International Institute for Environment and Development
(IIED)

ENVIRONMENTAL MAINSTREAMING DIAGNOSTIC

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Draft: 9 February 2011

What is environmental mainstreaming?

'Environmental mainstreaming (EM) has been defined as

> "*the informed inclusion of relevant environmental concerns into the decisions of institutions that drive national, local and sectoral development policy, rules, plans, investment and action*"
>
> (Dalal-Clayton and Bass, 2009) [1]

It can help in several ways – to:
- find integrated solutions that resolve e.g . 'development vs. environment' and 'top-down vs bottom-up'arguments, institutional tensions, and associated costs;
- enable more efficient planning of environmental assets and environmental hazard management;
- support technological innovation that is informed and inspired by nature;
- support informed policy debate and formulation on big issues;
- enable environmental mandates to be fulfilled in effective ways

and, in these ways, improve the productivity, resilience and adaptability of social and economic systems – reducing the risk of collapses and the need for short-term 'bail-outs'.

To achieve these benefits, EM requires collaboration – the integration of environment and development interests and ideas, not just environment being forced into development. It will often be as much a political and institutional change process as a technical one – working directly with politically hot overarching policy issues on matters such as security, macro-economic policy, employment, climate change and 'low-carbon growth'. EM depends upon leadership and catalytic organisations to forge the necessary links and processes, and needs to be a continuing and long-term process, not a one-off project.

But effective EM goes much wider than procedural assessments and embraces a broad array of tactics and approaches and a large toolkit of available analytical and assessment methods. EM has too often been approached as a narrow procedural hurdle – usually the application of a safeguard mechanism: indeed evidence shows that the traditional safeguarding approach to EM has not been particularly effective. It needs to be complemented by a more integrated and systematic institutional development approach which realizes the potential of environmental assets and recognizes the limits. In these respects, 'integration' or 'reciprocal mainstreaming' may be more suitable terms, though the former is too generalized and the latter is a new term which we hesitate to introduce. Nonetheless, this does suggest that (1) the context, and (2) the development aims being considered are as important as (3) environmental aims, and that equal

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[1] Dalal-Clayton D.B. and Bass S (2009) *The Challenges of Environmental Mainstreaming.*   Environmental Governance Series, No.1, International Institute for Environment and Development (available at www.environmental-mainstreaming.org)

attention should be applied to understanding how all three have and should interact. Hence we have developed this diagnostic.

Purpose of diagnostic

This diagnostic sets out a framework of issues and questions which can be used to:
- Understand what *progress* has been made to mainstream environment in a particular context;
- Map and analyse the the *EM approach(es)* of a country, institution or project;
- assess how *institutional structures and procedures* support or inhibit EM;
- Examine *EM performance* – internally (within the institution) and 'on-the-ground' (in terms of outcomes);
- Identify areas for *change and improvement*.

An institution's or project's documents alone are unlikely to provide a sufficient basis for reviewing how well its decisioons and actions are informed by and effect the environment, ie EM. They rarely address the full range of key aspects of EM and seldom contain frank or unbiased analysis of practice and performance - particularly if written by staff of the institution concerned; or, if they do, the words are not reflected in 'upstream' beliefs or 'downstream' real actions. Document review needs to be complemented by open engagement with staff from across the institution(s) concerned and other stakeholders involved in or affected by decisions of the institution or development activities promoted/funded by it (eg other government departments, NGOs, communities, private sector organizations) – through interviews, focus group sessions, workshops, etc.

The questions in the framework can be used in full or in part, as appropriate. The framework currently includes question sets for three particular contexts (but additional sets could be added for other contexts, eg climate change, urban environments):

Here we have amplified the framework for three applications:

A. *Organisational-level mainstreaming* – internal structure and procedures for EM in a donor, funding institution (eg multilateral development bank), development or sector ministry/agency;
B. *Project-level mainstreaming*;
C. Domestic EM approach *in a country*.

In addition a short set of questions is included specifically for NGOs.

Diagnosis can be undertaken internally as a self-assessment, eg as part of regular tracking, monitoring or review of EM performance; or externally by independent review.

Structure of diagnostic

For each application, *generic questions* are provided – meant as an agenda for managing or guiding discussions on EM with individuals, small groups or workshops.

These are followed my *more detailed and targeted questions* which aim to guide reviewers/assessors (ie as a prompt to aid probing more deeply on particular issues or themes that arise during discussion under one of the generic question), and for scrutinizing documents.

(A) ORGANISATIONAL-LEVEL MAINSTREAMING

Internal structure and procedures for EM in a donor, funding institution (eg multilateral development bank), development or sector ministry/agency, etc

Generic questions

- Is there political will and commitment within the institution for EM?

