



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

ESA/STAT/AC.301
UNCEEA/11/4b

**Eleventh Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on
Environmental-Economic Accounting
New York, 22-24 June 2016**

Cover Note for Session 4.b –

Capacity building for the SEEA: Training and capacity building

Session Organizer: Indonesia

(for discussion)

COVER NOTE: TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Background

The United Nations Statistical Commission has recognized the need for training and capacity building in support of the implementation of the SEEA on a regular basis, starting with the adoption of the SEEA Central Framework as an international statistical standard in 2012. At its most recent meeting the Commission “[u]rged the Committee of Experts to scale up its implementation activities based on an updated implementation strategy, including developing in-depth courses on SEEA modules at the global, regional and national levels, finalizing core accounts and associated technical notes on selected SEEA modules and advancing the research agenda of the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting”.¹

Furthermore, countries and international organizations have not only explicitly mentioned the need for training and capacity building in the formal proceedings of the UNSC but also through numerous requests to UNSD and other international agencies. Whether in the context of supporting sustainable development or the need to better inform evidence based policies, countries have recognized the SEEA approach as a useful tool in organizing their statistics to bring about consistency and coherence to environmental-economic information. As countries embark on programmes of work on implementing the SEEA, one of the main constraints is the lack of technical capacity. As it stands, demand for training as well as in-country assistance is high but not enough financial and human resources have been mobilized to meet the needs of countries.

Current activities

In order to meet the ever increasing demand, a number of common tools have been developed including training materials, technical notes and compilation guidelines.

As part of SEEA training, the Statistics Division, in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has developed a programme for the training of trainers for the worldwide SEEA implementation. The main aims of the programme are twofold. First, it aims to increase the pool of SEEA experts who are in a better position to implement the accounts and train others, with particular emphasis on raising capacity in developing countries. Second, it aims to provide a standardized set of training materials that can be used by all those delivering training on the SEEA in order to ensure a consistent quality and messaging. The training is based on a blended learning format and is comprised of three phases: a mandatory online training, an in-person seminar, and a follow-up phase where participants are tasked with organizing a national seminar in their countries with the main stakeholders to present the SEEA and initiate discussions on a programme of work.

Given the success of this initial SEEA course, UNSD plans to expand the number of courses being offered. Taking into account the demand from countries, there are plans to develop in depth courses for energy, water and ecosystem accounting. The decision to prioritize water and energy accounts stemmed from the fact that these accounts were identified as priorities in the Global Assessment on the SEEA completed in

¹ See Economic and Social Council, Official Records 2016, Supplement No. 4, Statistical Commission, Report of the forty-seventh session.

2014. The training courses will build on existing materials, including the SEEA Water, the International Recommendations for Water Statistics and the SEEA Energy. The ecosystem course will be fully consistent with the technical recommendations on ecosystem accounting which is currently being finalized. In addition to the above, to better sensitize the users of the accounts, in particular policy makers, a short introductory course on the SEEA is planned for this particular audience. One of the aims of this particular course is to generate examples of use of the accounts in policy making in due course. Additional courses will also be developed on the basis of country needs. Furthermore, it is expected that once technical notes are finalized they will serve as useful tools for countries to initiate discussion on the implementation of modules that a prioritized in a country given policy demands.

The development of future courses, as it was the case for the other courses, will be done under the guidance of SEEA CF Technical Committee and in consultation with experts from national statistical offices and international organizations. Financial resources are the main impediment to the development of the courses.

Other work in the development of tools includes the drafting of various technical notes, compilation guidelines and the creation of a knowledge base. The technical notes aim to support the compilation of certain modules. Subject area specialists from national statistical offices and international organizations have contributed their technical expertise in the drafting of the notes. Compilation guidelines for water have also been drafted. Last but not least, some initial work has been completed on developing a knowledge base on the SEEA.

Way forward

In order to meet the ever-increasing demand for capacity building there a number of issues that need to be considered including: type of trainings; harmonisation/dissemination of common tools including training materials, manuals, implementation guides, technical notes, national plan templates, communication tools, assessment tools and others; coordination; and, resources. The development of a well-resourced and coordinated capacity building programme on the SEEA will require the active involvement of experts at national and international organizations working under the auspices of the UNCEEA.

The current approach to training has been to have general courses on the SEEA Central Framework and the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting to develop basic capacity in countries. In a second stage course more in depth courses have been developed on particular modules of the SEEA (e.g. water, energy) which can also be linked with the relevant technical notes. This approach can be extended to have courses of different levels of difficulty that can be delivered in various formats (e.g. face to face, on-line). A particular example of this in depth courses, or tailor-made courses is to have countries preliminary determine their national plans, accounts to be prioritized, statistical infrastructures presence with which data for SEEA modules derived from and relevant capacity building to be needed.

Furthermore, currently training materials, implementation guides, national plan templates, communication tools and assessment tools are not harmonised and there is no central repository/knowledge base of the various materials used by countries and international organizations.

Relevant training materials, manuals and technical notes produced by a number of international and national organizations are also not part of central repository. Moving towards a one stop place/platform for tools in support of capacity building for the SEEA would allow for the more efficient development of the tools, minimizing duplication of effort and making it easier for those interested in learning more about SEEA to have access to such materials. The use of harmonised training materials would also make it easier to expand the pool of trainers. It is important to also note that there is a need to maintain and update the tools on a regular basis to ensure their relevance and timeliness in disseminating information.

As mentioned above, one of the tools being developed to aid in building capacity in countries, among other, are the technical notes for various modules. The technical notes are being developed to support the development of data based on the SEEA. They are not exhaustive and need to be complemented with more detailed compilation guidance. As countries start testing the notes, it is expected that there will be a need to maintain and update the notes to reflect the practical knowledge gained. In this regard a process needs to be in place to ensure that the current notes are maintained. Moreover, priorities need to be set for developing the additional notes to the ones that have already been developed (overarching note, water, energy, MFA, air emission, environmental protection expenditures, and EGSS).

The development of harmonised tools would require coordination among international organisations and countries as well as human and financial resources. One approach that would allow for improved coordination is to have a subgroup of the UNCEEA manage the development of a central repository/knowledge base to host and disseminate such materials; mobilize resources; and, work on communication issues. The SEEA CF Technical Committee could be responsible for leading the work on training materials and methodology.

The UNCEEA is invited to consider the following:

At the broader programmatic level:

1. How can a training and capacity building programme technical notes and training courses for the SEEA implementation be arranged by modules (water, energy, etc), by level (basic, intermediate, advanced, etc.), by format (face to face, distance learning), by qualification and certification
2. Does the presence of statistical infrastructures (data availability, national priority program) relates to capacity building module requirements?
3. Do we have an inventory of existing material and how can we make efficient use of existing training materials and transform them in e-learning courses? Do we need to harmonise/make this material consistent to develop internationally agreed model courses? What new training materials still need to be developed? Is there a need to develop a knowledge platform to host training materials?

Coordination of capacity building

4. How do we go about having a training of trainers programme in combination with the use of common e-learning courses?
5. How do we coordinate global and regional training activities in collaboration with regional training institutions?

6. Should we establish a group on training and capacity building to coordinate capacity building activities on the SEEA done by national and international organizations?

Training materials and resources

7. Is the UNCEEA satisfied with the technical notes developed so far? What notes should be a priority in the near term and who will be responsible for drafting and maintaining the technical notes?
8. Is the UNCEEA satisfied with the introductory courses on SEEA CF and SEEA EEA? What would be additional courses to be developed on a priority base?
9. How can we mobilize external funding support for the SEEA implementation?