

**OECD
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
COMMITTEE**

Guidelines on Aid and Environment

No. 2

**Good Practices
for Country Environmental Surveys
and Strategies**



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OECD
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE
Guidelines on Aid and Environment

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) seeks to improve and co-ordinate Member policies which will integrate development and environment imperatives. The Guidelines are designed to help policy-makers and practitioners address serious national, regional and international environmental problems.

Guidelines No.2: *Good Practices for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies* identify approaches that have been successful in producing these essential instruments. The results of such activities can provide the basis for integrating sound policies and practices of environment and natural resource management into decision-making for sustainable development. The basic rationale and main components are laid out in a clear, succinct format for non-specialists, including :

- *why these instruments are essential,*
- *what have been DAC experiences with them and*
- *what practices are seen to be most useful*

In December 1991, OECD Ministers of Environment and of Development Co-operation endorsed these, and other guidelines, on environmental impact assessment, involuntary displacement and resettlement in developing projects, and global environmental problems. This consensus of OECD Member countries is indicative of strong donor support for the efforts of developing countries to manage and protect the environment and to minimise environmental effects of economic development.

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DAC GUIDELINES ON AID AND ENVIRONMENT

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) seeks to improve and co-ordinate Member policies which will integrate development and environment imperatives. Through its Working Party on Development Assistance and Environment, the DAC is preparing a series of Guidelines on subjects relating to Aid and Environment. These Guidelines are designed to help policy-makers as well as practitioners in donor agencies and developing countries to prepare strategies to address serious national, regional and international environmental concerns.

In December 1991, OECD Ministers of Environment and Development Co-operation endorsed the following four guidelines:

1. *Good Practices for Environmental Impact Assessment of Development Projects;*
2. *Good Practices for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies;*
3. *Guidelines for Aid Agencies on Involuntary Displacement and Resettlement in Development Projects;*
4. *Guidelines for Aid Agencies on Global Environmental Problems.*

This consensus of OECD Member countries is indicative of strong donor support for the efforts of developing countries to manage and protect the environment and to minimise environmental effects of economic development.

Guidelines No. 2 *Good Practices for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies* identify approaches that have been successful in producing these essential instruments for environment and natural resource management. The basic objectives and main components are intended to assist donors as well as governments of developing country and non-governmental participants to organise the process and incorporate the results in policy-making for sustainable development.

These Guidelines are only one aspect of many DAC activities which bear on sustainable development. The subject of recommendations in the near future will pertain to areas of high priority interest to developing countries as well as to aid agencies. These include chemical management, including accident prevention and prior informed consent; pesticides and integrated pest management; natural disaster reduction; primary environmental care; environmental economics and environmental capacity building.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 6

Definition and Purpose of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies 7

DAC Member Experience with Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies 8

Good Practices for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies10

 General considerations10

 Donor co-ordination10

 Initiation of country environmental surveys and strategies11

 Organising the country environmental surveys and strategies.....11

 Technical coverage12

 Publication, dissemination and review14

 Follow-up.....14

 Time and costs15

GOOD PRACTICES FOR COUNTRY ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYS AND STRATEGIES

Introduction

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies are an important instrument for fostering improved environmental and natural resource planning and management in developing countries. During the past decade, an increasing number of developing-country governments, international donors, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have embarked upon Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies in order to shape new strategies for environmentally sound development. Recognising the key role these studies can play, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee reviewed its Members' experiences and identified those approaches which constitute "good practice" for development assistance donors as well as for governments in developing countries. This document offers a generic definition of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies, describes their purpose, summarises DAC Member experiences to date and sets forth a set of guidelines to good practices which have emerged from these experiences.

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies provide a basis for integrating sound policies and practices of environment and natural resources management into planning and decision-making for sustainable development. The following are the essential elements and objectives of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies:

- a comprehensive inter-sectoral assessment of the environmental sustainability of resource use, including baseline data for a particular developing country or geographic region;
- an assessment of the importance and relevance of the resource base for the population, disaggregated by gender and indicating the relationship between poverty and the environmental situation;
- an analysis of the trends in the quality of the environment and the use of natural resources;
- a natural resource information system for monitoring the state of the environment which is closely integrated into the planning and decision-making processes for environmental and natural resource management;
- an assessment of the legal, economic and institutional issues associated with the management of natural resources;
- the formulation of policy responses to reverse environmental degradation and mismanagement of resources;
- the capacity for environmental impact assessments of individual locally and externally financed projects and programmes;

- the strengthening of the institutional capacity in developing countries for natural resource planning and management, gathering data, monitoring environmental trends and analytical studies to assist planners and policy makers;
- the strengthening of public participation and awareness of environmental issues to improve the quality of the environment and the management of natural resources;
- the identification of policy distortions, institutional bottlenecks and other constraints to effective natural resource planning and environmental management;
- recommendations concerning policy reform, institutional restructuring, training and education, research and monitoring as well as long-term commitments from the host government and from donor organisations;
- follow-up action at the level of specific investment projects and programmes; appropriate policies and strategies across the whole range of economic and developmental activities; the use of economic instruments, price policies, subsidies and investment incentives, regulatory frameworks and land tenure systems;
- co-ordination of donor activities under the responsibility of the host country.

