*Integrated **Environmental** Management Information Series*

Scoping 2

Other topics in the series of overview information reports on the concepts of, and approaches to, integrated environmental management are listed below and the first six are currently available on request. Further titles in this series are being prepared and will be made available periodically. Sequence of release and titles are subject to change.

PLEASE NOTE: This document is intended as an information source and cannot take the place of legal advice in a specific situation governed by legislation. The document is not a guideline document, but serves as a reference and supportive text. This document will not take the place of official guidelines and regulations published by DEAT.

PREFACE

This document is one of a series of overview information reports on the concepts of, and approaches to, integrated environmental management (IEM). IEM is a key instrument of South Africa's National Environmental Management Act (NEMA). South Africa's NEMA promotes the integrated environmental management of activities that may have a significant effect (positive and negative) on the environment. IEM provides the overarching framework for the integration of environmental assessment and management principles into environmental decision-making. It includes the use of several environmental assessment and management tools that are appropriate for the various levels of decision-making.

The aim of this document series is to provide general information on techniques, tools and processes for environmental assessment and management. The material in this document draws upon experience and knowledge from South African practitioners and authorities, and published literature on international best practice. This document is aimed at a broad readership, which includes government authorities (who are responsible for reviewing and commenting on environmental reports and interacting in environmental processes), environmental professionals (who undertake or are involved in environmental assessments as part of their professional practice), academics (who are interested and active in the environmental assessment field from a research, teaching and training perspective), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and interested persons. It is hoped that this document will also be of interest to practitioners, government authorities and academics from around the world.

This document has been designed for use in South Africa and it cannot reflect all the specific requirements, practices and procedures of environmental assessment in other countries.

This series of documents is not meant to encompass every possible concept, consideration, issue or process in the range of environmental assessment and management tools. Proper use of this series of documents is as a generic reference, with the understanding that it will be revised and supplemented by detailed guideline documents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUMMARY

The scope of an environmental assessment is defined by the range of issues and alternatives it considers, and the approach towards the assessment that will follow it (DEA, 1992b, p. 5). Scoping is a critical stage in the integrated environmental management (IEM) procedure, since it is an important tool for involving the public in the environmental assessment process, and for structuring assessment studies. IEM is an approach that integrates environmental considerations into all stages of the planning and development process.

Through scoping, the priorities of the environmental assessment are set. As an open and iterative process, it may continue throughout planning and assessment, depending on whether or not additional issues or alternatives are introduced or eliminated because of new information.

The terms of reference for the assessment phase will be based on issues and concerns raised during scoping; when issues are inadequately identified, the assessment will be of poor quality. A consequence would be further delays in decision-making while further environmental information is gathered and assessed. On the other hand, if insignificant issues are not excluded from the assessment process during scoping, a great deal of unnecessary work and wasted resources can be expended.

Internationally there are slight variations from country to country in the approach to scoping. Typically, the procedural aspects of scoping are determined by the legal, policy and administrative requirements and guidelines within a particular jurisdiction.

All who have a stake in a proposed activity are provided with the opportunity to contribute to the scoping process. When effectively done, it will involve the relevant authority, the proponent, other authorities, and interested and affected parties in discussions about the proposed activity and the issues it raises. The process for the identification of project alternatives must be documented, as well as the criteria used to evaluate these alternatives. Such criteria would include social, economic and ecological/biophysical issues.

Scoping is typically divided into three phases:
- planning the scoping procedure;
- a process of stakeholder engagement to identify the key issues, and
- reporting on the terms of reference for the next phase of the assessment.

Though scoping is described as a discrete step in the environmental assessment procedure, in practice the process of identifying the significant issues usually continues throughout the assessment process, as well as decision-making, detailed design, implementation and monitoring.

