to link different agendas (not just raise new issues) and how to utilize or even shape the opening of policy windows.

Way forward

- The manual may be subject to 1-2 more rounds of review (including more immediate comments from a few additional reviewers), but it was understood that the first revision would be the most significant, addressing all the points agreed at this meeting. It was also suggested that UNEP maintain a website for updates. The revised version is expected to be available in mid-July 2007.