

Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum

Call for Expressions of Interest for Projects to be Involved in Trialling of the Draft Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol

1. Background - The Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum

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

There are 14 Forum members, including representatives of developed and developing countries involved in hydropower as well as from the NGO, finance and industry sectors.

The Forum's work centres around the International Hydropower Association's (IHA) Sustainability Guidelines and Assessment Protocol. 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 recommending the relevant issues to be included in the assessment protocol and the measurement approach for each of 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, and input from key stakeholder reference groups. See www.hydropower.org/sustainable_hydropower/hsaf.html for more information.

Following release of the Draft Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol (the "Draft Protocol") planned for July 2009, the HSAF intends to engage in a trialling program to systematically test the draft Protocol during August, September and October 2009. This would be alongside a period of public consultation.

The Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol contains four sections, each of which is a stand-alone assessment tool, and so projects to trial the Draft Protocol are sought at any one of these project life cycle stages. These sections are:

- I. Strategic Assessments (prior to the decision to commence project preparation)
- II. Project Preparation (prior to the decision to award construction contracts)
- III. Project Implementation (prior to project commissioning)
- IV. Project Operation

2. Objectives of the Trialling Program

The primary objective is to validate the Forum's work so far by providing feedback on how well the Draft Protocol is measuring sustainability, and to inform the final revision.

Trials need to assess, and provide recommendations for improvement, on -

- **Objectivity and replicability.** To understand how robust the Protocol is in terms of field testers arriving at consistent and unbiased results.
- **Understandability.** To identify parts of the proposed Protocol that field testers find hard to understand.
- **Scope and comprehensiveness.** To identify issues that field testers encounter but that are not covered in the draft Protocol, or that are duplicated unnecessarily.
- **Ease of use.** To assess the burden of applying the draft Protocol: for instance, whether information required to apply it is not available or available only with undue cost or effort.
- **Impact and effectiveness.** To assess to what extent field testers find application of the Protocol a useful exercise in terms of identifying weaknesses/opportunities, encouraging dialogue, and encouraging improvement of performance.

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- **Applicability to a range of scale and regions.** To identify any special problems in applying the draft Protocol that arise for field testers in relation to project scale, region, developed versus developing economy, type of project, etc. Also to find out how the field testers make their scoping decisions.
- **Adequacy of implementation guidance.** To identify where additional implementation guidance would be helpful to the field testers. Where choices and alternative assessment methods are allowed in the Protocol, identify any circumstances in which field testers chose to use them, and why.

3. Benefits of Project Participation in the Trialling

- Comprehensive snapshot for the project developer / owner / operator of project strengths, weaknesses and opportunities from a sustainability perspective.
- Possibly support to the project developer / owner / operator for communication and discussion about the project with other stakeholders.
- First hand knowledge of and ability to advise on the practicability of the emerging assessment tool for the benefit of the hydropower sector as a whole.

4. Selection of Trial Projects

The following criteria will be utilised as a basis for selection of projects for trials of the Draft Protocol:

- **Diversity.** The project would clearly contribute to the overall diversity in the set of Protocol trials. Diversity is with respect to geographic area (by continents and by level of development), type of project (run of river/storage, single/multipurpose, small/large, private/public sector), and stage in the project cycle (selection, preparation, implementation, operation).
- **Representativeness.** The set of projects on which the draft protocol is trialled should not be considered too unrepresentative of types of projects one might typically encounter.
- **Project owner support.** The project owner exhibits a high degree of support for the trial. This would be reflected in the willingness of project owners to host the trials, provide access to information, and disclose trial results. Ideally the owners would already understand the HSAF process.
- **Government agency engagement.** The relevant government agencies to be involved in the trial are engaged and willing to actively participate in the trial.
- **Assessment team.** Availability of interested and experienced partners for multi-stakeholder trial teams, ease of formation of these teams, and clear commitments to be involved from the relevant parties.
- **Logistics.** Relatively low logistical barriers, for example with respect to time and language issues involved in travelling to project sites and interviewing relevant stakeholders.
- **Cost.** Relatively low cost requirements. In most cases this will reflect the ability and willingness of project owners and stakeholders to cover major part of trial costs; remoteness and language will also be influences.

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- **Insight.** The degree of insight likely to be gained from the trial. This may be because there are issues of particular note in relation to the project and it could be demonstrated that the adequacy of the Protocol in addressing these issues has been well-scrutinised. Repeat trials at projects that have previously had Protocol assessments could be considered as a criterion in favour of project selection, as there is the ability then to compare the draft protocol with the version used for the previous assessment; as well, the requirements for organisation could be considerably lessened if the project owner has done it before.
- **Target region.** The trial set is weighted towards including regions where hydropower growth is occurring at a rapid rate, or in which there are recognised concerns about hydropower sustainability. Target regions could include China, India, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America.
- **Political environment.** If a project is presently embroiled in controversy and/or is the subject of highly polarised views, the implications of conducting a Draft Protocol assessment would need to be well understood.

