



BMT Asia Pacific Limited

**Review of the World's Latest Practices
on Environmental Evaluation of Trade
and Economic Policies and Actions &
Formulation of a Reference Document
for HK on Strategic Environmental
Assessment Review of Such Policies
and Actions (Tender Ref. SA 06-003)**

Reference Document – Final Version

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Reference: R8335/03 Issue #05

Date: 9 January 2007

Filename: J:\8335 - SEA Review for Trade and Economic\Task 3\Reference document_05.doc



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1 Introduction

A Reference Document on the environmental review of trade and economic policies, agreement and actions (trade policy / action) for Hong Kong has been prepared to provide a precise, clear and practical guidance, including illustrations (e.g. flowchart), for users and readers, which consist of:

- Officers of the HKSAR Government;
- Multi-stakeholders engaged in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedure; and
- Interested parties in the society (including the general public).

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of conducting an environmental review of trade and economic policies and actions are:

- To measure the environmental impacts potentially arising from trade and economic policies and actions;
- To provide information and recommendations to policy-makers on integrating environmental considerations into the development of policies and/or actions; and
- To allow public access to the information on potential impacts arising from the policy and/or actions and how these impacts are being addressed.

1.2 Background

The coexistence between trade and environment is a crucial issue to be tackled with the rising demand for sustainable development, which requires a consideration of environmental, economic and social impacts on any planning and / or actions. In the past decade, SEA has become a strategic tool used by many countries to identify and control potential environmental impacts and is carried out at various government levels on policies, plans and programmes. However, SEA practices in trade-related policies have not been widely adopted until the past five years.

The approach and methodology of environmental reviews on policies and projects are established in many countries, and some of these reviews are set out at



procedural levels. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the development and incorporation of more strategic and holistic assessment methodologies, which further extends the assessment to incorporate environmental protection, economic development and social equity during policy-making processes. Given that more free trade negotiations have happened between developed and developing countries since late 1990s, there is an increasing need to direct the application of a specified SEA approach for trade-related policies and their effectiveness and feasibility.

Generally speaking, there is no single, extensive approach to the SEA for trade-related policies and actions. In many circumstances, the SEA is carried out on a case-by-case basis. In Hong Kong, a detailed SEA process is usually required for large-scale development plans and programmes, and a sustainability assessment required for all major policies, plans and strategies. This reference document, is developed in accordance with the general SEA approach adopted by the HKSAR Government (see Appendix A), and provides a general reference for the reader to understand the basics behind the general SEA process for trade policy / action and the integration of the assessment with the aim of achieving sustainable development.