Definition and Purpose of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies are comprehensive multi-sectoral analyses of the environmental trends and issues in a particular country. Similar kinds of studies may also be done for a geographic region or a provincial area. They should be distinguished from the assessments by aid agencies as part of their project planning process. Generally speaking, the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies examine trends in the quality of the environment and the use of natural resources and assess the legal, economic, social and institutional issues associated with the management of these resources. Typically, they will describe the use of land, water, mineral, forest and marine resources; review the status of efforts to conserve wildlife and parks; examine issues of urbanisation, air and water pollution, sanitation and hazardous and toxic wastes; assess the social and economic dimensions of these issues; and analyse the policy and institutional framework for environmental planning and management. Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies will also produce policy and programme recommendations designed to resolve policy distortions, institutional bottlenecks and other constraints to effective natural resource planning and environmental management in the country.

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies and the process by which they are conducted are viewed as part of a long-term strategy for bringing about sustainable development through improved environmental and natural resource planning and management. Consequently, their objectives require a well thought-out, flexible plan of action. They must address the critical issues facing a country and its population (groups) and set forth pragmatic strategies for change which can evolve in accordance

with the circumstances within the country. They must also receive continued moral and material support from the relevant donor community as the various elements move towards implementation.

This broad definition of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies covers a variety of different types that have been produced by developing countries and donors since the late 1970s. These include State of the Environment Reports, such as those published in India and the United States; the National Conservation Strategies sponsored by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN); Country Environmental Profiles of the type supported by the United States Agency for International Development (US AID), the Netherlands and other bilateral donors; the Environmental Action Plans of the World Bank; and similar environmental assessments and plans being initiated by the Inter-American Development Bank and the Asian and African Development Banks. All of these reflect the comprehensive and multi-sectoral characteristics described above.

A listing of country environmental studies is contained in the 1990 Directory of Country Environmental Studies prepared for US AID by the Center for International Development and Environment of the World Resources Institute (WRI). The Directory also contains sectoral assessments and studies, such as US AID's Tropical Forest and Biological Diversity Assessments, FAO/UNDP's Tropical Forestry Policy Studies and Sector Reviews, and national plans to combat desertification. While narrower in focus, these studies often seek policy and institutional transformations not unlike those envisioned by Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies. Accordingly, the guidance on good practices set forth below may also be applicable to these sectoral types of resource assessments. Summaries of these studies appear in the Directory with the listings organised in such a way as to permit developing-country governments to identify the types of studies which different donor institutions have funded. The Directory is being expanded and up-dated under a DAC-supported project to establish an International Environmental and Natural Resource Assessment Information Service (INTERAISE), undertaken collaboratively by the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), WRI and IUCN. Under INTERAISE, libraries of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies are being established at IIED, WRI and IUCN as well as a computerised information service to assist donors, NGOs and developing-country governments.

DAC Member Experience with Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies

DAC Members have been involved in producing or supporting Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies for over a decade. While Members have taken various approaches to these studies, they view them as essential tools for understanding the linkages between environment and development and promoting sound natural resource management in developing countries.

In general, three categories of DAC Member Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies can be distinguished. The first covers environmental strategies, assessments and natural resource management plans which donor agencies conduct primarily to define and shape their own internal policies and development assistance programmes. To some extent all Members have undertaken such studies in one form or another, but some specific examples include: the Environmental Strategy Papers which the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) includes in its individual country review documents; the Natural Resource Assessments which US AID has conducted in countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia as part of the Country Development Strategy Statements

(CDSS) for US AID missions. While these studies primarily serve the aims of the donor, they can make substantive contributions to the body of knowledge about the environment and natural resources in a given country. They can also help strengthen institutional capacity if they are conducted in a collaborative manner and information is made accessible to the host country.

A second category of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies is Country Environmental Profiles (CEP). The Netherlands supports profiles which cover regions, districts, or provinces in countries in which it has large development programmes. US AID also has supported CEPs in developing countries in which it operates.