- What steps/procedures has the institution taken/put in place to mainstream environment - in its organizational structure, policies, operations, working with others (partner organizations and countries), etc ?

- Where does the main responsibility lie within the institution for EM ?

- How has the institution responded to international commitments on environmental issues (eg UN conventions)

- Has the institution developed any safeguard policies? And what tools/methods does it use in applying such policies?

- Is there a good level of environmental awareness, skills and capacity across the institution?

- How are environmental concerns communicated within the institution and to others (eg partner organizations and countries)?

- What factors are driving attention to environmental concerns within the institution and its work? – external (eg markets, electorates) and internal (eg incentives, training).

- Are there any opportunities to improve how the institution addresses environmental issues in its work? and any constraints?

- Are there examples of successfully mainstreaming environment in the institutions work which have led to positive environmental outcomes?

- Is adequate information available about environmental issues?

- What are the constraints to EM?

Guide to deeper questions

Commitment and political will

- What evidence is there that there is genuine political will and commitment within the institution for EM? – commitment to introduce measures and change in order to genuinely mainstream environment

in its policies, plans, actions, operations, etc.

- What steps has the institution taken to ensure that it respects and adheres to the commitments, policies, guidelines, standards and procedures, etc. of partner organizations (particularly co-funders) and partner/client countries regarding EM ?

Institutional structures, safeguards, approaches and tools

- What administrative and operational structures has the institution established to promote EM? eg
    - o Is there a department with direct responsibility for environmental matters?
    - o How is environment addressed across sectoral, regional/country departments and regional/country offices?

- Does the institution have clear and accessible environmental and social policies and safeguards?

- Are such institutional structures, safeguard policies/directives and support materials/sources (eg guidelines, web resources) clear and easily accessible by all staff and partners?
    - o Do they conform with international standards and practices?
    - o Are they adequate to achieve effective EM?
    - o Are they being followed and implemented effectively?
    - o Are the institutional systems within the institution (eg departmental structures and procedural arrangements) coordinated and integrated adequately so as to maximize the possibilities of achieving EM?

- What key tactics, approaches and tools (eg EIA, SEA) for EM does the institution use?
    - o When are these applied in the institutions operations (eg during project or planning cycles)?

- How does the institution specifically address EM in monitoring and evaluation?

- What other tactics, tools and approaches could be used to mainstream environment at different 'entry points' - ie those in the institution's planning and project cycles?

- Has the institution assessed the opportunities and constraints in its management and operations and its engagement with others (collaborating organisations, partner/client countries, etc) for/to effectively mainstream environmental concerns?

Environmental awareness, skills and capacity

- What is the level of understanding/awareness of environmental and social issues, and their importance to sustainability, amongst institution – at all levels – and particularly in different departments that handle policies, country negotiations, development projects at different stages in their cycle?

- What steps has the institution taken to raise environmental/EM awareness amongst its staff and by those it engages with?

- What steps has the institution taken to:
    - o assess its own skills and capacity for EM?

- o provide training for staff and others (eg partner organizations or countries, affected stakeholders) to implement EM measures such as safeguard policies – and with what success (what is the evidence to indicate success/change)? Does more need to be done – and, if so, what?

Communication

- How does the institution 'communicate' the importance of the environment, EM and EM efforts:
  - o Internally to departments and staff ?
  - o Externally – to those it engages with - eg countries, other organizations, stakeholders?

Drivers, opportunities, constraints

- What are the drivers that potentially provide a 'push' for EM within the institution? (internal/external, domestic/international)?

- How has the institution engaged with and responded to the array of international drivers of EM, eg conventions, UN conferences, UNCSD, Johanessburg Plan of Implementation, MDGs, Paris Declaration , REDD, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment) ?

- What opportunities for EM are presented in the institution's response to 'hot' overarching policy issues such as security, macro-economic policy, employment, climate change and 'low carbon growth'; and those arising through other operating modes of the institution, eg Board meetings, country programme discussions with borrower countries, collaborative discussions/agreements with other co-funders, etc.

- What are the constraints to the institution improving its efforts towards EM? (eg in policies, constitution, administrative structures and arrangements/procedures, staff mix and skill base),

Outcomes

- To what extent, and how, have development activities (eg particular genres of projects) been improved due to application/implementation of EM measures by the institution?
  [This is likely to be particularly difficult to assess from the review of documents alone. And care will need to be taken to distinguish between the outcomes due to EM and those due to other factors/influences]

Quality of assessment procedures and documents

- Have reports of EIAs/SEAs and similar assessment approaches used by the institution been reviewed/assessed for quality?
  - o Do they follow international principles and practice?
  - o Do they address the environmental and social aspects that might be expected (from international experience) to be associated with the particular focus (eg policies, plans, programmes or projects) to which they are applied; and in their particular contexts (eg geographical or environmental location).