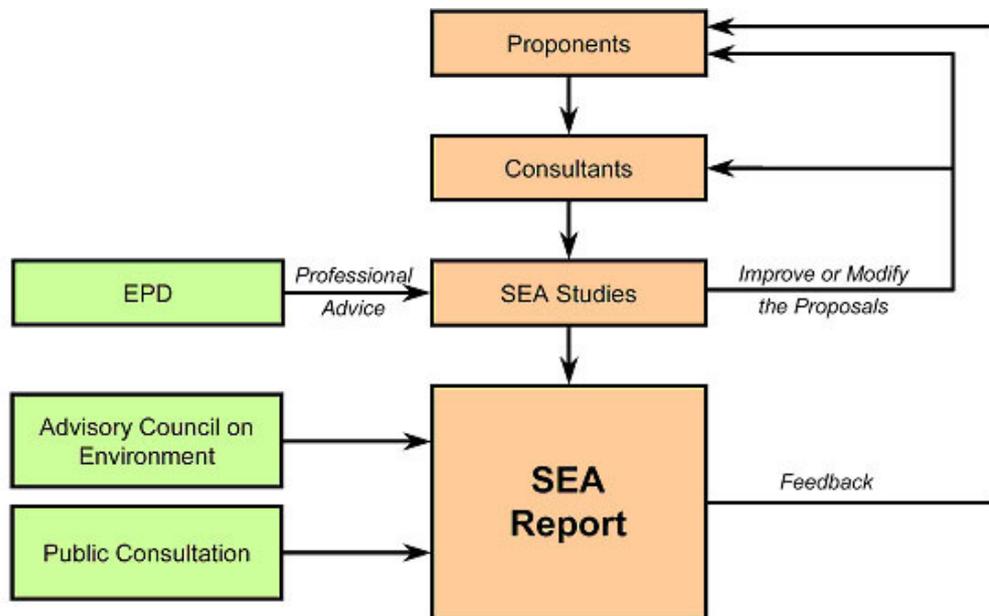
2 Preparation for the SEA

The generic process for conducting the SEA and the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders throughout the process are discussed in this section. The timing for carrying out the SEA and the involvement of various stakeholders are the two key factors to be considered prior to the commencement of a SEA. These two critical factors are detailed in this section.

2.1 Generic SEA Process

Environmental review of trade policy / action in Hong Kong is a type of SEA process and follows the generic process of undertaking a SEA study is provided as the following:

Figure 2.1. Generic SEA Process in Hong Kong



Source: Hong Kong Strategic Environmental Assessment Manual

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of each party refer to the generic SEA process with the summary table shown below:

Table 2.1. Roles and responsibilities under SEA Process in Hong Kong

Phase of SEA	Proponent	Decision Maker or Environmental Authority	Other Stakeholders (if applicable)
Alternative and Screening/Scoping Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs of policies/plans Alternatives Initial budget / programme Baseline study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design SEA process Initial screening and scoping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative ideas Possible key issues
Initial Assessment Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline study (continue) Framing options Identify key issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate yardsticks Initiate a review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early feedback on options and key issues Start dialogues
Final Assessment Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed assessment & interactions Selection of preferred PPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct detailed reviews Decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed feedback Follow-up

2.3 Timing of the Assessment

The timing of a SEA is a critical factor within the planning cycle, which determines the possible results and benefits of the SEA for decision makers and negotiators. There are two main approaches to timing an assessment – the *ex-post* (the assessment undertaken after policy reform) and the *ex-ante* (undertaken before the policy reform).

In line with the SEA approach commonly adopted in Hong Kong circumstances for other plans and programmes, preference is given to *ex-ante* assessment approval since it can provide policy makers with forward-looking information, allowing them to design a rational and an integrated set of policies. Such assessments can help to develop approaches that:

- Contribute to the policy process by identifying sustainability issues associated with a particular trade policy / action;
- Identify different issues that reflect the political and economic interests of various stakeholders;
- Assist the country or region to identify policy priorities and put forward an integrated negotiating position;
- Guide the scope of policy change to ensure that effective national environmental policies exist in vulnerable sectors;



- Assist countries in designing trade policy / action in a coordinated way that reflects the interdependence of economic, environmental and social goals; and
- Assist in building consensus within government and among a range of stakeholders.

Ex-ante approaches are more widely adopted (than *ex-post* approaches) as the identification of environmental impacts early on allows policy makers to respond more effectively to new challenges and to proactively develop more integrated policies.

2.4 Information, Participation and Consultation

Another key element for carrying out a legitimate and credible integrated assessment is the acquisition and communication of accurate, relevant and timely information to various stakeholders, including the public. Interactions with stakeholders are in correspondence to the spirit of free press and freedom of information enshrined in Hong Kong's Basic Law. Policy proponents are recommended to initiate communication dialogues with their stakeholders at different stages of the policy development. Key stakeholders in the process of SEA may include all or some of the following:

- Local and/or federal governments;
- Non-government organizations (NGOs);
- Trade negotiators;
- Policy makers'
- Private sector representatives;
- Industry groups;
- Trade unions;
- Industry or sector workers;
- The general public; and
- Other minority groups.



Where trade policy / action has potential cross-border or global sustainability impacts, government is recommended to consult with other countries during the review process.

To ensure an open and transparent assessment, all concerned parties and interested individuals that have concerns on economic, environmental and social issues related to the trade policy / action should be able to access adequate related information. In this regard, it is recommended that documentation related to the trade policy / action is made available to stakeholders as much as possible at an early stage in the consultation process.