US AID's experience includes two types of CEP: "Phase I" and "Phase II" studies. The first are brief desk studies done exclusively to orient US AID programmes. The second -- "Phase II" studies -- fit the comprehensive field-based definition of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies set forth above. They have been done primarily by host-country organisations and they are expressly designed to improve environmental and natural-resource planning and management in the host country. "Phase II" Profiles have been done in 14 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in Rwanda and Thailand.

The World Bank's Environmental Action Plans are similar to the "Phase II" CEP studies described above. Action Plans have been completed for Mauritius and Lesotho and studies are under way in Madagascar, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Rwanda.

National Conservation Strategies (NCS) are the third type of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies that has received considerable support from DAC Members. As conceived by UNEP, IUCN and other sponsors, NCS present information and analysis that are similar to CEP, but also seek to develop political consensus around legislation to implement national strategies for conservation in a particular country. Over 50 NCS are either completed or in preparation around the world and DAC Member institutions including CIDA, the European Economic Community (EEC), the Norwegian Aid Agency (NORAD), the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the Swiss Directorate for Co-operation and Humanitarian Aid (DDA), and US AID have supported many of these.

Two other examples which fall outside the broad categories described above should be mentioned. Both involve regional planning and development projects which aim to resolve major problems of degradation with comprehensive resource management programmes. One is the work of the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) with other Nordic donors on a proposal for the Zambesi River Action Plan. This project, which was originally drafted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), will include environmental profiles of the countries covered by the Plan. The other is the initiative to develop a strategy for regional desertification control in the Sahel which Germany has supported through the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

A more detailed review of DAC Member experience with Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies appears in the DAC Chairman's Report Development Co-operation in the 1990s (OECD, December 1990). This review covers Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies as well as environmental impact assessments, tropical forestry action plans and other policy and programme

initiatives taken by Members to address environmental issues. Additional information also appears in the Directory of Country Environmental Studies.

Good Practices for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies

General considerations

The central purpose of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should be to foster the development (and eventual implementation) of a strategy for sustainable development in a particular country. They should examine the factors affecting the sustainability of resource use, the quality of the environment and social contexts and propose solutions that confront the underlying causes of resource degradation. This will involve analysing and designing policy reforms for complex and often delicate institutional, political and economic arrangements and practices. With this in mind, Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies must be especially responsive to the context in which they are being undertaken; donors and government sponsors alike should have a clear perception of the strategic role which the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies could play. Donors must be well prepared to enter into a constructive policy dialogue on these matters with their developing-country partners and in particular to provide institution-building assistance to help developing countries effectively address these issues.

Donor co-ordination

Co-ordinating donor plans and activities is ultimately the prerogative and responsibility of host governments. Consequently, the potential advantages of such co-ordination for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should be underscored early in deliberations between donors and host governments.

From the outset, donors should be appraised of the intended Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies. They should build upon the basis of other studies and projects and their results should provide a package of potential projects or initiatives that a number of donors might support.

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies, therefore, should be designed with the policies, priorities, programmes and projects of other donors in mind. This can be facilitated through early notification of the relevant donors, donor meetings throughout the process, and project and funding co-ordination for follow-up to the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies.

DAC's Project Appraisal Principles call for early notification of other donors to determine all relevant experience in a given country; this can be applied to the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies process. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), representing the United Nations Environment Programme at the local level, could assist in facilitating donor co-ordination.

Initiation of country environmental surveys and strategies

Developing-country governments and donors should base their decision to undertake Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies on a preliminary assessment that defines the basic policy and institutional parameters for the project as well as its likely technical requirements. The scope of the assessment should examine the institutional framework for the study; the available professional expertise and data; and the NGO, university and other private-sector interests which should be involved. It also should provide a preliminary view of the trends and critical policy issues which the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies will be likely to address. The assessment should also pay appropriate attention to the social context and macro-economic linkages. To the extent feasible, this preliminary study should involve consultations with the governmental and non-governmental participants in the projected Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies.

Based upon this preliminary assessment, negotiations can proceed between the donor and the recipient government about the strategic objectives, the scope and the organisation of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies. Commitments of funds, in-kind services, the secondment of staff and other technical and administrative factors also would be agreed upon at this time.

Organising the country environmental surveys and strategies

A fundamental objective of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies is to strengthen the capacity of developing-country governments to plan and manage more effectively natural resource use and the quality of the environment. This requires introducing critical environmental issues, data, and analytical approaches, policy alternatives, and new implementation techniques into the formal decision-making processes of the government. It calls for improving inter-governmental co-ordination and the training of policy makers and professionals. It also places a premium on involving local representatives and NGOs, as well as national officials, in the planning process.