- What evidence is there that adequate that environmental/social data are available, sufficiently reliable, and appropriately used in assessment and to mainstream environment in the institutes operations?

Working with others (eg co-funders, partner/client countries)

- How does the institution seek to harmonise its approach to EM with that of co-funders or partner/client countries, etc ?

- How does the institution interface with other actors (eg NGOs, CSOs and local communities, private sector organizations, national-local government, politicians, educational and research institutions, etc.) in addressing EM and achieving common and coordinated purpose?

(B) PROJECT-LEVEL MAINSTREAMING

Generic questions

1. What is the history of the project – how was it planned and who was involved?

2. How were environmental issues addressed through the project cycle?

3. Was adequate environmental information available and made use of?

4. How have environmental issues been addressed as part of project monitoring and evaluation?

5. How were the environmental aspects of the project communicated to stakeholders?

6. Were there any constraints to EM in the project?

7. What lessons does the project provide for improving EM in similar projects?

Guide to deeper questions

Project planning and implementation

- Who originally proposed the project (partner country, funding institution)?

- Which government ministry/department/agency took the lead in:
    - Designing/planning the project?
    - Discussions/negotiations with the funding institution?

- Which offices/departments (key individuals) of the funding institution handled project through its stages: identification, planning/development, implementation, closure, monitoring/evaluation.

- Who else (key stakeholders) was involved in the project throughout its course – at what stages and how?
    - Government (national-local), finance institution, private sector, local communities, NGOs/CSOs, etc.

- Who were the main partners in the project?
    - How did they work with each other (was coordination effective? Particularly on environmental and social issues)?

- How did the main partners interface with other actors (eg NGOs, CSOs and local communities, private sector organizations, national-local government, politicians, educational and research institutions, etc.) in addressing EM?

- What opportunities did such stakeholders have to influence the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?

- o Were they able to engage effectively, and particularly to raise environmental and social issues? If not, what were the constraints?
- o What evidence is there that their inputs had any influence as regards EM?

Application of safeguards
[the following questions are illustrative: fuller international guidance is available on formally reviewing EIA and SEAs)

- In general terms, was the project one that was likely (based on past experience) to have significant environmental impacts (positive or negative) and that should have triggered environmental safeguards?

- What environmental and social safeguard policies or environmental and social assessment procedures of the funding institution and client government were applicable to this project?
    - o Which of these was followed, which took precedence?
    - o Were these applied as officially required (the correct steps followed, the correct tools applied, etc)?
    - o What specific EM approaches/tools were applied (eg EIA, SEA, social impact assessment)?
    - o Were TORs set for these and by who?, and were these followed properly?
    - o Who undertook the assessments (eg government officials, funding institute officials, independent consultants)?
    - o Were all relevant stakeholders (particularly likely affected people) involved, and how?
    - o Were the reports of such procedures reviewed and by who?
        - ▪ Did such review show whether these tools conform with TORs
        - ▪ Were they were undertaken to good professional standards (did they conform with international principles, and standards of practice)?
            - • Did they examine alternatives (different project focus, locations, etc)? and examine cumulative effects?
    - o Were the findings, conclusions and recommendations taken into account and how did they have influence on key project decisions? eg
        - ▪ Were alternatives proposed, taken into account and acted upon?
        - ▪ Were mitigation measures proposed and put in place?

Monitoring and evaluation

- What structures and procedures were put in place to monitor the environmental and social aspects and outcomes of the project throughout and following its full course?
- Who was responsible for these and who was involved, and how?
- Did these reveal any need to make changes to the project, and were any actions taken as regards these?
- Have any lessons been learned which have influenced the implementation of other ongoing projects or the design of planned projects?
- How have such lessons been communicated and to who?

Opportunities and constraints

- Has the project revealed opportunities for improved EM in similar projects and constraints to EM which need to be addressed in planning/designing future similar projects?

Environmental awareness, skills and capacity

- Has the project provided any lessons about the understanding/awareness of environmental and social issues amongst different actors and stakeholders (those directly engaged in the project, or others)?
  - How have these been acted upon? – by government or the financing institution, incuding for similar projects?