This is a type of SEA process specified for trade policy / action and therefore the generic SEA process adopted by the HKSAR government is referred and the following sections provide step by step approach for carrying out the proposed SEA for trade policy / action. Cross references with the Generic SEA process are made at each steps of the proposed Trade SEA process. The outline of the specified process for trade policy / action is shown in Appendix B.



3 Preliminary Assessment

As the new or amended trade policy / action process is initiated, its associated environmental, economic and social effects need to be identified, analyzed, and mitigated as far as possible before the finalisation of the new policy / action. Moreover, early interaction with various stakeholders is a critical element for a successful assessment and therefore, the identification of stakeholders should be initiated at this stage.

3.1 Screening

(i.e. Generic Step of SEA Process – Initial Screening or Scoping)

Similar to the “Screening” step of the Generic SEA process, the purpose of a screening process is to determine whether the environmental reviews should be made for individual trade policy / action since they are likely to have significant environmental impacts inside or outside Hong Kong. The basic principles of the screening analysis are:

- Existing environmental, social and economic stresses;
- Likelihood of significant environmental, social and economic impacts resulting from the stipulation of the trade policy / action;
- Likelihood of having cumulative effects from these impacts; and
- Sufficiency to implement proper preventive/mitigated measures through the current regulatory framework.



To help policy proponents conducting the screening analysis, a sample set of preliminary criteria is provided in the Screening Checklist as in Appendix C for selecting the trade policies and actions to be reviewed. This Screening Checklist is specified for examining a trade policy / action, whereas the screening checklist in the Generic SEA Process is designed for a broader remit in terms of policy, plan and programme. The screening results should provide the necessary information to decide the level of assessments and types of methodologies; consideration of issues such as funding issues and time allowed for the assessment should also be evaluated. The breadth and depth of the assessment should be corresponding with the level of trade reforms to be made and should at least help to confirm the environmental acceptability and preference of options considered.

3.2 Scoping

Scoping is an exercise using qualitative methods to define the boundary and complexity of an environmental review on trade policy / action. Based on the available data and information, significant environmental, economic, and social issues, whether they are beneficial or harmful, direct or indirect, will be identified and prioritised for the Detailed Assessment. Compared to the Preliminary Assessment, the Detailed Assessment is a more comprehensive, and predominantly quantitative, impact analysis. Similar to the Generic SEA process, the outcome of the scoping exercise is a study brief which defines the major sustainability issues to be studied in the Detailed Assessment.

Scoping can be involved with a simplified causal chain analysis (CCA) which assists in identifying the potentially important sections of each causal chain which link, in sequence, each trade measure to its eventual, significant impacts. Inputs from economic and environmental experts may be required to identify areas of environmental interests and potential concern that might arise from the trade policy / action.

The fundamental steps for the scoping exercise are:

1. Identification of economic effects of the proposed trade policy / action;
2. Identification of the changes in production system based on the identified economic effects;
3. Identification of potential environmental and social impacts induced from the changes in production system; and
4. Prioritisation of these potential environmental and social impacts.



To help policy proponents to identify relevant environmental issues to be studied through this scoping exercise, EPD would work closely with proponents to prepare a study brief for each environmental assessment.

3.2.1 Methodology of Qualitative Assessment

An environmental assessment methodology is one of the commonly used qualitative assessment approaches for the impacts of trade on the environment and development. Five main categories of environmental and sustainable development impacts from trade policy / action can be identified and incorporated throughout the assessment, and these are the following:

- **Product effects** – impacts related to the flow of products / services between countries;
- **Technology effects** – effects related to the changes in the flow of technologies;
- **Scale effects** – changes in the overall economic activity of a trade policy / action;
- **Structural effects** – impacts in the patterns of the economic activity of trade policy / action; and
- **Regulatory effects** – changes in the environmental regulations and standard.