Bearing these objectives in mind, organisers of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies must place special emphasis on selecting the lead agency for conducting the work, structuring the inter-governmental co-ordination mechanism, composing the technical team and defining the public participation process.

Ideally, the lead agency should have the authority and capacity to integrate environmental and natural resource factors into national economic development plans. It should also have the commitment, skill and political durability not only to manage the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies process effectively, but also to act as its advocate on a national basis and within the government. The agency should not be a body with limited sectoral interests or an ad hoc secretariat with neither authority nor permanent status.

A national development planning ministry, working closely with the appropriate environment ministry or agency, could be the strongest lead agency for achieving the goal of linking environmental planning to development decision-making. In theory at least, such a national planning agency would have the mandate and the co-ordinating powers to convene the sectoral ministries of government as well as to reach agreements over policy and programme priorities. In cases where such a lead agency

is chosen, however, the role of the environmental agency should not be diminished in the process. Furthermore, in cases where no such central body exists for integrating sectoral planning and development activities, the environment ministry should be given the lead role with explicit authority from the nation's chief executive to co-ordinate other sectoral interests in the process.

Overall policy guidance for the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should be provided by a steering committee composed of non-governmental as well as governmental institutions. Chaired by the lead agency, the committee should include representatives of sectoral ministries, special agencies, private sector interests, and NGOs concerned with the environment and development. An adequate participation of women should be ensured.

The steering committee could organise itself into sub-committees for administrative and technical purposes. Policy and technical review groups should be established to foster inter-governmental co-ordination as well as non-governmental participation in the review process.

The technical secretariat to the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should be lodged within the lead agency but its multi-disciplinary professional staff should be drawn from other agencies and NGOs. Such a procedure for staffing should facilitate inter-governmental co-ordination and introduce environmental expertise into government agencies which might not have had any in the past. If feasible, expatriate consultant expertise should be kept to the minimum required to treat specialised areas not covered by local professionals. Opportunities to foster inter-governmental co-ordination and professional training through special workshops and training sessions during the process should be fully exploited. Both the steering committee (and its sub-committees) and the technical working groups of the secretariat offer opportunities for introducing new approaches to natural resource analysis and management. For example, special briefings or training sessions on policy for sustainable agriculture or for the techniques of rapid rural appraisal could be held during the process.

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies must involve a well thought-out, deliberate and publicised process of public participation from the outset. Such a process is necessary not only to identify priorities and develop consensus around alternative strategies but also to enlarge the constituency for implementing recommendations. NGOs as well as private business interests can bring specialised insights into the characteristics of environmental problems and the practical and cultural constraints underlying different policy options. Consequently, they can make an invaluable contribution to effective Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies. The process should include: a) public participation in the project steering committee and in policy and technical review committees; b) private sector review committees, including NGOs, universities, the business community, etc.; c) international donor committees or co-ordination meetings; and d) meetings at the village or community level. The process of participation should continue after the formal study is completed in order to test and implement new initiatives.

Technical coverage

At the beginning of the process, the fundamental objectives and scope of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should be agreed on through a formal scoping process. Similar to the process recommended for environmental impact assessments, the scoping session gathers key

people concerned with environment and natural resources from the government, NGOs, the scientific community and the private sector to discuss the aims of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies, identify and prioritise the critical issues it should address. The array of issues the scoping process might address can be quite broad -- from data and research needs, regional concerns and institutional co-ordination to the relative priority assigned to each of the policy objectives. The ultimate aim, however, is to reach consensus on the explicit objectives, coverage, and procedures of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies so that they may be as effective as possible.

The coverage will respond to the particular conditions and requirements of the subject country. Generally speaking, therefore, the scope of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies will analyse trends and issues in the following resource areas: soil/agriculture; forestry; mineral resources/ mining; hydrology; marine and coastal eco-systems; protected areas and wildlife; urban environment, industrialisation, air and water pollution, sanitation and hazardous wastes. In examining the underlying causes for the mismanagement of natural resources, the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies will also analyse social and cultural factors, economic sectoral policies and practices and the legal, regulatory and institutional framework for environment and natural resource management in the country.

A central objective of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies is to integrate available information on the state of the environment and its relationship to indigenous people and provide a comprehensive presentation of trends in environmental quality and natural resource use. As such, it establishes a clear baseline for future planning and analysis which is especially important in countries where such information may either not exist or not be compiled in a comprehensive form.