- Does the project indicate whether the government and/or financing institution had adequate skills and capacity to address environmental issues in relation to the project?
  - Where gaps and deficiencies need to be addressed?
  - What might be the options for appropriate response?

Information and communication

- Was adequate environmental/social data available for the planning and implementation of the project (including for any environmental and social assessments), was it sufficiently reliable, and was it appropriately used to mainstream environmental concerns?

- How were environmental issues communicated, and to who, throughout the project?

(C) DOMESTIC APPROACH TO EM IN A COUNTRY

Generic questions

1. What are the political, institutional and economic ***changes*** occurring with regard to *environment* in the country? Are these or other factors/influences (domestic or external) driving attention to the environment?

2. What are the key institutions and processes that foster the ***enabling conditions*** in which environment is taken into account by institutions and in development decision-making? And are these open to the participation of diverse actors.

3. Who is ***championing*** the environment? Which are the government bodies, NGOs, donors and other key actors in the environment field and what are their mandates for mainstreaming? EWhat actions have they taken, or propose to take, in mainstreaming environment – what are actors doing separately and together?

4. Is there ***political will*** amongst leaders for EM? And how is this given effect, eg in policies and laws?

5. What steps have been taken to increase ***environmental awareness, skills and capacity*** in the country?

6. Are there any ***constraints*** to addressing environmental concerns, eg in government, investment, development decisions (at different levels)? Do particular organizations and individuals ignore, resist or actively work against EM – and how do they oppose it?

7. What ***progress to date*** has been made in EM in the country? Are there examples of ***successful EM*** (eg better decisions, successful outcomes and initiatives associated with them)? What contributions have they made and what was their significance (if not yet actual impacts). What were the reasons for success (eg particular government or non-government protaganists involved)?

Guide to deeper questions

Commitment and political will

- What evidence is there that there is genuine political will and commitment within the country for EM? – commitment to introduce measures and change in order to genuinely mainstream environment in its policies, plans, actions, operations, etc.

- What steps has the country taken to ensure that it respects and adheres to its commitments (eg under international agreements/conventions), national policies, guidelines, standards and procedures, etc.?

Institutional structures, safeguards, approaches and tools

- What administrative and operational structures has the country established to promote EM? eg
  - Is there a ministry/department/agency with direct responsibility for environmental matters? Does this function effectively in promoting/securing EM?

- How is environment addressed across sectoral departments and line ministries, parastatals, national organizations/agencies, and at sub-national and local government levels?

- How do the constitution and particular laws and legal instruments promote and support EM?
  - Do these support each other and form an integrated suite, or is there overlap, confusion and conflict between them?

- What environmental safeguard policies/directives/regulations has the country introduced? A
  - What tools are required to be used (eg EIA, SEA) and when?
  - Are there clear guidelines for the applications of such measures/tools?
  - Are these readily accessible?
  - In what language(s) are these provided?
  - Do they conform with international standards and practices?
  - Are they being followed and implemented effectively? And what are the constraints?

- Is environmental monitoring and evaluation undertaken of development activities – to assess progress and outcomes and learn lessons?

- What are the entry points' in national and local planning and decision-making to address environmental issues?

- What are the opportunities and constraints in policy development, development planning and the routine management of development operations for mainstreaming environmental concerns?

Private sector and NGOs

- How does the private sector address environmental issues?
  - What is the influence in the country of international business standards and mulit-national company practices regarding the environment?

- Is there a strong NGO sector addressing environmental issues in the country? How effective is this?

Environmental awareness, skills and capacity

- What is the level of understanding/awareness of environmental and social issues, and their importance to sustainability amongst:
  - Politicians and senior decision-makers
  - Government and civil service – at all levels (national-local)
  - The public
  - Private sector
  - NGOs and CBOs

- What steps has the government/others taken to raise environmental/EM awareness amongst officials and the public?

- What steps have the government or other national actors taken to:
  - assess their own skills and capacity for EM?

- o provide training for staff and others to implement EM measures and with what success (what is the evidence to indicate success/change)?
- o What more needs to be done?

Communication

- How is the importance of the environment, EM and EM efforts communicated within the country?
  - o To leaders, decision-makers, opinion-formers?
  - o Internally within government to ministry/department/agency/local authority staff ?
  - o Externally – to the public
  - o In the media?
  - o In educational curricula?

Drivers, opportunities, constraints

- What are the drivers that potentially provide a 'push' for EM within government and national (domestic) institutions (internal/external, domestic/international)?