In controversial cases which involve a wide diversity of stakeholders and perspectives, skilful and effective scoping increases the probability that the environmental assessment will satisfy all stakeholders, with agreement on rationale and criteria for distinguishing potentially significant issues from others.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

The history of mandatory environmental assessments starts in the United States of America, where the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) ensured that decisions on major federal activities could only be taken with foreknowledge of their likely environmental consequences (Wathern, 1988, p. 5). NEPA was created to "help public officials make decisions that are based on an understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore and enhance the environment" (Council on Environmental Quality, 1978). Examples of federal actions include decisions to enact legislation, the implementing of policies and plans, and initiation of development projects. The procedure employed to assess the environmental implications of such actions is the environmental impact assessment (EIA). Industrialized countries that have led the way in the implementation of EIA procedures include Canada, Australia, The Netherlands and Japan, who adopted legislation in 1973, 1974, 1981 and 1984 respectively. Directive 85/337EEC was adopted by the European Community in 1985 to make environmental assessments mandatory for certain categories of projects, and was amended in 1997 (Directive 97/11/EC). Not only have many other countries now instituted procedures for EIA, but it (environmental assessment) has also been incorporated into the operational requirements of bilateral and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank (1999), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (1996), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (1995) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (1996).

Environmental impact assessment has been researched and discussed in South Africa since the 1970s. It is a major part of the integrated environmental management (IEM) procedure, an approach that integrates environmental considerations into all stages of the planning and development process and requires post-impact monitoring and management (Sowman, *et al*, 1995, p. 51). Six guideline documents on the IEM procedure were published in 1992 by the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA, 1992a), and a more recent discussion document on the subject was released in 1998 by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT, 1998).

According to DEA (1992b, p. 20), "scoping may well be considered the critical stage in the IEM procedure. The success of a proposal will be largely determined by the adequacy of the scoping exercise." Such adequacy is best measured against important principles for good environmental assessment practice, described by UNEP (1988) as follows:
1.   Focus on the main issues.
2.   Involve the appropriate persons and groups.
3.   Link information to decisions about the project.
4.   Present clear options for the mitigation of impacts and for sound environmental management.
5.   Provide information in a form useful to the decision-makers.

The first contact between proponents of an activity, government agencies and interested and affected parties (I&APs), typically occurs during scoping. It is important that those involved in it should:
• have sufficient information about the project and its affected area, so that they can identify possible alternatives and potential effects on the environment;
• understand relevant legislation and its implications for the project and any environmental investigations that are undertaken; and,
• understand the decision-making process, so that they can ensure that significant issues will be considered by the decision-maker.

2. Purpose of this Document

This document has been written for a wide audience to serve as an initial reference text on the scoping phase of the environmental assessment process. It includes a definition of scoping and an overview of its purpose and various methods available. The aim is not to provide detailed guidelines on how to implement scoping. Instead, introductory information on the scoping process is provided for government authorities, environmental practitioners, advocacy groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry, project proponents, academics, students and other I&APs.

3. Definition of Scoping

The scope of an environmental assessment is defined by the range of issues and alternatives to be considered, and the approach towards the assessment that will follow (DEA, 1992b, p. 5). In some countries, screening and scoping are merged; though the techniques and procedures for both are markedly similar, the information gathered during screening will often provide the basis for scoping.

Screening is a process to determine whether a proposed activity requires an environmental assessment, as well as the type and level of assessment required. Through scoping priorities are set, efficiency is improved and focus for advice to decision-makers is provided by limiting the environmental assessment procedure to significant issues and reasonable alternatives, i.e. focusing on a manageable number of questions. As an open and iterative process, scoping may continue throughout planning and assessment, depending on whether or not additional issues or alternatives are introduced or eliminated because of new information (DEA, 1992b, p. 20).

3.1 Basic elements of scoping

The characteristics of a scoping exercise are as follows:
• It is an open process that involves the authorities, proponent and stakeholders.
• Feasible alternatives are identified and selected for further assessment.
• Important characteristics of the affected environment are identified.

- Significant issues to be examined in the assessment procedure are identified.
- It provides the basis for determining terms of reference for the assessment procedure.

Key factors to be considered when identifying significant issues include:
- the nature of the proposed activity and the receiving environment;
- the legal, policy and planning context for the proposed activity; and,
- the environmental priorities of the affected population.

3.2 Distinction between scoping, stakeholder engagement and social impact assessment

There is potential for confusion regarding the differences between scoping, stakeholder engagement and social impact assessment (SIA).

