



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
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**Cover Note for the UNCEEA Working Group on Implementation and Statistical Capacity
Building (Area D)**

Draft paper prepared by KNBS, ESCAP/SIAP, and UNSD

(for discussion)

UNCEEA WORKING GROUP ON IMPLEMENTATION AND STATISTICAL CAPACITY BUILDING (AREA D)

The regular work programme of Area D focuses on the coordination of implementation initiatives and statistical capacity building activities for the SEEA in countries, as well as the administration of the Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics. This cover note is structured into three sections. Section 1 summarizes the achievements of Area D since the last Committee meeting; section 2 lays out the work programme of Area D for 2023-2024 and section 3 contains the items for decision by the Committee.

1. Achievements of Area D in 2022-23

The UNCEEA at its meeting in June 2022 agreed to the following work programme for Area D: coordination of capacity building and implementation activities, updating the implementation guide, and conducting an abbreviated Global Assessment in 2022. Christine Magu of the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and Sokol Vako of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific / Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP/SIAP) continued to serve as co-chairs of Area D.

Area D members, consisting of members from UN regional commissions and international agencies providing technical assistance on the SEEA implementation, met regularly on a quarterly basis (25 August 2022, 17 November 2022, 23 February 2023, and 18 May 2023). At each meeting members discussed progress in the three components of the work programme. Members also shared updates on their activities related to capacity building and implementation of the SEEA, ensuring improved coordination of SEEA related activities at the regional and global level. Members are also regularly updating a shared excel sheet with their regional capacity building priorities and requests. The 2022 abbreviated Global Assessment was successfully completed in early 2023 and a background paper was submitted to the UNSC. The reports from the 2022 assessment as well as prior assessments can be found on the SEEA website.¹

Over the past 12 months, Area D undertook a review and update of the SEEA Implementation Guide, which was initially developed in 2014 with a primary focus on the implementation of SEEA CF.² Since 2014, several new developments have taken place, most notably the adoption of SEEA EA and the advancement in the use of global data and earth observation in support of the SEEA compilation. Members of Area D and UNSD drafted the guide. The draft was circulated to Areas B1 and B2 for review and the presented version of the guide has incorporated comments received from member of those areas.

¹ See <https://seea.un.org/content/global-assessment-environmental-economic-accounting>.

² See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings/ninth_meeting/UNCEEA-9-6d.pdf.

The updated implementation guide entitled *“Towards the Institutionalization of the SEEA: An Implementation Guide”*³ is fully available online in a more user friendly and interactive format. It contains five core sections: Strategic planning; Building mechanisms for implementation; Compiling the accounts; Disseminating the accounts; and Institutionalizing the SEEA. Each section outlines the main aspects related to the implementation of both SEEA CF and SEEA EA and includes at least one country example to illustrate the particular aspect of the SEEA implementation.

The new online format of the Implementation Guide is relatively short so as to provide a general guidance on how to start the implementation of the SEEA but provide links to other documents for those interested in additional information. It is intended to be a ‘live document’ that can be updated and improved based on feedback received from countries and partners.

2. Proposed work programme for 2023-24

Area 1: Coordination of capacity building and implementation activities

The primary purpose of Area D is to coordinate capacity development and implementation activities at the global and regional levels, as well as ensure lessons learned from these activities are shared widely. In order to realize this priority, Area D members have been meeting regularly and updating each other on capacity development projects, requests from countries, and share experiences in their projects.

Members acknowledged that the flow of information on the capacity building and implementation activities is crucial for successful coordination at both regional and global levels. They welcomed the increased interest from a wide number of partners, including from regional and international organizations, as well as a variety of NGOs and other players, working in the field of the SEEA implementation. Area D will continue to hold regular meetings in 2023-24 to ensure coordination of capacity building and implementation activities at the regional and global levels. Given the increased number of regional and global organizations undertaking SEEA implementation activities, especially in the compilation of ecosystem accounts, the co-chairs in consultation with UNSD will invite representative of organizations such as UNEP, UNDP or IUCN to participate in some of the regular meetings of Area D to brief Area D on their SEEA related activities.

Area 2: Revitalize the SEEA Focal Point network

Based on the concept note, the SEEA focal points are responsible to serve as the first point of contact on all matters related to the SEEA, including the updates on compilation programme, responding to the global assessment, data validation, coordination of SEEA work, etc. The SEEA focal point network was established in 2020, by requesting nominations from all UN Members States. UNSD received approximately 192 nominations from 123 countries.

³ Available at <https://seea.un.org/content/towards-institutionalization-seea-implementation-guide>.

The network has served well as a point of contact for all SEEA related matters; however, it has not constituted itself as a group of technical experts on the SEEA. The aim under this priority would be to review the terms of reference for the focal points, review and update the current membership of the group, clearly communicate what are the expectations from the network and, if possible, energize the group to become more active. Updating the list of members in the network will also be important for the Global Assessment under priority 3 below.

Area 3: Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics

As agreed by the Committee during its sixteenth meeting, in 2021, the Global Assessment is carried out every year as either a benchmark assessment or an abbreviated assessment. Benchmark assessments collect detailed information from countries on the status of SEEA implementation and are conducted every three years. The abbreviated Global Assessment is conducted in between benchmark years and is a shorter version of the benchmark assessment. The abbreviated Global Assessment was conducted in 2021 and 2022, mainly for the purpose of monitoring needs for the two Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators focusing on the SEEA (12.b.1 and 15.9.1).⁴ The results of the previous Global Assessments are available on the SEEA website.⁵

In 2023, a full (benchmark) Global Assessment will be carried out. In the benchmark Global Assessment questionnaire, countries can indicate their compilation of CF and EA accounts in detail, along with questions on institutional arrangements, technical assistance, plans, and use of the accounts. As such, the benchmark Global Assessment provides a comprehensive picture of the SEEA implementation around the world. A few changes to the questionnaire are proposed, mostly to accommodate the adoption of the SEEA EA since the last benchmark Global Assessment in 2020.

The 2023 Global Assessment will be administered to all UN Member States in September 2023. Responses will be validated and analysed by UNSD and a background report prepared for the UN Statistical Commission's session in March 2024. Area D members will assist the Global Assessment with (1) reviewing the questionnaire (end of August 2023); (2) following-up with countries in their regions (beginning of October 2023); and (3) reviewing the final report for the Statistical Commission (in January 2024).

The results of the Global Assessment have been widely used and cited by different organizations and the press in the past years. To increase the communication and outreach of the Global Assessment, Area D will explore possibilities for the dissemination of results though, for example, webinars, communication products, etc.

⁴ These two indicators measure the implementation of tools to monitor sustainable tourism and the mainstreaming of biodiversity values into policy and accounts, respectively.

⁵ See <https://seea.un.org/content/global-assessment-environmental-economic-accounting>.

3. Questions to the Committee

The Committee is requested to provide its views on:

- 1) Endorsement of the new implementation guide “Towards the Institutionalization of the SEEA: Implementation Guide” (<https://seea.un.org/content/towards-institutionalization-seea-implementation-guide>)
- 2) Priorities for the workplan of Area D as outlined above: (1) Coordination of capacity building and implementation activities; (2) Revitalize the SEEA Focal Point network; and (3) Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics.
- 3) What are the capacity building and implementation areas of particular interest for countries that Area D should focus on?
- 4) Possible avenues for communication and dissemination of the results of the Global Assessment.