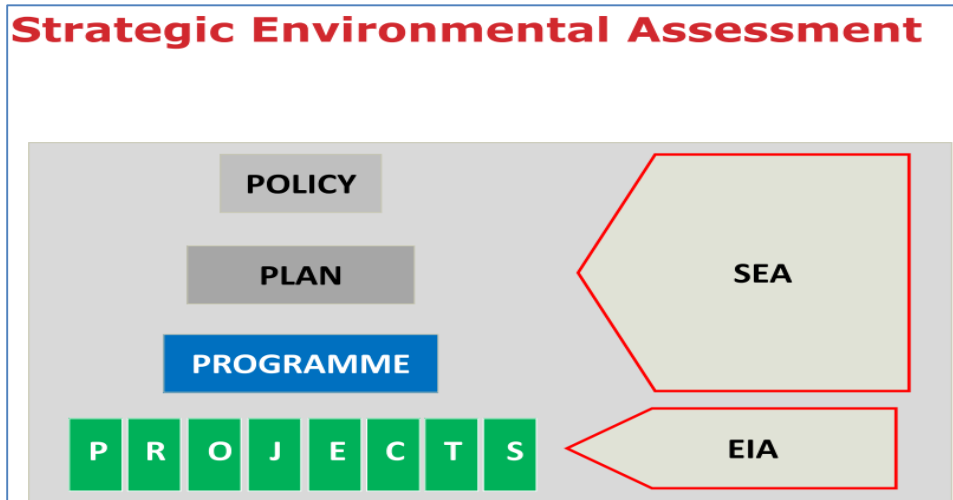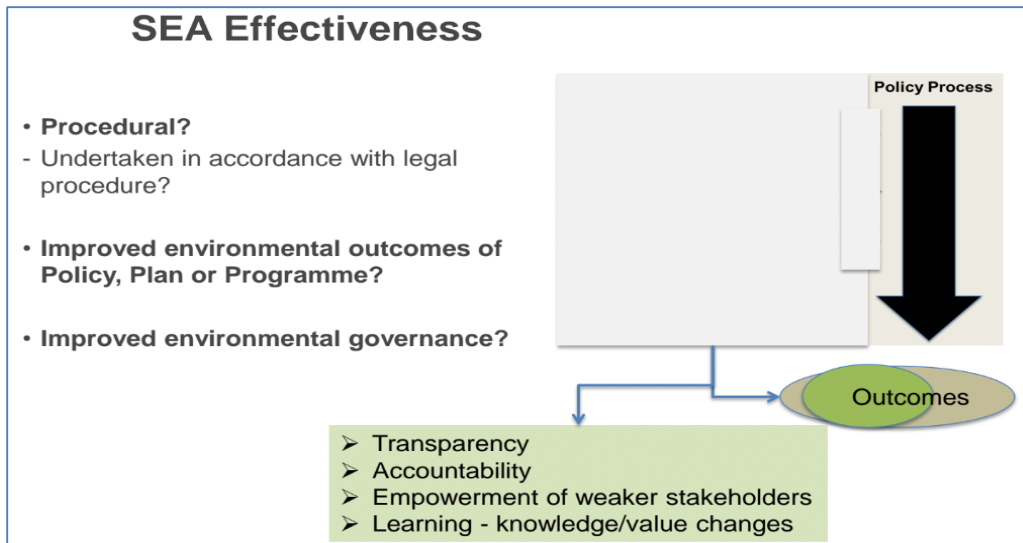# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT ASSESSEMENT (SEA).

1. What is SEA?

Strategic Assessments take a more holistic approach to environmental planning and impact assessment. Rather than looking at how a single activity will affect nationally protected matters as is the case for EIAs, a strategic assessment (SEA) looks at how a group of activities (under a policy, plan or program) will affect these matters on a regional scale. See below.

2. What are the benefits of undertaking a SEA?

3. What are the intentions of a SEA?

A SEA should be able to answer 5 I's. These include;

i)   **Influence** – Influence the planning, the decision-making process, implementation
ii) **Inform** – inform planners, stakeholders, decision makers
iii) **Interact** – enable interaction among planners, stakeholders, decision-makers
iv) **Institutions** – analyse, strengthen/build capacity, reform (if necessary)
v)   **Integrate** – environment in other sectors, development themes

4. Why do we need a SEA?
- To raise awareness of environmental problems
- It empowers communities to make decisions on natural resource utilization and management
- Creates an understanding of   the burdens of environmental degradation
- Develop a system to hold policy makers accountable for their decisions
- Develop an understanding of the linkages between environment and growth sectors

5. What are the current national provisions for SEA in Uganda?

National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has prepared step by step guidelines clearly specifying the roles, responsibilities for carrying out, reviewing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating SEA.

