



## SESSION 1 Getting Started

### Purpose of the Course

Social and Economic Assessment (SEA) is a way of learning about your community – about their demographic, economic and cultural characteristics, financial circumstances, their history, aspirations, values and attitudes, and their social structures, including the communities of interest and the networks and relationships that hold them together.

Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) is a process for predicting impacts of a management action or policy on a community, to allow decision-makers to understand in advance how those consequences will affect people's lives.

These people factors are the controls over how people use natural resources and over what management responses will be adopted when changes in practices are necessary.

The course explores the reasons for learning more about your community in order to better understand how it will be affected by the social and economic impacts of natural resource management decisions and actions. Understanding the impacts then allows you to design and put in place measures to avoid or mitigate these impacts.

NRM officers in regional bodies often have extensive and first-hand knowledge of the social and economic features of their region. Often this knowledge is intuitive. SEIA provides tools and approaches for analysing this information, and giving consistency in its use. It moves 'insight' into social and economic issues and characteristics into 'foresight' for impact assessment and mitigation.



**SEIA and community engagement are not the same though they are complementary. SEIA underpins good community engagement however it is not the engagement strategy.**

### Course objectives

At the end of this course you will:

- be familiar with the nature and scope of SEIA
- have considered its relevance to the NRM cycle of activity
- have an overview of several tools available for SEIA
- have a working knowledge of tools and their application
- have prepared an action plan for your own use of SEIA

### Overview of this training course

- Introduction and four tools
- Regional profiling– knowing your community's characteristics
- Stakeholder analysis– enabling better communication and engagement
- Decision-making criteria– weighing up social, economic and environmental benefits and risks
- Change mapping– mapping the pathway of impacts from a change to a current situation
- Your action plan

Sessions on the tools will include case studies and group exercises. At the end of each session the relevance of these tools to your work will be explored.

### Important Questions for you to consider are:

- How does information about a community facilitate community involvement, community learning, community capacity building, and community adaptation and resilience?
- How might it help you predict responses to NRM projects? How could it be used to predict future projects?
- For instance how might socio-economic information shape the targets, timeframes, priority areas, priority actions and the regional body's processes such as indigenous involvement or the application criteria for incentives funding?



## Why SEIA - 'getting real' about community-driven NRM

The "M" in NRM is crucial. People manage our natural resources, making the social and economic context fundamental.

SEIA builds capacity, provides useful community insights, increases participation, increases effectiveness of initiatives, supports cultural shifts required for the community to work with change and builds confidence and cohesion within communities. SEIA enhances the organisational capacity of the regional body. It builds confidence and insights to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of regional strategy and individual projects.

Social and economic impacts will result from NRM programs. Changes or impacts arising out of regional NRM can be seen as one of three types:

- Strategic level - change as a result of strategic direction-setting for example out of the region's NRM Plan
- Major project level - change as a result of major projects or events e.g. soil erosion control program.
- Small projects level - change as a result of multiple initiatives, widely distributed in the landscape and with long lead times for ecological outcomes.

Most impacts arising out of NRM work have the features of this third group of changes – small scale, incremental change. Recognising and quantifying the social and economic impacts of NRM then is a major challenge, particularly against a background level of impacts arising out of drought, cyclones, regulatory and industry initiatives.

Working with a sound knowledge of social and economic impacts is essential because:

- The regional NRM planning, priority setting and decision-making is largely a community-driven process
- There are social and economic impacts of continued land and water degradation
- There are social and economic impacts of managing land degradation
- Social and economic impacts affect the uptake of changed practices
- There is a need for a range of support mechanisms to assist the change process and these have economic and social dimensions.

NRM operates in the context of a community's socio-economic aspirations...how does it work with these to achieve the broad range of outcomes sought?