Examples might include (to aid discussion – not as a prompt):

- International commitments
- Legislation, regulations and requirements (national/local)
- Company/business plan or objectives, or regulations/requirements
- Stakeholder/public demands
- Conditions imposed by donors/lenders
- Risk management
- Personally held or organizational values
- Traditional/cultural reasons
- Actual or potential environmental events and issues

- Who are the key individuals/institutions that already champion environmental concerns? Or which ones might willing/well positioned to take a leading role?

- How has the government engaged with and responded to the array of international drivers of EM, eg conventions, regional accords, UN conferences, UNCSD, Johanessburg Plan of Implementation, MDGs, Paris Declaration , REDD, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment) ?

- What opportunities for EM are presented in the government's response to 'hot' overarching policy issues such as security, macro-economic policy, employment, climate change and 'low carbon growth'; and those arising through other operating modes of the institution, eg Board meetings, country programme discussions with borrower countries, collaborative discussions/agreements with other co-funders, etc.

What are the constraints to the government or other domestic institutions improving their efforts towards EM? (eg in policies, constitution, administrative structures and arrangements/procedures, staff mix and skill base),

Examples might include (to aid discussion – not as a prompt):

- Lack of or insufficient data/information
- Insufficient human resources (n general) or with particular/relevant skills
- Lack of awareness of the rnage of tools available for EM
- Lack of or insuffient funding
- Lack of political or bureaucratic will
- Lack of understanding and awareness of the relevance of environmental issues in policy-making or development planning
- Corruption

Outcomes

- To what extent, and how, have policies, plans and development initiatives/activities (eg particular genres of projects) been improved due to application/implementation of EM measures by the government or national/local institutions?
  [Care will need to be taken to distinguish between the outcomes due to EM and those due to other factors/influences]

Quality of assessment procedures and documents

- Have reports of EIAs/SEAs and similar assessment approaches used by the government been reviewed/assessed for quality?
  - Are they of good standard and presented in a way that makes them easy to understand and use to support planning and decision-making ?
  - Do they follow international principles and good practice?
  - Do they address the environmental and social aspects that might be expected (from international experience) to be associated with the particular focus (eg policies, plans, programmes or projects) to which they are applied; and in their particular contexts (eg geographical or environmental location)?

- What evidence is there that adequateenvironmental/social data are available, sufficiently reliable, and appropriately used in assessment and to mainstream environment in the operations of the government?

Working with others

- Does the government require donors, finance institutions, private sector investors, etc. to follow EM procedures required by laws and legal instruments?
  - Do the latter take precedence over the EM requirements of such organizations?

- How does the government interface with other actors (eg donors, international finance institutions, NGOs, CSOs and local communities, private sector organizations, national-local government, politicians, educational and research institutions, etc.) in addressing EM and achieving common and coordinated purpose?

Examples of EM that works

- Are there good examples of approaches to EM that have been used in the country and have 'worked' (ie have successfully enabled/facilitated/promoted environmental issues to be taken into account and influence policy-making, planning and/or development decision-taking , eg the use of particular tactics, EM approaches or methods /tools
  [such case examples might be useful for EM awareness-raising, or illustrative purposes]

(D) EM IN NGOs

- Is commitment to EM addressed in key policy documents, eg mission statement, strategy, multi-year work plan, brochure, etc. and are these accessible to the public (eg on website)?

- Is EM treated as a discrete theme/objective or as a cross-cut issue?; and how is it handled - by one particular department/section or integrated throughout/across the organization and its work?

- How Is EM addressed in communications work, eg website, newsletters, publications, annual report, press work, etc?

- Is there dedicated monitoring and evaluation of the organisation's work/activities to determine the success or efficacy of EM activities and to derive lessons?

- How are outcomes of, and lessons from, EM activities captured and presented (eg in publications, opinion pieces, workshops)?

- What are the NGOs major achievements in EM?

- Has the NGO developed or achieved distinction in the use of particular EM tactics, methods or tools?

- Are there incentives for group/departmental heads and team leaders or activity managers to ensure that EM is addressed in research, projects, work with partners, other activities?

- How does the NGO engage with other organizations to address EM?

- In what way does the NGO seek to influence others (organisations, governments, other actors, public, etc) about environmental issues?

- What is driving the organisation's focus on EM?

- Are there any constraints to working on EM or achieving EM goals and objectives?

- Has the NGO undertaken/commissioned an audit or similar assessment of its own environmental practices and performance (including carbon footprint) ?

- What proportion of the staff base have environmental qualifications and skills? And what environmental experience/skills are available amongst the staff base?

- Are there individuals on the Board/governing body who have environmental backgrounds/interests? And have they raised questions relating to the NGOs environmental work/performance?

- What proportion of the budget is committed to environmental or related activities?

- ETC.