

APPENDIX F

Theme 1: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Namibia – challenges and opportunities

Plenary discussion following Peter Tarr's presentation

1. It was generally agreed that the embedded SEA approach without a separate document is the preferred approach and this should be promoted.
2. SEAs need to be balanced, well structured, fair and neutral assessments.
3. Town planners compile regional or town plans. EAPAN should promote an embedded SEA with these plans. The practices of SEAs for towns commissioned on their own do not make sense if they are not aligned with the development plans for the towns.
4. Investigate how a high level of leverage can be achieved for the implementation of SEAs.
5. EAPAN should promote integration of sectors to work against the silo effect that is so evident in national and regional planning.

Theme 2: Specialist Studies in EIAs - how to promote a more systematic approach?

Plenary discussion following four specialist presentations – agreed way forward

1. Good Practice Guidelines should be developed for a set of the more common Specialist Studies required for EIAs, e.g. social studies, biodiversity studies – including botany, vertebrates and invertebrates, archaeology, natural resource economics, etc.
2. These must not be in the form of a blueprint, because each project is different, and the team leader and specialist must retain the authority to design the study methodology to meet the specific requirements of each project.
3. A guideline “contents” should be developed and circulated to specialists and lead practitioners for their review, and personalized to each discipline.
4. One or more experienced specialist per discipline should then be contracted to prepare Good Practice Guidelines, to then be circulated amongst practitioners for review, comments, revision and finalization.
5. In parallel, a set of Good Practice Guidelines should be developed for Lead Practitioners on how to most effectively use specialists and Specialist Studies in EIAs.
6. The Environmental Commissioner and his EA Unit in the DEA should be engaged in this process from the beginning.
7. The Good Practice Guidelines should be made available on the EAPAN website and through the Office of the Environmental Commissioner to all EA practitioners.

The purpose of developing Good Practice Guidelines for Specialist Studies in EIAs is so that:

- ✓ The client who is paying for the EIA knows what he/she is paying for and what output to expect
- ✓ The lead practitioner knows what to expect in terms of desk-top and field work, and what will be covered in the specialist report
- ✓ The reviewer and regulator will know what to expect
- ✓ Specialists will know what is expected of them
- ✓ Apprentice practitioners will know what to aspire to and to seek training and mentoring to achieve the required level of professional specialist.

Additional points from the discussion

- Reference collections in the National Museum and Herbarium are critical to specialist studies in EIAs, particularly in disciplines such as invertebrates, lower vertebrates and plants where there are no comprehensive field guides. The dysfunctional nature of the National Museum is of particular concern, and the issue needs to be taken up with the Environmental Commissioner in the hopes of finding a solution.
- The paucity of young specialists is of deep concern. Where are the future entomologists, arachnologists, herpetologists, ornithologists, mammalogists and plant taxonomists? These disciplines require specialist training through tertiary educational institutions, and on-the-job training in biodiversity institutions (museums, herbaria, research organisations) under experienced mentors. This is simply not happening. Namibia is turning out generalists who are more interested in going into management than specializing in scientific disciplines. As this will have a significant impact on EIA quality (and science in general) in future years, the issue should be taken up with the Environmental Commissioner.
- Some shortcomings identified in Specialist Studies as seen through a botanical lens but also having broader application are:
 - Need to define the scope of the study in the early stages
 - Need to make full use of existing literature and available information systems at a desk study level prior to any field work
 - Need to design an appropriate methodology based on the nature of the project, the geographic area and its ecological and social characteristics, and the findings from the desk study
 - Need to define the level of effort in all field work undertaken (e.g. hours surveying, transect lengths, areas covered)
 - Need to fully describe constraints, e.g. time of year / seasonality, local conditions, which might have an impact on the findings and recommendations.

Theme 3: Screening of EIAs – assessing the appropriate level of assessment needed

Plenary discussion following four specialist presentations – agreed way forward

1. Screening is a very important phase of the EIA, but it is currently poorly used. It is particularly the smaller projects that are often not properly screened in terms of level and scope of work required (they either have a small impact but excessive effort is required, or or they have a big impact, but potential sensitivities have been overlooked) Guidelines are therefore needed for this phase, which would assist the Environmental Commissioner, competent authorities, EAPs and proponents alike.
2. TORs need to be issued by the Environmental Commissioner, which are based on a standard set of screening guidelines, although we cannot only rely on those for the final scope of the study. The EAP should also consider the level and scope of the EA and make adjustments where necessary.
3. The screening/scoping phase should play a bigger role in the EA process. The Background Information Document should be used more readily to solicit issues to be investigated.
4. Specialists expert opinion could be more readily solicited during screening.
5. The method proposed (i.e. using matrices) is useful for screening – it provides a systematic guideline for a thought process that is flexible but consistent.
6. Screening is dependent on good information. Access to good information is currently lacking in Namibia. We need to promote the establishment of a good centralized information database.

The following EAPAN members availed themselves to serve on a committee to compile screening guidelines:

Werner Petrick, Coleen Mannheimer, Stephanie van Zyl, Eloise Carstens and Pierre Botha.