Scoping is carried out at the commencement of the environmental assessment process, where it attempts to focus the assessment on a manageable number of important questions. Stakeholder engagement is a process of interacting with stakeholders, so that a range of views and concerns can be expressed to inform decision-making and help build consensus on the assessment process to be followed. However, an important tool for scoping, it also continues through other stages of the assessment. A suite of tools to engage the public would include:
- Focus group meetings with representatives of key stakeholders.
- Workshops and seminars.
- Interdisciplinary team meetings.
- Public meetings.
- Participatory rural appraisals.
- Public response to written documents and/or other media coverage, e.g. TV and radio.

In contrast to scoping, which focuses on a broad range of issues, SIA is more focused. It is a process of assessing the likely social consequences of policy, plan or project actions, and provides an integrated, participatory framework in which the relevant social information that has been gathered can be prioritized, gathered, analyzed and utilized (Burdge and Vanclay, 1995). Stakeholder engagement and scoping can also be used to focus SIAs. In South Africa SIAs are commonly commissioned as a response to social concerns raised during scoping, and are seldom used as an assessment tool separately from EIAs or SEAs.

3.3 Issues-focused scoping

When the scope is determined solely by a team of specialists, the resulting content of the assessment report could tend to match the capabilities of the team rather than the converse, which is that the team should match the requirements of the assessment (Weaver, *et al*, 1998). Skilful use of the scoping phase of environment assessment is thus critical in cases involving a wide diversity of stakeholders and perspectives.

Both prior to, and at the outset of the scoping process stakeholders will have a strong interest in whether the issues they raise will be rejected, accommodated or validated by the process. The issues-focused approach to scoping takes care of such concerns when there is effective participation. This approach is implicit in the procedure described in the regulations for EIA in South Africa, issued in 1997 in terms of sections 21, 22 and 26 of the Environment Conservation Act 73 of 1989 (Weaver, *et al*, 1999). These regulations emphasize the need for wide I&AP consultation and review. With this approach, significant issues identified by I&APs in the scoping phase become the focus of environmental assessment, and it is therefore critically important that the views and perspectives of all I&APs are adequately represented in the process.

4. Outcomes of Scoping

The desired outcomes of scoping are as follows (Weaver, *et al*, 1999):
- Stakeholders have been effectively identified and incorporated into the scoping process.
- Alternatives for achieving the objectives of the proposed activity have been given due consideration.
- Closure has been reached on the significant issues to be addressed.
- The roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the process have been clarified.
- All participants have agreed on the process to be followed.
- Teams have been appointed to execute the work required, and provided with adequate terms of reference that are acceptable to all participants.

The terms of reference for the assessment phase are based on the issues raised during scoping. When significant issues are not identified and addressed, it will result in an inadequate assessment of poor quality (Wood, 2000). Delays in decision-making may thus also be experienced while further environmental information is gathered and assessed. On the other hand, if insignificant issues are not excluded from the assessment process at an early stage, a great deal of unnecessary work and wasted resources will be expended.

4.1 Terms of reference

Scoping is typically considered complete when a document, which sets the terms of reference for the subsequent assessment phase and the process to be followed, is produced and reviewed. This document should not be rigid; it should be flexible enough either to increase or decrease the scope of investigations as new issues emerge or others are reduced in importance. It should also clearly identify the work to be undertaken. An example of content for a scoping report is provided by UNEP (2002).

Weaver, *et al*. (1999) stress that *why* an answer to a particular question is needed is just as important as *what*

the question is. The concerns underlying questions raised usually provide important pointers for specifying the depth and extent of the investigations that are required to adequately respond to the question itself. Proper terms of reference will ensure that the results of the environmental assessment will, indeed, provide the answers to concerns raised by stakeholders, thus closing the loop between their concerns and the findings of the assessment.