## Linking NRM to improved levels of understanding of socio-economic drivers

- The NRM cycle essentially consists of the key activities of -
  - planning and target-setting,
  - priority setting and investment
  - implementation
  - monitoring and evaluation.
- NRM processes – participation and engagement, negotiation, information capture and sharing, capacity building, collaborating, monitoring and reviewing, reporting

Social and economic impact assessment can be integrated into the NRM cycle and can make use of a number of these NRM processes... how does SEIA contribute to each of these four steps? Which of these processes can it use?

### ■ How will we use the SEIA tools?

To gain greatest value out of your work with the SEIA tools it is important to consider the process of their application. Different results can be generated depending on the method you use to apply the tool.

The tools can be applied through various means for example:

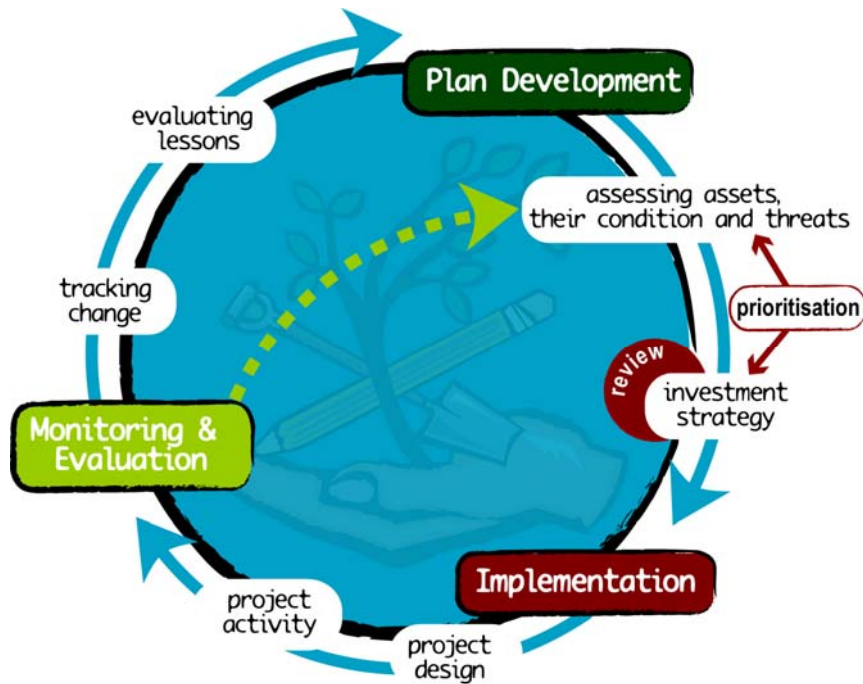
**Desk-top analysis** of documented information can support the application of a tool such as a stakeholder analysis. A more **participatory approach**, perhaps involving people from within the regional body, can be used in addition to the desk-top analysis

A **wider or more targeted participatory approach** could be useful. For example you could undertake the regional profile with a set of key stakeholders (e.g. agencies, landholders, local government) who have a shared interest in knowing more about a community, or you conduct a workshop with a target group of landholders to identify impacts and desired management responses using the change mapping tool.



### The NRM Cycle

The NRM cycle consists of a three key cyclical phases are linked to one another through review and prioritisation.

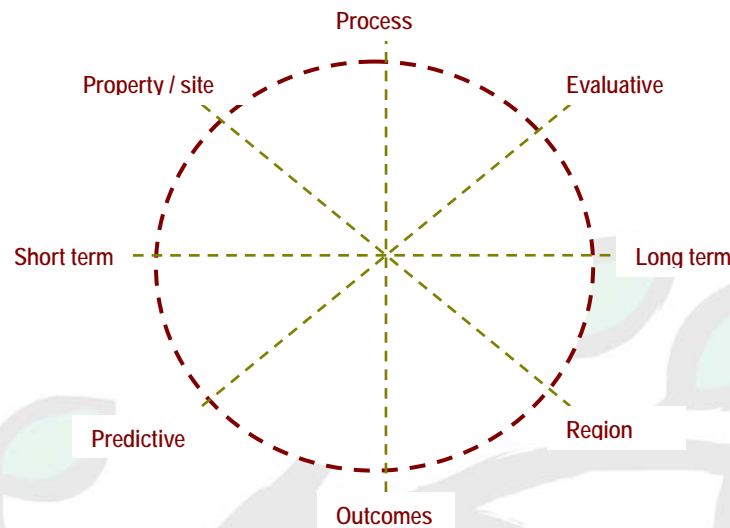


SEIA can apply to all stages of NRM activity; from planning, implementation and evaluation.

