

Introduction to the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol

A unique opportunity to demonstrate sustainability in the hydropower sector

The World Commission on Dams Final Report (2000) showed that the hydropower sector required a globally applicable tool for demonstrating sustainability. Taking the initiative the hydropower sector began proactively working with partners to define such a sustainability assessment tool. After 30 months of cross-sector engagement and review of IHA's previous tool for sustainability, the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum produced the new Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol.

The Protocol was formally adopted by IHA in November 2010 and consequently, a major opportunity now exists for leading hydropower organisations to clearly demonstrate sustainability performance.

What is the Protocol?

The Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol is a sustainability assessment tool being used to measure and guide performance in the hydropower sector. The Protocol has been designed to be used to assess the sustainability of hydropower projects anywhere in the world. It assesses the four main stages of hydropower development: Early Stage, Preparation, Implementation and Operation. Assessments rely on objective evidence to create a sustainability profile against some 20 topics depending on the relevant stage, and covering all aspects of sustainability.

Assessments rely on objective evidence to support a score for each topic, which is factual, reproducible, objective and verifiable. The Protocol is most effective when it is imbedded into business systems and processes. Assessment results may be used to inform decisions, to prioritise future work and/or to assist in external dialogue.

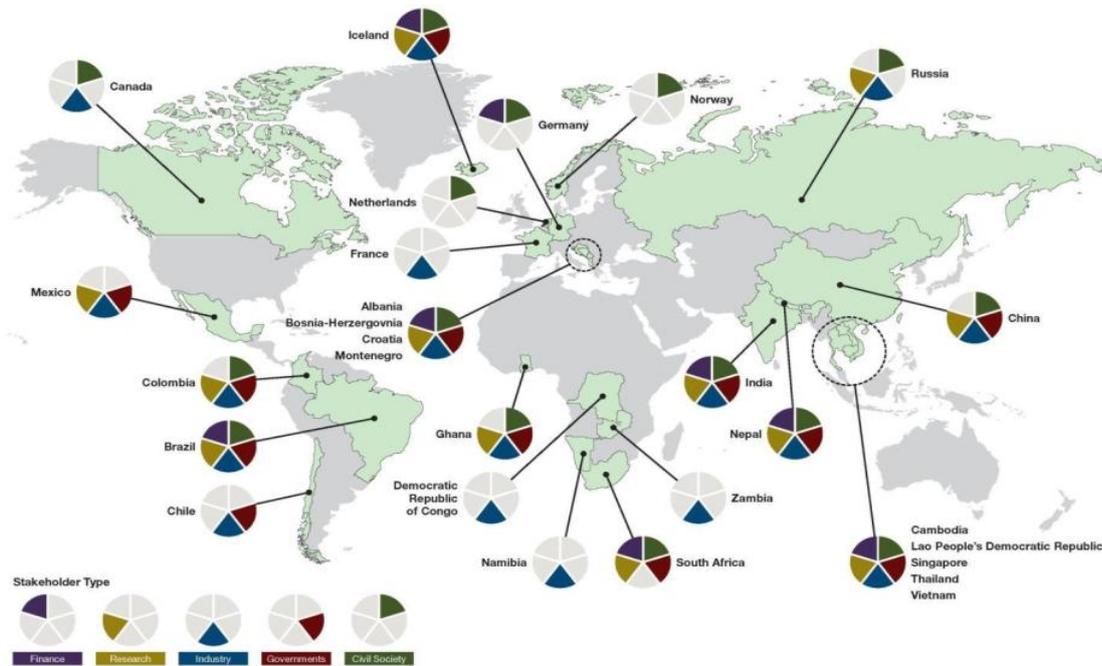
As an assessment tool the Protocol gives scores in gradation from 1 to 5 across a range of topics, resulting in a detailed sustainability profile of a hydropower project. It has been designed to cover a broad variety of possible case scenarios (for example project scale and complexity, public or private sector projects, mainstream or tributary stream siting, multi-unit versus single-unit design, single versus multi-use purpose, or reservoir versus run-of-river design).

It is intended that the organisation with the primary responsibility for a project at its particular life-cycle stage will have a central role in any Protocol assessment. This organisation may not have the major responsibility for all sustainability topics. Roles and responsibilities for different topics will be discussed in a Protocol assessment and indicated in the assessment report.

The development process of the Protocol involved field trials in 13 different countries and stakeholder engagement with 1,933 individuals in 28 countries.

The Protocol is the result of intensive work from 2008 to 2010 by the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum, a multi-stakeholder body with representatives from social and environmental NGOs (Oxfam, The Nature Conservancy, Transparency International, WWF); governments (China, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Zambia); commercial and development banks (Equator Principles Financial Institutions Group, The World Bank); and the hydropower sector, represented by IHA.

Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum Stakeholder Engagement Activities



Principles underpinning the Protocol

- Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Sustainable development embodies reducing poverty, respecting human rights, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, long-term economic viability, protecting and managing the natural resource base, and responsible environmental management.
- Sustainable development calls for considering synergies and trade-offs amongst economic, social and environmental values. This balance should be achieved and ensured in a transparent and accountable manner, taking advantage of expanding knowledge, multiple perspectives, and innovation.
- Social responsibility, transparency, and accountability are core sustainability principles.
- Hydropower, developed and managed sustainably, can provide national, regional, and local benefits, and has the potential to play an important role in enabling communities to meet sustainable development objectives.