5. Benefits of scoping

The value of scoping should not be underestimated, whether undertaken as part of a legal process or as good practice. Its benefits are as follows (adapted from EC, 2001):
- Scoping ensures that issues of particular concern to I&APs are included in the information base for decision-making by authorities.
- It helps to focus the environmental assessment on issues which are important for decision-making, and thus reduces any delays in decision-making due to requests for further environmental information.
- Engagement on the proposed activity and its environmental effects between the proponent and stakeholders occurs very early in the project cycle.
- Feasible alternatives to the proposed activity are identified, as well as preliminary mitigation measures that must be considered by the proponent.
- All legal, policy and planning measures relevant to the proposal are identified, so that duplication of effort and costs due to compliance with the various measures may be avoided.
- Scoping is useful for finalizing the choice of who the members of the assessment team should be.

6. Methods of Scoping

Internationally, procedural aspects of scoping are shaped by whatever legal, policy and administrative requirements and guidelines are in place.

6.1 Roles and responsibilities for scoping

Scoping involves all who have a stake in a proposed activity. Effectively done, scoping will involve the lead authority and the proponent in a dialogue about the project and the issues arising from it. This is supplemented by consultations with relevant statutory and non-statutory organizations, and I&APs (EC, 2001).

6.1.1 The proponent

The proponent should provide a clearly stated proposal based on existing information, as well as succinct statements of the purpose and need for the proposed activity, and information that will help determine the appropriate level of environmental assessment.

Scoping will help the proponent to recognize the perspective of others, consider alternatives and issues of concern raised by the authorities and I&APs, and to make changes to the proposal that will not only address concerns raised,

but also improve it.

6.1.2 The lead authority

The lead authority may issue directions on the scope of the environmental assessment, or may review and approve the scope proposed by the proponent. These directions may include the issues to be addressed, other authorities and I&APs to be consulted, and the form of consultation to be employed.

6.1.3 Other authorities

Other authorities contribute detailed knowledge about specific issues within their jurisdiction, e.g., water supply and controls on health and safety. This knowledge may include specific legislation, policy frameworks, standards, local knowledge and experience. Because they often provide licences, permits, approvals or leases, knowledge of their requirements is essential.

6.1.4 Interested and affected parties (I&APs)

Interested parties include those indirectly affected by a proposed activity, such as local, national and sometimes international NGOs, individuals and interest groups. They reflect a range of values that should be included in the scoping process and they can provide useful information to improve the effectiveness of this process.

Those affected by the proposal have a major role in identifying issues and ensuring that local knowledge and values are understood. Their views should be taken into account when choosing between alternatives, in deciding on the importance of issues, and in framing mitigating measures, compensation provisions and management plans. Some affected communities might, in order to articulate their concerns and play a meaningful role in the assessment process, need help and support for them to understand the proposed activity, its alternatives, and likely effects.

6.2 Generic procedure for scoping

Though scoping is described as a discrete step in the environmental assessment procedure, in practice the process of identifying significant issues usually continues throughout the assessment process, decision-making, detailed design, implementation and monitoring.

When scoping commences, the proponent should provide a documented account of how proposal alternatives were identified, as well as the social, economic and ecological/biophysical criteria used to evaluate such alternatives.

The phases of scoping are typically divided into the following:
- Planning the scoping procedure.
- A process of stakeholder engagement to identify the key issues.

• Reporting on terms of reference for the next phase of the assessment.

6.2.1 Planning the scoping procedure

When planning the scoping procedure, the objectives include the following:
• Identification of the authorities and I&APs who should be involved in the process.
• Definition of the roles and responsibilities of the various authorities and I&APs.
• Agreement by all stakeholders on the process to be undertaken for the assessment.
• Compilation of background information to enable effective involvement by authorities and I&APs.
• Identification of the most effective strategies for communicating with all I&APs.

The outline of the scope is developed through assembling available information, identifying information gaps and through discussions between the proponent, the lead authority, and other authorities and key I&APs. The process to be undertaken should be agreed upon with relevant authorities and key I&APs. Legislative requirements, including permitting requirements, should be clarified, key decision points should be identified and the type of information required from each stakeholder for the scoping process should be clarified. A background information document (BID) should be produced, which will enable I&APs to understand the nature of the proposed activity and identify key issues. This BID should include an outline for scoping, with headings such as the following:
• Objectives and description of the proposed activity.
• The legal, policy and planning context and setting of the proposed activity.
• Environmental opportunities and constraints, including the characteristics and importance of an area.
• Feasible alternatives.
• Predicted impacts on the environment.
• Public involvement - how I&APs can participate.
• A timetable of the process to be followed.

