

HYDROPOWER SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT FORUM

1-page summary sheet - August 2009

The Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum (the "Forum") aims to establish a broadly endorsed sustainability assessment tool to measure and guide performance in the hydropower sector.

The Forum's work centres on review and revision of the International Hydropower Association's (IHA) *Sustainability Assessment Protocol (2006)*. The *IHA Sustainability Assessment Protocol (2006)* was developed as a measuring tool to assess social, environmental and economic performance against criteria described in the *IHA Sustainability Guidelines (2004)*. The Forum is determining the relevant issues to be included in the revised assessment protocol, and the measurement approach for these issues. The work plan involves input from experts on key hydropower sustainability themes, on-ground assessments of schemes, workshop sessions focussed on the Protocol, input from key stakeholder reference groups, public consultation, and trialling of the Draft Protocol.

There are 14 Forum members, including representatives of developed and developing country governments, social and environmental NGOs, commercial and development banks, and the hydropower sector. The Forum was launched in March 2008 in Washington DC, with subsequent Forum meetings held in July 2008 (Santa Rosa, USA), September 2008 (Zambia), October 2008 (China), December 2008 (Brazil), March 2009 (Turkey) and June 2009 (Iceland). The Forum is scheduled to meet two more times in early 2010. A following work phase is envisaged, which would focus on potential Protocol applications and pathways forward. The Forum seeks at all times to operate with transparency, goodwill and by consensus.

Following the Forum launch, the Forum completed a phase of foundation work in Meetings 2-5, aimed at better understanding of the existing (2006) Protocol and key issues (including economics and finance, technical considerations, transparency, governance, anti-corruption, environmental flows, strategic assessments, transboundary issues, resettlement, benefit sharing), and involving expert presentations and project assessments. Proposals concerning revised Protocol structure and content were presented to stakeholders as a Draft Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol Key Components Document in January 2009, and were subject to a first round of public consultation in January and February 2009. The outcomes of this Phase 1 Consultation were considered in Forum Meetings 6 and 7, and have been incorporated into the Draft Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol made publicly available in August 2009 (the "Draft Protocol").

The Draft Protocol is a set of four documents, each a stand-alone assessment tool addressing a different stage of the project life cycle as follows:

SECTION I - STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT
Assesses the strategic basis for a hydropower project. This section of the Protocol can be used prior to and to inform the decision that there is a strategic basis to move forward with project preparation.
SECTION II - PROJECT PREPARATION
Assesses the preparation stage of a hydropower project during which investigations, planning and design are undertaken for all aspects of the project. This section of the Protocol can be used prior to and to inform the decision to move forward with project implementation.
SECTION III - PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
Assesses the implementation stage of a hydropower project during which construction, resettlement and other management plans and commitments are implemented. This section of the Protocol can be used to inform the timing and conditions of project commissioning.
SECTION IV - PROJECT OPERATION
Assesses the operation of a hydropower facility. This section of the Protocol can be used to inform the view that the facility is operating on a sustainable basis with active measures in place towards continuous improvement.

The Draft Protocol reflects the sustainability issues which have been identified and discussed by the Forum, representing a diversity of sectoral views, and are presented in a structured manner intended to suit a sustainability assessment process. It is recognised that the consultation and trialling may lead to revision before a final document is prepared, with a focus on it being a succinct, practical tool for the assessment of sustainability in a hydropower context. The Forum seeks views and input which will assist its forward process.

During September, October and November 2009, the Draft Protocol is subject to a period of trialling and public consultation. Trialling assesses a range of considerations including scope, comprehensiveness, ease of use, effectiveness, applicability to a range of scale and regions, adequacy of implementation guidance, and methods for presentation of results. A set of consultation questions about the Draft Protocol have been prepared, and interested stakeholders are strongly encouraged to fill in an on-line questionnaire.

Information on trialling, consultation, and access to the on-line questionnaire are all available at www.hydropower.org/sustainable_hydropower/hsaf.html.