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The South African Development Community (SADC) region comprises 14 countries. Those on the African mainland include: Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SADC also includes the Indian Ocean island states of Madagascar and Mauritius. Madagascar has only recently joined SADC, while the Seychelles, which was one of the original members, has withdrawn. Nevertheless, this handbook includes the Seychelles.



SADC's *Policy and Strategy for Environment and Sustainable Development* (1996) calls for 'a breakaway from fragmented sectoral approaches to environmental management' and urges the region to pursue 'a single agenda and strategy' and to achieve the consistent integration of EIA in decision-making. In spite of many challenges, great progress has been made in the implementation of EIA within the region since the Earth Summit in 1992. All SADC countries have promulgated framework legislation that makes allowance for EIA, and most countries have signed the main international conventions, treaties and protocols relating to environmental and species protection.

However, for EIA to fulfil its real potential in the SADC region, there is a need to significantly strengthen the capacity of all the major role players in the region, including the authorities, environmental assessment practitioners, developers and the financial institutions who are involved in project finance. To this end, many countries have developed, or are in the process of

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developing various tools to build the necessary capacity in environmental management. These include guidelines for EIA, sector EIA guidelines, skills development training courses, university courses and other supporting tools. One of the key aspects requiring support is that of legal compliance. There has been a major overhaul of environmental legislation in the region over the past 15 years due to two main factors: the increase in global awareness of the need for sustainable development, and secondly, the overwhelming requirement to update antiquated, colonial legislation in many of the SADC countries.

As development in the region continues to boom, developers and consultants are becoming much more 'regionalised' in their approach and as a corollary to this, project finance is being sought from the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) for activities throughout the region. In order to ensure that EIA is a process facilitating sustainable development, rather than acting as a hindrance, it is necessary to ensure that all projects are compliant with the environmental assessment laws of the countries in which they are located. Often this information is difficult to find, it is disseminated in many different places and in various languages. This Handbook provides an overview of the environmental assessment (EIA) institutions, legal and policy frameworks and EIA procedures prevailing in each SADC country. The Handbook is the result of a collaboration between the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment. Its main goals are to: reduce project risk; provide information about EIA legislation for the entire region; empower all role-players to be proactive with regards to legal compliance; and, to promote best EA practice. One of the problems of providing a book of this nature in a rapidly changing legal environment is that it quickly goes out of date. Therefore, it is the intention to make the Handbook a web-based document, which will be updated every year to ensure that the information is as current as possible.

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