5. A Preview of a Project Trial

4.1 Participants in the Trial

Trial teams undertaking the assessment should consist of about 3 people, including of necessity at least one Forum member / alternate, with other members potentially including:

- an individual with sustainability assessment / auditing experience
- external stakeholders such as NGOs, civil society, government (determined in consultation with the project developer / owner / operator acting as the host company).

The trial host would have a lead company representative available to the trial team at all times so that he/she is aware of the information gaps and needs of the trial team and how best to address them. The trial host should also make an interpreter available to the trial team.

In the trial, interviewees will vary with aspect, and would be company representatives, government representatives, community representatives and experts with particular knowledge about the aspect under focus.

4.2 Trial Schedule

For the trial itself, a typical itinerary is as follows:

- **First Day** - Initial meeting, presentations by trial team, project owners and others (such as government agencies), and a tour of the project (including downstream impacted areas and resettlement areas) as far as practicable given travel times, practical logistics and the key areas of focus.
- **Intermediate Days** - Interviews on technical, economic, social and environmental aspects. Number of days may be 1, 2 or 3 depending on size and complexity of the project, and also travel times.
- **Final Day** - Close out meeting involving presentation on key assessment findings and agreement on main outcomes.

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Because the trialling of the Draft Protocol is happening in parallel with the Forum's second public phase of consultation, the Forum will be interested to discuss with project developers / owners / operators the potential to schedule consultation on the Forum and the Draft Protocol with regional stakeholders before and/or after the project trial.

4.3 Preparation and Support Requested of the Host Company

The following preparation and support activities would be requested of the developer / owner / operator acting as the host company to the trial team:

Prior to the arrival of the trial team:

- provision of a lead company representative to be the main point for coordination in arranging the trial;
- provision of advance information on the project for pre-reading by the trial team;
- identification of internal staff or external individuals who can provide information to support assessments on particular aspects, and prior briefing of those individuals;
- review of the Draft Protocol by all participants;
- identification of objective evidence that can be brought to the interviews to support ratings for each aspect;
- preparation of an agenda and interview schedule for the visit;
- preparation of project overview presentation and site visit;
- assistance with organising consultation with regional stakeholders; and
- international airfares (as applicable) for the assessors.

During the trial:

- availability of the lead company representative at all times;
- provision of an interpreter;
- relevant staff attending meetings and interviews;
- provision of site tour;
- provision of relevant documentation for viewing;
- provision of room where initial and close out meetings can be held and interviews conducted, and documentation viewed;
- support for consultation with regional stakeholders; and
- provision of local transport, accommodation and meals during the trial, as appropriate.

4.4 Trial Reports

Trial reports will follow a standard format, still to be developed. This is likely to have the following components:

- Introduction to the project and the company.
- Introduction on the purpose of the trial, trial participants (trial team plus those interviewed), and trial program.
- Aspect-by-aspect summary of who was interviewed; what evidence was brought forward; and views of the trial team on how the protocol addresses that aspect (strengths, weaknesses, suggested improvements). If of interest to the host company, the report could also provide proposed score and reasons for the score given.

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- An overall summary table giving aspect-by-aspect feedback on the Draft Protocol content (and on project performance if desired by the host company).
- Any other observations arising from the assessment.

Trial reports will be focussed on adequacy of the Draft Protocol and not on project details except where they help to understand the points made in the report.

All trial participants will need to understand the necessity for a high degree of transparency. The assessment report with the aspect-by-aspect evaluation of the Draft Protocol content would be a public report; if scoring were provided to the host company, it would be at their discretion whether this was to be made public. All trial team members and a nominated representative of the host company would need to sign the assessment report for it to be considered final.

The trial team will review all evidence brought before it, and report on this evidence, but whether the evidence itself is made public is at the discretion of the host company. The trial team members can sign a confidentiality agreement if desired by the host company. Where information needs to be withheld from the trial team due to commercial or regulatory sensitivity, this would be flagged beforehand and agreed.

6. How to Express Interest

If you are interested in nominating a hydropower project as a candidate for trialling of the Draft Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol, during the period August-October 2009, please email the Sustainability Forum Coordinator, Dr. Helen Locher, at hl@hydropower.org ideally by 15th June 2009, but no later than 15th July 2009

Please provide some information on the nominated project in relation to each of the selection criteria listed in Section 3 of this paper, to assist the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum in making decisions about the trialling set. There is also the potential for a developer / owner / operator to do a self-assessment and provide the results evaluating the utility of the Draft Protocol utilising a standard reporting format, so please indicate if this is of interest.