Within this cycle of NRM activity, social and economic assessment provides most value when it is predictive; that is when it occurs before an activity commences. This contrasts with evaluating the social and economic impacts *after* an activity has been implemented.

Predictive SEIA allows you to design measures to mitigate or reduce any negative impacts, and to maximise the benefits from positive ones.

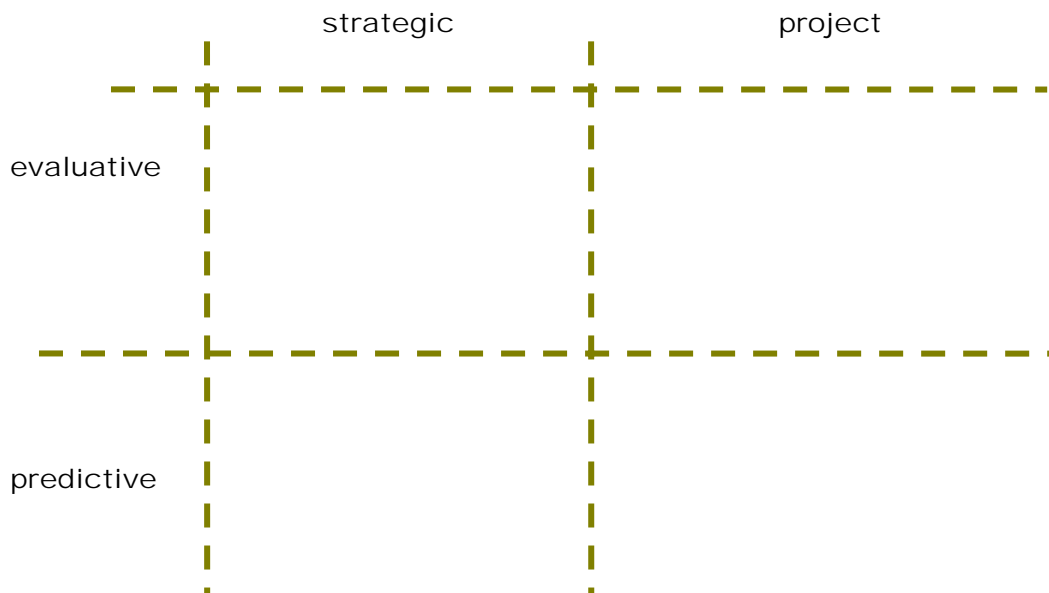
Apart from the phases on NRM activity outlined above, there are multiple other factors that affect how SEIA could be applied. Many of these relate to scales of both geography and time. Some of these factors are illustrated below. They do not constrain the application of SEIA, but an awareness of where you or your activity is on these spectrums helps in using it more effectively.





The context and scale for social and economic impact assessment varies – from applications at the strategic level, to those that are project specific. SEIA is also most effective when used to *predict* impacts, rather than assess impacts after they have occurred.

These contexts can be presented as follows:



### 3. Where are you at with SEIA? A quick self assessment

**Where is SEIA in your organisation?** For example, do we identify people who will be affected by our decisions? Do we predict the likely impacts of our actions on the community? Do we develop and assess alternative ways of achieving a desired outcome? Do we make decisions using social and economic as well as financial and ecological criteria? Do we consciously, comprehensively, build management of side-effects (social, economic, cultural) impacts from our initiatives into those initiatives?

On a scale of 1 (not a lot of SEIA) through to 4 (SEIA approach embedded in what we do)?

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Haven't a clue	Vague idea	On the way	It's in the bag

Your Score

Explain – your main reasons