3.2.2 Reporting Format

The principal findings of these scoping studies may be presented in scoping matrices (as in Table 3.1) which is the most popularly used format to visualise and report on the impacts that have been identified. The matrix format can help to identify what impacts may be related to the various trade related effects as shown in the first column.

Table 3.1 Sample Scoping Matrix for the Environmental, Health, and Social Impacts of Trade Policies and Actions

Trade-related Effects	Environmental / Health and Social Impacts			
	Impact of Pollution	Impact on Health & Safety	Impact on Resources	Impact on Society
Product effects				
Technology effects				



Scale effects

Structural effects

Regulatory effects

Source: United Nations Environment Programme – Reference Manual for the Integrated Assessment of Trade-Related Policies (<http://www.unep.ch/etb/publications/intAssessment/refmaniaFinal.pdf>)

The impacts can be symbolised by quantitative figures such as numbers of frequencies, or by qualitative figures, such as a 5 point scale from ++ (highly positive), + (positive), 0 (no influence), - (negative) and - - (highly negative). The results of this matrix will provide a clearer direction on selecting which issues (e.g. sectors, trade measure components) should be focused on for the Detailed Assessment. The matrix also provides a good way of selecting which issues should be focus on through quantitative assessment, particularly given financial and time constraints.

4 Detailed Assessment

Detailed Assessment should be conducted based on the key issues from the preliminary assessment. The Detailed Assessment will examine and evaluate the prioritised environmental and sustainable development issues for each individual trade measure. With regards to the Generic Step of SEA process, this Detailed Assessment corresponds to the “Initial Assessment” and shares similar objectives. The objectives of the Detailed Assessment are:

- Analysing separate components of the trade measure and their cumulative impacts;
- Using detailed CCA to identify the main causal links between each trade measure, its main components and their eventual sustainability impacts;
- Fine tuning the indicators; and
- Coping with variations within country groupings by selecting contrasting countries (regions).

The Detailed Assessment generates qualitative and quantitative results which address the projected impacts of trade policy / action on the three pillars of sustainable development (i.e. economic, environmental and social aspects). These findings will be written into the Detailed Assessment Report.

4.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Assessment

4.1.1 Determine Assessment Methodologies

Various types of assessment methodologies are available in conducting the SEA of trade policy / action. It is not unusual to adopt a combination of various methodologies depending on the nature and objectives of the trade policy / action and the types of effects. The general guidelines for choosing the assessment methodologies are:

- Using simple methods for analysis if these can serve your purpose;
- Using qualitative methods for insight into broad relations;
- Using quantitative methods for more specific insights into priority issues; and

- Use of methods already available in Hong Kong or regional countries.

Prior to the commencement of the assessment, the impact assessment method to be applied is determined for each trade measures that are likely to give rise to significant impacts. Appropriate assessment methods, both quantitative and qualitative, should be adopted to examine the economic, environmental and social impacts. There are three broad categories of methods, those for:

- Macroeconomic analysis;
- Microeconomic (sector-based) analysis; and
- A group of other methods.

4.1.2 **Macroeconomic Analysis**

Macroeconomic analysis defines the boundary of the system to be investigated and the method or model to be adopted. A partial equilibrium model will be most suitable if the analysis can be restricted to one sector or ecosystem. The extent of environmental externalities is another consideration in selecting the scope of the analysis. Where the identified impacts are localised, a national model can be sufficient. However, a regional analysis is more appropriate when there are significant cross-country effects. The assessment models are generally categorised into three broad groups, which can be used to review the linkages between trade and environment. These are:

- Input-output models and social accounting matrices;
- General equilibrium models; and
- A group of other macroeconomic models.

4.1.3 **Microeconomic (Sector-based) Analysis**

Sector analysis quantitatively and qualitatively evaluates the impact of likely consequences in the sector of concern; and assesses the cumulative effects on each sector on the basis of sustainable development criteria, such as poverty, gender or biodiversity. Sector-based models include:

- Partial equilibrium models – evaluate the effects of policy reforms solely on one sector (or products or ecosystem);
- Cost-Benefit analysis (CBA) – all monetized costs and benefits of a trade policy or an economic activity are compared using various valuation tools;

- Environmental Impact Assessment – to identify the environmental impacts of proposed proposals and the measures in which these impacts can be mitigated;
- Risk Assessment procedures – to balance what is acknowledged for certain, what is estimated as a potential and probable hazard, and what is unknown;
- Multi-criteria analysis – to address stakeholders' preferences in the use of natural and environmental resources; and
- Extended domestic resource cost analysis – to measure distortions (such as taxes) in the domestic sector, so that the gains from trade liberalization can be correctly estimated.

4.1.4

Other Approaches

- Life-cycle analyses involve the analysis of the links between the use of natural resources and the environmental outputs (emissions) of production processes.
- Global commodity chains analysis evaluates the social and economic relationship between all the stakeholders involved in the chain.

4.2

Integrated Assessment

The integrated assessment process aims to review and compare the different impacts identified and to complete an integrated assessment of the environmental, social and economic impacts. Some of the assessment methodologies for integrated assessment are discussed in the previous sections, whereas economic valuation (e.g. macroeconomic and microeconomic analysis) is the most common method used for this type of assessment. In general, economic valuation methods presume that all environmental and social values can be represented by cost indications.

The valuation techniques used within the context of trade policy / action can be categorised into conventional market-based, surrogate market-based and constructed market-based approaches, and discussed as follows:

4.2.1

Conventional Market-based Approaches

This technique uses market prices to evaluate and properly adjust for inefficiency. These techniques include three major approaches, the change in productivity approach, cost of illness approach, and cost-based approaches.



4.2.2 **Surrogate market-based approaches**

When no price is available for non-marketed environmental commodities, the prices of related marketed goods can be used to estimate their value. This approach uses the hedonic pricing methodology and the travel cost methodology.

4.2.3 **Constructed market-based approach**

This works by building up hypothetical market situations where preferences for the environmental good can be observed. Two applications of the constructed market-based approach are contingent valuation methodology and contingent ranking.

4.3 **Sustainability framework and indicators**

A sustainability framework is required to assess the potential environmental, social and economic impacts resulting from the proposed trade policy / action. It defines the criteria on issues of major long-term and large-scale concern. Its indicators are selected on a case-by-case basis.

To examine impacts and to continuously monitor the trends, sustainability indicators should be developed. Different from the primary statistical data, indicators provide meaning beyond what is being directly measured. Vertically, indicators should include a mix of short, medium and longer-term measures. Horizontally, a combination of local, national, regional or global indicators may also be desirable. Core environmental indicators should include but not be limited to the following:

- Environmental quality (air, water, land);
- Biological diversity; and
- Other natural resource stocks.

5 Final Assessment

The Final Assessment of the SEA process for Trade policy / action follows the same step as in the Generic SEA process.

5.1 Mitigation and Enhancement Analysis

A mitigation and enhancement analysis helps to propose improvements or protective measures that may enhance the overall impacts on sustainable development of the proposed trade policy / action, and these would include policy recommendations and “flanking” measures for dealing with potential impacts of a trade policy / action. Unlike the Generic SEA process, “flanking” measures, which are usually introduced in Trade SEA process along with or following the trade reform, are complementary economic, environmental and social measures, to promote beneficial impacts or mitigate negative impacts of a trade policy / action.

The suggested protective measures should ideally be able to maximize the positive impacts and to minimize any negative impacts of the trade negotiations. The following set of criteria can help in defining the most suitable policy responses:

- Relevancy – to address the major impacts and key opportunities identified during the integrated assessment, and the sustainable development concerns;
- Realistic – to be consistent with other policies;
- Cost-effective – to consider resources and capabilities for implementation;
- Feasibility – to consider what has been discussed with decision makers, and to ensure their commitment in the execution of the policy responses and proposed recommendations; and
- To propose a single policy response that meets all of the above criteria, this is more effective than separate responses to meet each one.

5.2 Monitoring, Evaluation and Follow-up

5.2.1 Monitoring

Ex-post monitoring refers to the monitoring of a trade policy / action once it is in place. This is essential in order to verify that the proposed policy responses have

been implemented and whether the impacts as identified during the SEA have been effectively settled. The monitoring can also help to allow further development and implementation of mitigation and enhancement measures if needed. Therefore, an accountable, cost-effective monitoring system should be defined during the Final Assessment for future implementation.

5.2.2 Evaluation

An internal process should be developed in each SEA to evaluate the development and implementation of the trade policy / action. The evaluation should involve all relevant stakeholders including the design of the performance benchmarks.

Examples of the performance benchmarking indicators include: integration (e.g. deals with the relationship between environmental, social and economic aspects), sustainability driven (e.g. facilitates the identification of alternative more sustainable development options and proposals), specific (e.g. provides robust, reliable and useful information for sound development decisions and, where practicable, quantitative information), accountable (e.g. carried out with professionalism, rigour, justice, impartiality and equity), participative (e.g. informs and involves the diverse stakeholders and government bodies throughout the decision-making process), interactive and flexible (e.g. provides enough information on the real impacts of implementing a strategic decision to judge whether the decision should be modified), and impact on policies (e.g. integrated into existing processes for the formulation of policies).

5.2.3 Follow-up

Follow-up is an important procedure not only to develop the policy responses but also to ensure the implementation of the trade policy / action. It includes:

- monitoring and assessing the implementation of the provisions of a trade policy / action;
- activities to monitor the impact of a policy / action on sustainable development;
- undertaking a study to compare the predictions in the SEA with the actual outcomes, and explaining any significant differences;
- proposing complementary analysis suggested either by existing work or in the light of implementation;
- further recommendations relating to any implementation problems which have been encountered; and



- additional mitigation and enhancement measures which may be needed to address any significant, unanticipated or unresolved sustainability impacts.