6.2.2 Stakeholder engagement to identify the key issues

The objectives for the process of engagement with stakeholders include:
• agreement on the scoping process to be followed;
• making information on the scoping process, and other supporting information, available to those whose views are to be obtained;
• ensuring that I&APs understand what is being proposed, and why;
• identification of the key issues to be addressed in the assessment;
• prioritizing the issues by evaluating the potential significance of concerns raised from both a technical and a subjective perspective, taking into account the needs, values and importance of the affected environment to stakeholders; and,
• development of a strategy for addressing and resolving each key issue. This will include why and what

information is required, and the terms of reference for specialist studies.

A range of techniques can be used to facilitate participation. These include workshops, focus group meetings with specific stakeholders, media releases, telephone/e-mail/fax hotlines and meetings with key individuals. The European Commission (2001) has developed a comprehensive checklist for scoping consultation. It is important that the stakeholder engagement process creates opportunities for participation by all, so that no I&APs are excluded from the process.

6.2.3 Reporting on the terms of reference for the next phase of the assessment

The objectives for reporting on the terms of reference for the next phase of the assessment include:
• closure on the issues to be addressed in the environmental assessment and in any specialist studies to be undertaken;
• provision of feedback on the way concerns raised has been incorporated into the environmental assessment process.

A draft scoping report should be compiled, which includes an issues trail and the draft terms of reference for specialist studies. The issues trail is a list of the issues identified by stakeholders, together with the project team's response to each concern.

7. Important Considerations

7.1 The question of significance

Significant issues are identified for inclusion in the environmental assessment and prioritized in order to focus the assessment studies on the most important concerns. However, since environmental assessment deals with the effects of human activities, assigning significance or importance to these effects would therefore include a value judgment (UNEP, 2002) with criteria that reflect political reality.

Kennedy (1988) characterized environmental impact assessment (EIA) as a science and an art, because it attempts to bridge the gap between a scientific approach to assessment and the political nature of decision-making. The effect of this is that natural scientists involved in environmental assessment are often required to extend their interpretation of significance beyond the scientific criteria of their academic discipline to issues such as quality of life, health and safety, and assurances about the future supply of food, materials, clean water and air.

Great care must be taken to ensure that the output of scoping and the subsequent structure of the environmental assessment reflect issues related to the proposed activity, and not only to the competence area of the specialists. When the concerns of poor people are not adequately considered, it often happens that the emphasis of the environmental assessment can shift to "green" issues.

Stakeholder engagement is thus critically important as a process for integrating diverse knowledge, expressed in various ways. This requires that stakeholder engagement practitioners take the time to become familiar with diverse stakeholders and their modes of expression to help them understand technical aspects under discussion and to ensure that any of their concerns that underlie issues can be uncovered (Weaver, *et al,* 1999).

7.2 Timing and duration of scoping

In EIAs, rigorous scoping typically comprises 30% of the time, effort and cost (Weaver, *et al,* 1998). A good scoping exercise reduces the amount of work required for the latter parts of the environmental assessment.

While scoping is a distinct and early part of the environmental assessment process, review of the scope is a continuous activity that proceeds throughout the detailed assessment, decision-making, detailed design, and implementation and monitoring. Unforeseen issues may arise in any of these phases, requiring further consideration. For example, within a particular issue (e.g. indigenous flora or air pollution), the work undertaken for the assessment may uncover new aspects for consideration by the study team and stakeholders.

7.3 Some constraints to scoping

Based on observations of EIAs done in South Africa, the following constraints and weaknesses in scoping should be noted (Weaver, *et al,* 1998):
- Too many meetings lead to scoping fatigue, and I&APs lose interest in further participation.
- Some I&APs can decide not to participate in the environmental assessment, then later cause delays in implementation if a decision which favours the proposed activity is made.
- The process is open to manipulation by individuals or groups who follow their own agenda if there is an ineffective and inequitable distribution of information and/or resources within the process.
- Communication or language problems can marginalize or alienate important I&APs.
- Raising expectations unnecessarily, e.g. an emphasis on job creation benefits, can blur the focus of the stakeholder engagement process.
- Inadequate consideration of the wider planning context can lead to it not being addressed in the terms of reference for the assessment.