Example of Range of Topics

Integrative Perspective	Environmental Perspective	Social Perspective	Technical Perspective	Economic / Financial Perspective
Demonstrated Need	Downstream Flow Regimes	Resettlement	Siting & Design	Financial Viability
Policies & Plans	Erosion & Sedimentation	Indigenous Peoples	Hydrological Resource	Economic Viability
Governance	Water Quality	Public Health	Infrastructure Safety	Project Benefits
Integrated Project Management	Biodiversity & Invasive Species	Cultural Heritage	Asset Reliability & Efficiency	Procurement

Protocol implementation

As the Protocol has now been formally adopted by IHA, developing and formalising appropriate structures for its implementation and management are in process. IHA has identified four main strategic objectives for Protocol implementation:

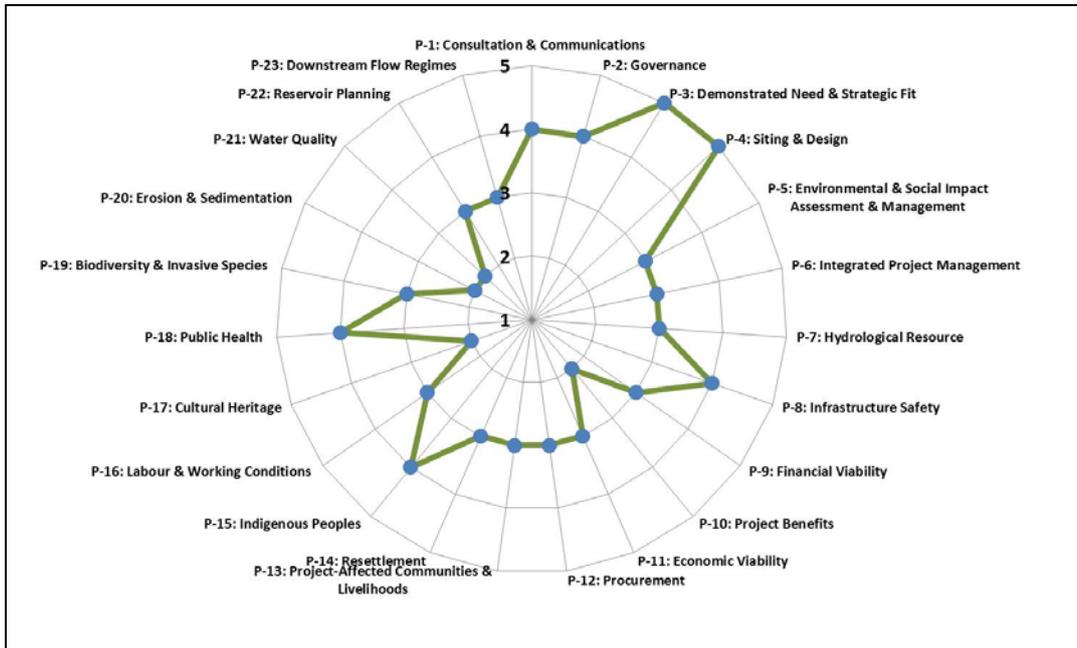
1. Wide use of the Protocol to advance sustainable hydropower
2. Awareness and training on the Protocol in collaboration with partners
3. Consistency in use and in the communication of Protocol assessment results
4. Transparent management and governance of the Protocol, and associated activities on a self-financing basis

To achieve these objectives, IHA is continuing to work with the organisations which comprised the Forum, together with additional parties, to develop appropriate governance arrangements for the Protocol. An interim governance committee is guiding these decisions, with a final set of proposals put forward to a larger consultative group at the IHA World Congress in June 2011. These proposals will finalise the terms and conditions for use of the Protocol, and the structural decisions for Protocol governance, management and consultation.

While the final terms and conditions for use of the Protocol are under development by the interim governance committee, it has been agreed that Protocol assessments may either be unofficial or official. Unofficial assessments will not require the use of an accredited assessor and will form a key part of a continuous improvement process and to inform dialogue. Official assessments will be conducted by accredited assessors, with disclosure of results.

It is important to emphasise that a Protocol assessment will provide a sustainability profile of a particular hydropower project/facility at a specific stage of its development (Early Stage, Preparation, Implementation or Operation). The key differentiating factor is that it is not providing a ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ result, but a more nuanced analysis of all the various sustainability topics being assessed. Scores are allocated in a range from 1-5, with 3 being basic good practice and 5 being proven best practice. The below diagram provides an example of how assessment results (in this case, from a Preparation assessment), could be presented.

Sustainability Profile: An example of how results could be presented



Next Steps

The European Parliament has recently approved substantial funds to enable application of the Protocol. This project is called *Hydro4LIFE* and comprises a €1.2 million investment over three years focusing on implementing the Protocol within the European Union and capturing results to support global implementation. IHA views this as an extremely positive message in the context of global political support for hydropower’s role in the future. The European funding will be used as a cornerstone for a global roll-out of the Protocol, benefitting the hydro sector worldwide. The approach requires that match funding is provided from leading hydropower organisations around the world; therefore, IHA is currently seeking Sustainability Partners for this initiative. Sustainability Partners will receive training and capacity building on the Protocol, an unofficial and official assessment at a chosen project/facility, and promotion as a leader in sustainable hydropower worldwide.

Subject to the terms and conditions for use, the Protocol is available to all parties, without charge, from the International Hydropower Association (IHA) website. Formal use of the Protocol, including translation, training of assessors, disclosure of assessment results and any income- and fee-generating activities relating to the Protocol, is controlled by license.

Further Information

For more information and a copy of the Protocol visit:

http://www.hydropower.org/sustainable_hydropower/HSAF_Hydropower_Sustainability_Assessment_Protocol.html

Further enquiries - please contact IHA Programme Director, Cameron Ironside: ci@hydropower.org or phone: +44(0)20 8652 5220.