The *National Environment Management (*NEM) Act provides for an environmental legislation for mainstreaming the   environment issues into development. The **National Environment Management Act cap 153** provides for statutory functions of NEMA to;

- Ensure integration of environment concerns in overall national planning through coordination with relevant ministries, departments and government agencies.
- Propose environment polices and strategies of the policy committee on environment
- Ensure observance of proper safeguards in planning and execution of all development projects, including those already in existence and are likely to have significant impact of the environment.

It is imperative to note that the NEM act is currently under review and will incorporate more specific requirement of SEA upon review. In addition, the National Environment management Bill and the revised National Environment Policy 2016, have incorporated SEA principles.

6. **What is the difference between SEA and the EIA?**

EIA	SEA
• Is reactive to development proposals •Narrow perspective, high level of detail and project specific •Addresses a specific project; e.g. local investment •Legal requirement to enable license to operate with environment conditions •Well defined beginning & end •Assesses direct impacts and benefits •Focuses on mitigation of impacts •Provides specific technical solutions	•Is proactive, informs development proposals; i.e broader and strategic •Wider perspective, less detail focus on key environment issues and longer time horizon for large areas, regions or sectors of development •Addresses Policies, Plans, and Programs (PPP) •Focuses on informing and influence, Planning, decision, and implementation •More open process i.e dynamic and able to adapt to politics and timing • Assesses cumulative impacts across resources

7. **What are the development activities that are likely to have significant environmental impact?**

Currently, a lot of the SEA undertaken in Uganda is donor driven and the following activities / developments require SEA. Activities include; New Infrastructure developments and extensions, Spatial plans such as coastal zone development plans, urban or industrial development, Multi intervention programs where individual project appraisal is not cost effective , Cumulative impacts i.e. impacts of individual projects is limited, however SEA is significant when the projects are linked, Macro policies such as poverty reduction strategies; tax reform; public sector reform; agric. policies, privatization, trade policy and Sector wide policies with national impacts such as water, drainage, environmental management, waste management, transport planning, energy and infrastructure.
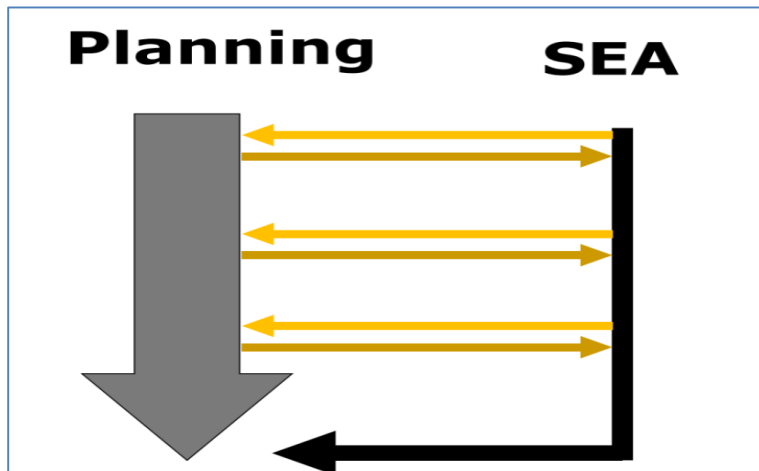
8. **What are those significant resources that are likely to be affected by such developments**

These include Heritage sites and cultural heritage, Ancient Monuments, Flora and fauna , Wetlands, Threatened species and fragile ecosystems, Migratory species /Biodiversity, Water resources (riverbanks, lakeshores & waterfronts, streams, water channels), Green cover
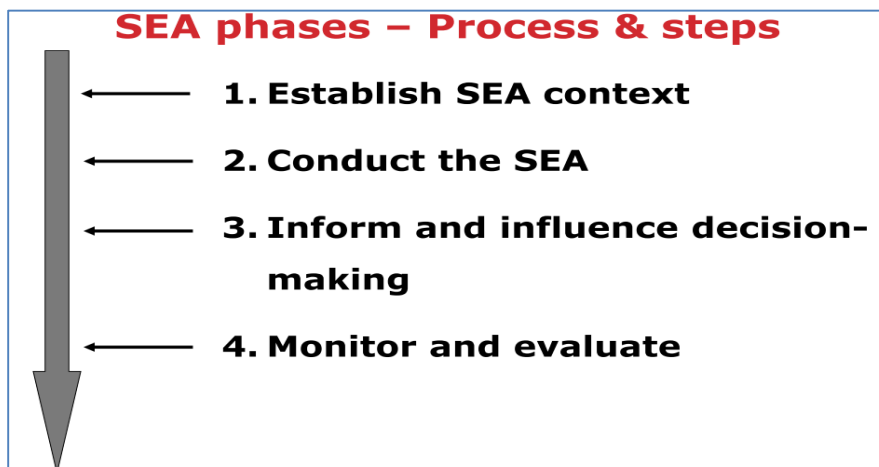
(rangelands, open spaces, forests, woodlands, swamps etc) , Human health, Cross territorial resources and general Environment under threat or degradation

9. **What are the steps taken when conducting a SEA?**

In order to have an impact on resource management, the planning process and SEA should be interactive such that environment concerns are considered at all stages of the planning process. See below;
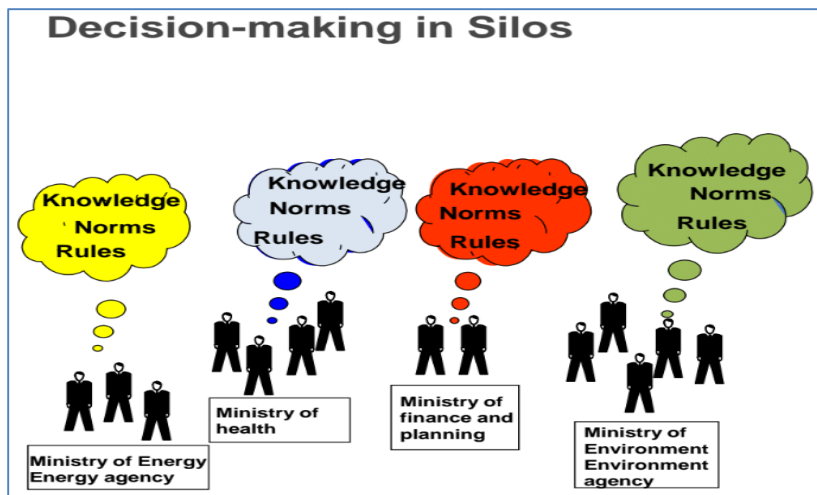

SEA comprises of mainly 4 phases. These include; establishment of the SEA context, conducting the actual SEA, informing and influencing the decision making process and Monitoring and Evaluation.

10. Public participation in the SEA process

Effective stakeholder participation is critical during SEA Planning and implementation. Successful SEAs have had clear and transparent mechanisms of citizen participation. Without the community commitment to protect and realize their relevance in managing the environment, a lot of resources continue depleted by the community themselves. As such, citizens have been found to have a critical role in decisions that impact on environment both positively and negatively.

A lot of institutions are managing resources and implementing programs upon decisions made in silo tendencies. SEA provides an opportunity for institutional coordination and setup of environment working groups to oversee policy plans and programs in a more holistic manner.

An effective SEA provides for decision makers with robust, timely clearly presented information about environmental impact of their plans; helps change the values, attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders; increases participation, collaboration , consensus and inclusiveness in the planning process; builds stakeholder capacity; provides institutional support and legitimacy; and helps changes within institutional processes.

11. Who is responsible for undertaking a SEA?

SEAs can be undertaken by either a ministry, department of government agency responsible for Policy, Plans or Programmes . These institutions are mandated to carry out a SEA that is likely to have significant or cumulative impact on the population and the environment.

12. How can SEAs be undertaken in Uganda?

A report detailing the environmental impacts of the Plan, Policy or Program must be prepared and submitted to the relevant ministry, department or government agency to enable assessment of whether the impacts are provided for in law and in turn resulting in effective protection and efficient use.

Once this is critically assessed and realized, such a policy plan or program may be endorsed to approve the activities acceptable during implementation.

This process is highly participatory and considers citizen inclusiveness as critical to the overall decision or outcome. As such, SEA requires extensive consultation with stakeholders including local communities, environmental experts, NGO, multidisciplinary categories of professional, property owners and legislators.

13. **What information is important during data collection for a SEA?**

Successful SEA must have vital information on the following;

- Thorough reconnaissance survey
- Baseline survey : Situation survey and analysis of critical resources
- SWOT
- Stakeholder analysis and their respective roles

14. What are the benefits of strategic assessments for the community?
- A sense of inclusion in the plan making process and implementation
- Improved commitment to decisions made
- Sense of belonging
- Transparency in resource utilization

15. How can KCCA benefit from undertaking SEAs?
- Improved strategic action (identification of preferred alternatives, authoritative planning decisions)
- Effective implementation on the strategic actions such that the actions are implemented as planned, monitoring is also followed through
- Environmental protection and sustainability
- Improved future plan making
- Improved integrated and inclusive planning process