

Purpose of this Manual

This manual is intended to be used by government officials, decision makers and professionals involved in the formulation of policies, plans and programs (PPPs) which might have significant environmental implications.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a “proactive instrument for integrating environmental considerations into spatial and sectoral policies/plans/programmes (PPP) formation for suitable development.” (IAIA, 2002). As there is a wide variety of PPPs being considered under different circumstances, SEA needs to be both systematic and flexible, providing the best available environmental information and advice to decision makers to improve the environmental performance of their proposed PPPs.

This manual aims to be as practical as possible, attempting to provide a systematic, and user-friendly guidance on SEA process. Throughout the manual, examples from more than 15-year experience in implementing SEA in Hong Kong are cited to demonstrate how SEA, if properly applied during the formulation of PPPs, can contribute to more environmentally sustainable outcomes and prevention of major environmental problems.

The examples also demonstrate that SEA techniques and principles set out in this manual are practical and effective. SEA is not just an academic exercise but has been put into practice in Hong Kong and worldwide, achieving remarkable environmental outcomes. The examples accompanying the text illustrate the difficulties and challenges facing SEA and demonstrate how major issues can be resolved.