A principal objective of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies is to install institutional mechanisms for gathering data, monitoring environmental trends and conducting analytical studies which can assist planners and policy makers. In each of the areas covered, the methodology should be designed to link the data gathered to the needs of policy planners and decision makers. Baseline data should be established and useful indicators defined which can be integrated into the development planning process. The best methods for establishing these linkages and indicators can be determined in the early stages of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies so that one result of the process will be an information management system for planning and monitoring the environment and natural resources.

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should examine the linkages between environmental quality, patterns of resource use and prevailing economic and fiscal policies. Existing price supports, subsidies, taxes, export incentives and other such policies may provide disincentives to the sustainable use of natural resources that can result in environmental degradation. Using the methodologies of resource economics, these factors need to be identified and analysed so that development planners and government policy makers can remove or revise policy instruments which have a detrimental effect on the environment. At the same time, policies that may provide incentives to protect or enhance the environment can be introduced.

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies also should put greater emphasis on analysing institutional arrangements for environmental and natural resource planning and management at the national and local levels. Institutional bottlenecks to improved resource management are prevalent

throughout the world in both developed and developing countries. Lack of institutional co-ordination, overlapping and contradictory functions, insufficiently trained staff, limited budgets, and poor policy support can all render an environmental policy ineffective. The practices of private institutions may also have an adverse effect on resource management. The Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should examine these institutional arrangements in order to define new practices, structures, or training programmes which will ensure the establishment of a permanent environmental planning and management capacity tied directly to the country's economic planning and management institutions.

Publication, dissemination and review

A fundamental goal of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies is to generate a consensus around their policy and programme recommendations and to raise public awareness of the importance of environmental and natural resource factors for sustainable development. Efforts to achieve these aims should be made throughout the process, and particular attention should be paid to defining explicit consensus-building and public-awareness strategies for the period following the publication of the results.

Strategies for publication, dissemination and review could include well-targeted widespread distribution of reports, including popular versions of technical documents, newspaper and television coverage, conferences, workshops and local village meetings. Training programmes based on the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies are also a useful means to deepen awareness of the issues among policy makers, planners and local people. All these activities could be scheduled over an extended period in order to keep the issues under public discussion.

An obvious but often neglected corollary to these stipulations is that full and adequate funding for these activities needs to be an integral part of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies project from the outset. Without being able to publish enough reports and cover the costs of distribution as well as of formal review and debate, the process of consensus-building and public education is unlikely to succeed. Popular versions and other forms of presentation should be promoted so that dissemination among indigenous people is ensured.

Follow-up

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies will generate a range of recommendations concerning policy reform, institutional restructuring, training and education, research and monitoring. The strategies for implementing such recommendations will require long-term commitments from the host government as well as commitments of funds and technical assistance from donor organisations.

Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies should generate agreement upon a deliberate strategy for follow-up from donors and the host government. A series of host-government/donor round tables, with NGO participation as appropriate, should be held to design such a strategy and to determine the appropriate levels of support to be provided by the participating parties.

There are two types of follow-up that host governments and donors will be called upon to support. The first is the array of specific policy reforms and/or project proposals that emerge from the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies. The second is the best use of the institutions and trained professionals who developed the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies to ensure a continuing process of data gathering, monitoring and policy analysis. The environmental planning process must be dynamic rather than static using new data and scientific information as it becomes available. Local knowledge and perspectives, including those of women, should be properly reflected in the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies. The presence of a permanent environmental research and analysis capability within the government ultimately can have a significant influence on improving environment and natural resource policy and management.

Following the completion of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies, donors and host governments involved should evaluate the process and its achievements after an appropriate period of time has elapsed. Aside from the lessons learnt from the process itself, such an evaluation could contribute to adjustments to improve initiatives launched as a result of the Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies.

Time and costs

The time and costs involved in conducting Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies vary widely from case to case. These factors will be affected, among other things, by differences in scope, availability of data and degree of participant co-operation. Although it is difficult, therefore, to generalise, some rough indications can be given here.

Past experience suggests that Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies take approximately two years to develop. This estimate, based on US AID's experience with "Phase II" Profiles, assumes appropriate governmental co-operation and the availability of sufficient data to complete the study.

Determining the costs of Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies is difficult. While past experience suggests a range from roughly US\$ 200 000 to US \$300 000, such figures do not include in-kind services, seconded staff and other factors. For example, costs in Latin America may be lower than in Africa because many Latin American countries have a well-developed local NGO network and local consultants. Cost estimates must take into account these factors, as well as the cost of publication, dissemination and follow-up. To the extent that Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies become an integral part of analysis, planning and project design as well as on-going monitoring, the additional costs can be reduced over time.