7.4 Some suggestions for an effective scoping process

To add value to the scoping exercise, the following is suggested:
- Maintain an effective paper trail of all correspondence (e.g. faxes, e-mails, advertisements and minutes). When posting information, check that it has been received and ensure that all deliveries have been signed for.

- Include issues if there is uncertainty about their significance.
- Avoid focusing on insignificant impacts.

8. Conclusions

Scoping is a critical stage in the IEM procedure, in which the following are identified:
- The approach to the environmental assessment.
- The key issues to be addressed.
- Feasible alternatives to the proposed activity.
- Preliminary mitigation measures that can be considered by the proponent.

The terms of reference for the assessment phase are based on the issues raised during scoping. Inadequate scoping will therefore result in an inadequate assessment of poor quality. Delays in decision-making may thus be experienced as further environmental information is gathered and assessed. As scoping deals with interpretations of significance, which are mostly value-based, stakeholder engagement is of critical importance.

Through scoping, the identification of significant issues allows priorities to be set, which provide a focus for decision-making. This improves the efficiency of the environmental assessment. During scoping, legislative or regulatory measures relevant to the proposed activity are identified, and early consultation is initiated between the proponent, the lead authority, other authorities, and interested and affected parties.

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10. Glossary

Definitions

Affected environment
Those parts of the socio-economic and biophysical environment impacted on by the development.

Affected public
Groups, organizations, and/or individuals who believe that an action might affect them.

Alternative proposal
A possible course of action, in place of another, that would meet the same purpose and need. Alternative proposals can refer to any of the following, but are not necessarily limited to these:
- alternative sites for development
- alternative projects for a particular site
- alternative site layouts
- alternative designs
- alternative processes
- alternative materials.

In IEM, the so-called "no-go" alternative also requires investigation.

Authorities
The national, provincial or local authorities that have a decision-making role or interest in the proposal or activity. The term includes the lead authority and other authorities.

Baseline
Conditions that currently exist. Also called "existing conditions".

Baseline information
Information derived from data that:
- records the existing elements and trends in the environment; and
- records the characteristics of a given project proposal.

Decision-maker
The person(s) entrusted with the responsibility for allocating resources or granting approval to a proposal.

Decision-making
The sequence of steps, actions or procedures that result in decisions, at any stage of a proposal.

Environment
The surroundings within which humans exist and that are made up of:
- i. the land, water and atmosphere of the earth;
- ii. micro-organisms, plant and animal life;
- iii. any part or combination of (i) and (ii) and the interrelationships among and between them; and
- iv. the physical, chemical, aesthetic and cultural properties and conditions of the foregoing that influence human health and well-being. This includes the economic, cultural, historical, and political circumstances, conditions and objects that affect the existence and development of an individual, organism or group.

Environmental Assessment (EA)
The generic term for all forms of environmental assessment for projects, plans, programmes or policies. This includes methods/tools such as EIA, strategic environmental assessment, sustainability assessment and risk assessment.

Environmental consultant
Individuals or firms that act in an independent and unbiased manner to provide information for decision-making.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
A public process that is used to identify, predict and assess the potential environmental impact of a proposed project

on the environment. The EIA is used to inform decision-making.

Fatal flaw
Any problem, issue or conflict (real or perceived) that could result in proposals being rejected or modified.

Impact
The positive or negative effects on human well-being and/or on the environment.

Integrated Environmental Management (IEM)
A philosophy that prescribes a code of practice for ensuring that environmental considerations are fully integrated into all stages of the development and decision-making process. The IEM philosophy (and principles) is interpreted as applying to the planning, assessment, implementation and management of any proposal (project, plan, programme or policy) or activity - at the local, national and international level - that has a potentially significant effect on the environment. Implementation of this philosophy relies on the selection and application of appropriate tools to a particular proposal or activity. These may include environmental assessment tools (such as strategic environmental assessment and risk assessment), environmental management tools (such as monitoring, auditing and reporting) and decision-making tools (such as multi-criteria decision support systems or advisory councils).

Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs)
Individuals, communities or groups, other than the proponent or the authorities, whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by a proposal or activity and/or who are concerned with a proposal or activity and its consequences. These may include local communities, investors, business associations, trade unions, customers, consumers and environmental interest groups. The principle that environmental consultants and stakeholder engagement practitioners should be independent and unbiased excludes these groups from being considered I&APs.

Lead authority
The environmental authority at the national, provincial or local level entrusted, in terms of legislation, with the responsibility for granting approval to a proposal or allocating resources and for directing or coordinating the assessment of a proposal that affects a number of authorities.

Mitigate
The implementation of practical measures to reduce adverse impacts or enhance beneficial impacts of an action.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
Voluntary environmental, social, labour or community organizations, charities or pressure groups.

Proponent
Any individual, government department, authority, industry or association proposing an activity (e.g. project, programme or policy).

Proposal
The development of a project, plan, programme or policy. Proposals can refer to new initiatives or extensions of, and revisions to existing ones.

Public
Ordinary citizens who have diverse cultural, educational, political and socio-economic characteristics. The public is not a homogeneous and unified group of people with a set of agreed common interests and aims. There is no single public. There are a number of publics, some of whom may emerge at any time during the process, depending on their particular concerns and the issues involved.

Roleplayers
The stakeholders who play a role in the environmental decision-making process. This role is determined by the level of engagement and the objectives set at the outset of the process.

Scoping
The process of determining the spatial and temporal boundaries (i.e. extent) and key issues to be addressed in an environmental assessment. The main purpose of scoping is to focus the environmental assessment on a manageable number of important questions. Scoping should also ensure that only significant issues and reasonable alternatives are examined.

Screening
A decision-making process to determine whether or not a development proposal requires environmental assessment, and if so, what level of assessment is appropriate. Screening is initiated during the early stages of the development of a proposal.

Significant/significance
Significance can be differentiated into impact magnitude and impact significance. Impact magnitude is the measurable change (i.e. intensity, duration and likelihood). Impact significance is the value placed on the change by different affected parties (i.e. level of significance and acceptability). It is an anthropocentric concept, which makes use of value judgements and science-based criteria (i.e. biophysical, social and economic). Such judgement reflects the political reality of impact assessment in which significance is translated into the public acceptability of impacts.

Stakeholders
A subgroup of the public whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by a proposal or activity and/or who are concerned with a proposal or activity and its consequences. The term therefore includes the proponent, authorities (both the lead authority and other authorities) and all interested and affected parties (I&APs). The principle that environmental consultants and stakeholder engagement practitioners should be independent and unbiased excludes these groups from being considered stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement
The process of engagement between stakeholders (the proponent, authorities and I&APs) during the planning, assessment, implementation and/or management of proposals or activities. The level of stakeholder engagement varies, depending on the nature of the proposal or activity and the level of commitment by stakeholders to the process. Stakeholder engagement can therefore be described by a spectrum or continuum of increasing levels of engagement in the decision-making process. The term is considered more appropriate than the term "public participation".
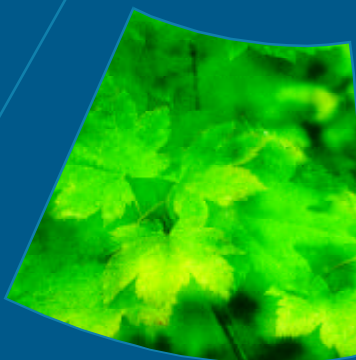
Stakeholder engagement practitioner
Individuals or firms whose role it is to act as independent, objective facilitators, mediators, conciliators or arbitrators in the stakeholder engagement process. The principle of independence and objectivity excludes stakeholder engagement practitioners from being considered stakeholders.

Abbreviations

CBO	Community-based Organization
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EMS	Environmental Management Systems
I&AP	Interested and Affected Party
IEM	Integrated Environmental Management
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment