

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

www.millenniumassessment.org | Strengthening Capacity to Manage Ecosystems Sustainably for Human Well-Being

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Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

– Information to Conserve Ecosystems and Enhance Human-Well Being –

Overview

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) is an international work program designed to meet the needs of decision makers and the public for scientific information concerning the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and options for responding to those changes. The MA was launched by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in June 2001 and it will help to meet assessment needs of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Convention on Migratory Species, as well as needs of other users in the private sector and civil society. If the MA proves to be useful to its stakeholders, it is anticipated that an assessment process modeled on the MA will be repeated every 5–10 years and that ecosystem assessments will be regularly conducted at national or sub-national scales.

The MA focuses on ecosystem services (the benefits people obtain from ecosystems), how changes in ecosystem services have affected human well-being, how ecosystem changes may affect people in future decades, and response options that might be adopted at local, national, or global scales to improve ecosystem management and thereby contribute to human well-being and poverty alleviation. The specific issues being addressed by the assessment have been defined through consultation with the MA users.

The MA will:

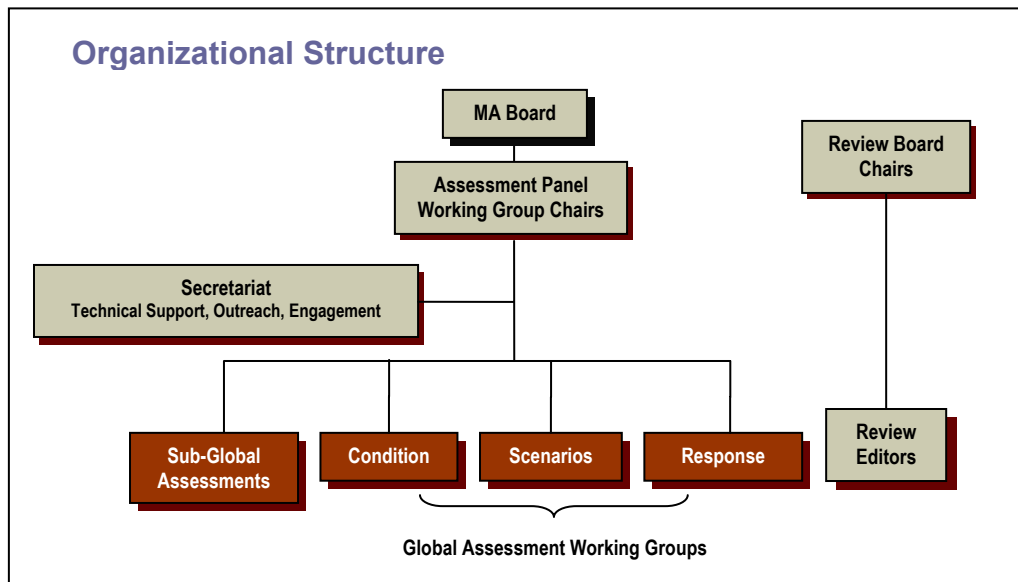
- Identify priorities for action;
- Provide tools for planning and management;
- Provide foresight concerning the consequences of decisions affecting ecosystems;
- Identify response options to achieve human development and sustainability goals;
- Help build individual and institutional capacity to undertake integrated ecosystem assessments and to act on their findings.

The MA synthesizes information from the scientific literature, datasets, and scientific models, and makes use of knowledge held by the private sector, practitioners, local communities and indigenous peoples. All of the MA findings undergo rigorous peer review.

The MA is governed by a Board comprised of representatives of international conventions, UN agencies, scientific organizations and leaders from the private sector, civil society, and indigenous organizations. A 13-member Assessment Panel of leading social and natural scientists oversees the technical work of the assessment supported by a secretariat with offices in Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa and coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme. More than 500 authors are involved in four expert working groups preparing the global assessment and hundreds more are undertaking more than a dozen sub-global assessments

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The MA is a “multiscale” assessment, consisting of interlinked assessments undertaken at local, watershed, national, regional and global scales. The MA sub-global assessments directly meet needs of decision-makers at the scale at which they are undertaken, strengthen the global findings with on-the-ground reality, and strengthen the local findings with global perspectives, data, and models. Sub-global assessments that have been approved or are being planned as components of the MA include: Arafura and Timor Seas; São Paulo, Brazil; Coastal British Columbia, Canada; the Caribbean Sea; the mountains of Central Asia; Salar de Atacama, Chile; Western China; Colombia; Chirripo river basin, Costa Rica; Sinai Peninsula, Egypt; the Hindu Kush-Himalayas; several regions within India; Indonesia; small islands of Papua New Guinea; Vilcanota Region, Peru; Laguna Lake Basin, the Philippines; Portugal; Atlay Sayan ecoregion, Russia; Saudi Arabia; Southern Africa (including Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe); Sweden; Trinidad and Tobago; Mekong wetlands, Viet Nam; and the tropical forest sites of the CGIAR Alternatives to Slash and Burn Project. In addition, a pilot assessment has been completed in Norway. Additional sub-global assessments can join the MA through a process described on the MA website.

Products

A report describing the approach and methods used in the MA – *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment* – will be published in 2003. The technical assessment reports produced by each of the four MA working groups will be published in 2005, along with short syntheses distilling the findings for ease of use by specific audiences. Each of the MA sub-global assessments will produce additional reports to meet the needs of their own audiences. All printed materials will be complemented by an information- and data-rich Internet site, capacity-building activities, and briefings and workshops designed to help communicate the findings, tools and methods to the users.

Budget and Sponsors

The four-year MA budget is approximately \$17 million, with more than \$7 million of additional support through in-kind contributions. Major financial support for the MA is being provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Government of Norway, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A complete list of donors is available on the MA Website

For additional information, visit the MA Website: <http://www.millenniumassessment.org>