6 Conclusion

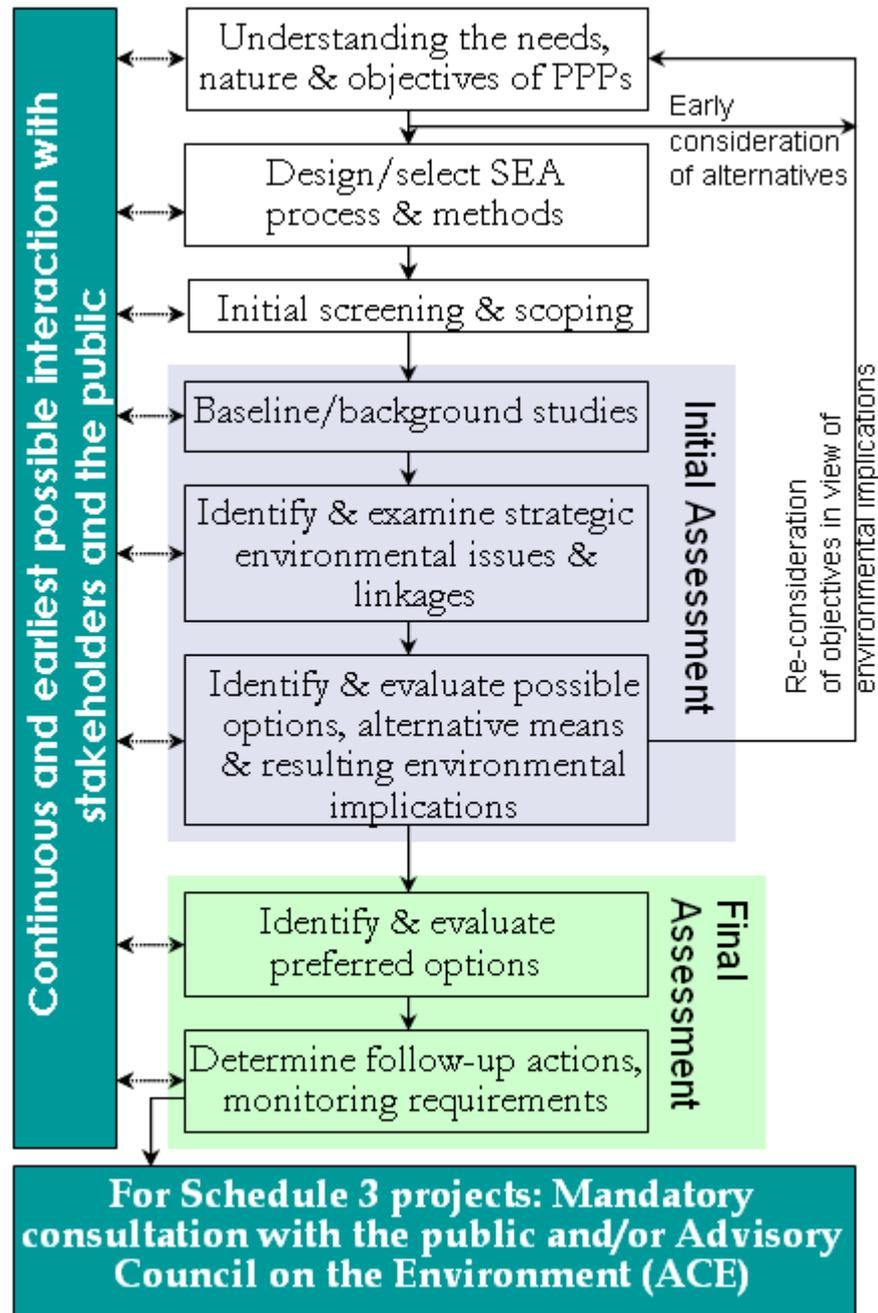
This document is prepared with reference to the international common practices and the generic SEA process adopted by the HKSAR. The main goal of this Reference Document is to act as the foundation for identifying the linkages between the environment and trade and make them more understandable and accessible to government officials, policy-makers, and the interested public. Potential economic, environmental and social impacts resulting from the proposed trade policy / action can be identified and mitigated by a systematic assessment as introduced in this Reference Document. A trade policy / action with sustainable consideration shall reinforce a longer, beneficial relationship among the involved parties. Through environmental review of trade and economic policies and actions, the harmonisation among trade, the environment and development can be strengthened and thereby creating a sustainable relationship between Hong Kong and our trade partners.



Appendix A

Generic Steps of SEA

Generic Steps of SEA



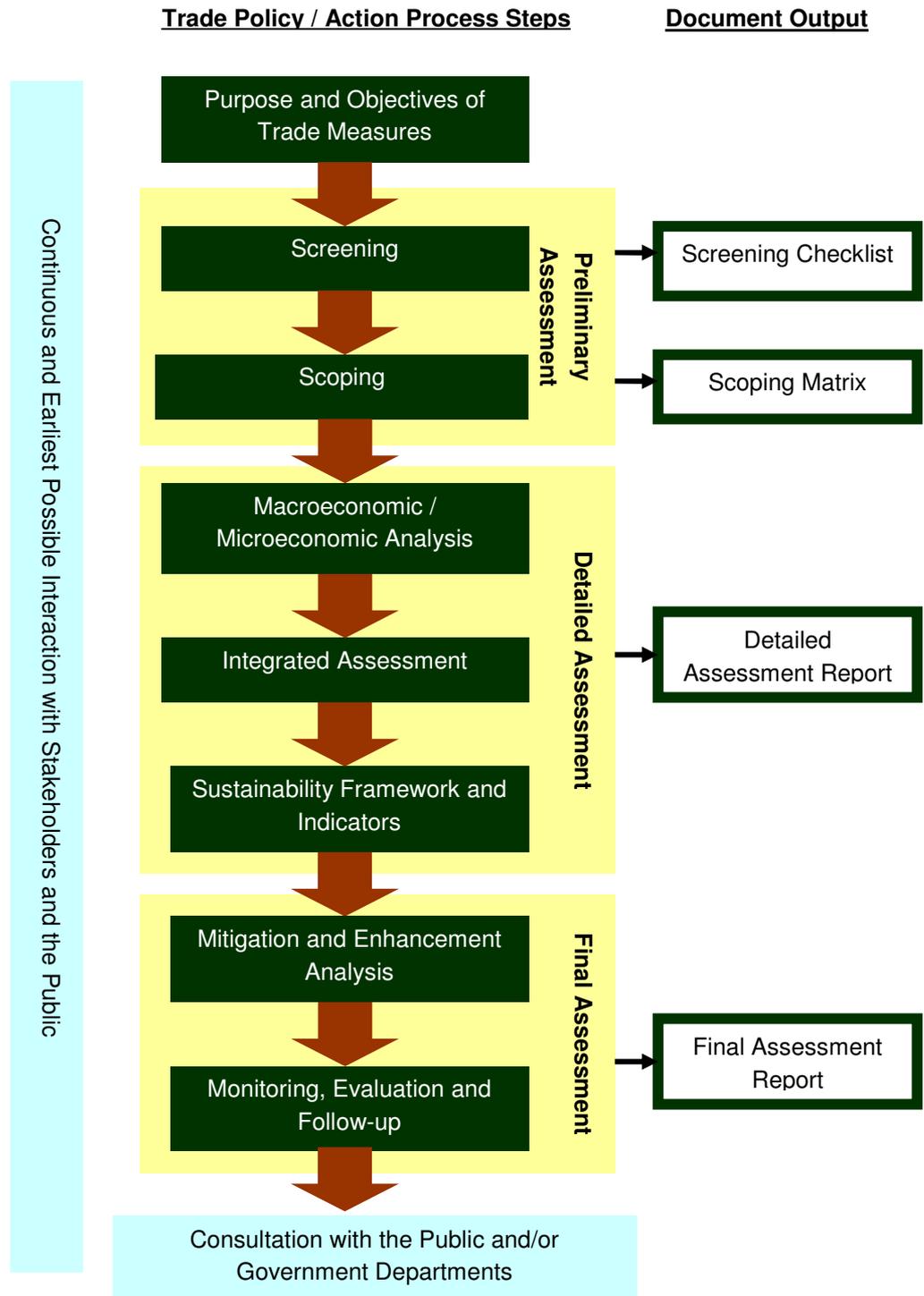
Source: Hong Kong Strategic Environmental Assessment Manual



Appendix B

Process Flow Chart

Process Flow Chart





Appendix C

Screening Checklist for Environmental Reviews on Trade Policies and Actions



Screening Checklist for Environmental Reviews on Trade Policies and Actions

1. What is the type of trade policy or trade agreement?

Trade Policy

- Tariffs and Related Measures
- Non-Tariffs Measures
- Trade-related Subsidies
- Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs)
- Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs)

Trade-related Policy

- Industry and export-subsidies (includes investment subsidies)
- Macroeconomic policy and exchange rate and current account regimes
- Deregulation and privatization
- Tax policy
- Policies affecting banking and credit systems

Trade Agreement

- Trade Liberalisation Agreements
- Commodity Agreements
- Preferential Trade Agreements
- Sectoral Trade Agreements

2. What is the purpose of this trade policy / action?

3. What products and sectors are tentatively targeted under the trade policy or action?

4. What are the major types of environmental impacts predicted (e.g. pollution, health and safety, resource degradation)?

5. What is the potential scope of the environmental effects predicted (e.g. local, transboundary, regional, global)?

6. What products, processes, sectors and/or regions may be affected by the trade policy or action?

7. What is the potential magnitude of the environmental effects predicted (both in short term and cumulative)?

8. Are there any existing regulatory framework available and sufficient to implement appropriate mitigating/enhancement measures to protect the environment?

Reference: Guideline on EIA of Economic Partnership Agreements and Free Trade Agreements in Japan (English Summary), 2004, http://www.env.go.jp/en/policy/assess/epa_fta/index.html



Appendix D

Reference Materials



Reference Materials

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