

GRID-Arendal Strategy 2009-2013

PREAMBLE

In May 1989, at the Governing Council of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Norwegian Minister of the Environment announced that Norway, as a concrete follow-up to the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development, was ready to support the establishment of a GRID (Global Resource Information Database) centre in Arendal, Norway. A project agreement was signed between UNEP and the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment in Arendal on August 22, 1989, for the establishment and operation of GRID-Arendal. GRID-Arendal is established as a foundation in accordance with Norwegian legislation. In 2001 GRID-Arendal was designated an official UNEP Centre.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNEP and the Norwegian Ministry of Environment on the operations of GRID-Arendal, signed in January 2005, was extended for two years in September 2009 (see addendum 1).

Dialogue between UNEP and the Government of Norway, Ministry of the Environment for the above extension confirmed that the strategy should be founded on GRID-Arendal's overarching role to support UNEP with its key communications services in visualizing scientific data and environmental information, outreach and capacity building, targeting different groups, and innovatively applying communication tools and training techniques.

Within this overarching role, the elements of GRID-A's strategy contain the following focus areas:

- polar and cryosphere, with an increased focus on climate change interlinkages and impacts;
- marine environment, particularly within the developing countries engaged in the UNEP Shelf Programme¹; and
- environmental assessments and information.

This document aims to be the main tool to guide GRID-Arendal's strategic decisions in the coming five year period (2009-2013). It is intended to increase coherency and is based on foundation documents such as: the MoU between the Government of Norway and United Nations Environment Programme

(UNEP) regarding GRID-Arendal; the MoU between UNEP and GRID-Arendal; the Framework agreement between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and GRID-Arendal; as well as UNEP's strategic and planning documents. It is also intended that the strategy remains flexible and be periodically revised in response to changing external and internal factors.

BACKGROUND

Today, the world is going through interlinked systems crises in the fields of finance, food, fuel and the environment, presenting enormous global challenges particularly to developing countries. These same crises open a window of unprecedented opportunities. The global community faces a choice between trying to fix fundamental problems by maintaining past destructive practices, and making a paradigm shift toward a sustainable future for all. These challenges create demand for GRID-Arendal's specific environmental competencies. The organization is in a unique position to "bridge the gap between the science and decision-making worlds" and to reach out with essential environmental messages to the broader public.

Concern for the environment has entered into the mainstream of political thinking - as proven by two Nobel prizes within the last five years awarded to environmentalists. GRID-Arendal can be proud of its modest contribution to that achievement. Efforts for the coming five year period will focus on how to turn this growing environmental awareness into action.

Implementing environmental policy requires collaboration with the corporate world. The UN acknowledges the importance of linking with the private sector through the UN Global Compact Initiative and the currently unfolding Green Economy Initiative of UNEP. GRID-Arendal needs to participate in this process and develop a viable strategy for working with the private sector, to increase the organization's impact.

Climate change and resource scarcity are disproportionately affecting some regions of the world. In particular, the Polar and other cryosphere regions as well as Africa are geographic areas of growing concern.

High human population densities in coastal zones are generating multiple environmental challenges and overburdening the marine and coastal ecosystem services on which humans depend. This, coupled with high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, food security and ever increasing exploitation of offshore marine resources, makes the marine environment a critical focus area.

The ongoing information and communications revolution is manifesting itself in the merging of internet-based and mobile communication technologies. The development of new delivery channels

and virtual social networks enables both a broader and more selective reach of individuals and groups. However, given the growing number of information providers and information fatigue of recipients, competition for attention will continue to increase. This must be addressed through targeted information products and strategic partnerships with the media.

VISION

GRID-Arendal's vision is a society that understands and values the environment on which it depends. In pursuing this vision, GRID-Arendal strives to be a creative, sustainable and motivating environmental organization making a difference locally and globally.

MISSION

The mission of GRID-Arendal, which was established to support the UN in the field of environment, mainly through its Environment Programme (UNEP), is to create environmental knowledge enabling positive change. This is achieved by organizing and transforming available environmental data into credible, science-based information products, delivered through innovative communication tools and capacity-building services targeting relevant stakeholders.

VALUES

- Environment
 - Knowledge based information
 - Empowerment for action
 - “Apply a green lens” to all our thinking and actions
 - Ensure a legacy for future generations

- Diversity
 - Knowledge and Thinking
 - Nature
 - People
 - Creativity and Cooperation

- Integrity
 - Credibility
 - Transparency
 - Modesty
 - Respect

SLOGAN

Environmental knowledge for change.

GOALS

The overall goals of GRID-Arendal are:

To be an internationally recognized and innovative organization providing decision-makers and stakeholders with relevant and reliable environmental information;

To ensure best quality of information and its impact through assessments, networking, capacity building and training services; and

To be recognised as a leading institution in visualizing environmental data and information; identifying effective and relevant environmental key messages; and putting environmental issues onto decision-makers' agendas.

The goals for the three focus areas for the strategic period 2009-2013 are:

A. Polar and Cryosphere

GRID-Arendal is mandated, used and valued by UNEP and other UN organizations as their key actor for networking and for providing analyses, environmental **information**

- and knowledge as well as the promoter of environmental solutions in the Polar and Cryosphere regions, with an increased focus on climate change interlinkages and impacts;

B. Marine Environment

GRID-Arendal makes a valuable contribution to improved understanding of marine ecosystems, focusing on coastal developing nations and Small Island Developing States engaged in the UNEP Shelf Programme; and to contributes to policy changes promoting responsible management and sustainable use of the marine environment.

C. Environmental Assessments and Information

GRID-Arendal is a key provider of environmental information, through environmental

assessments and reports and expertise in communication, outreach and capacity building primarily targeted at developing countries.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

While remaining responsive to emerging issues, GRID-Arendal defines the following **Strategic Objectives**:

1. Make GRID-Arendal's support to the UN system more effective; reinforce the UNEP profile of GRID-Arendal;
2. Strengthen existing partnerships and identify and collaborate with new partner institutions to build stronger long-term relationships;
3. Deliver credible products and services with measurable impact, targeting specific audiences, which build on GRID-Arendal's strengths and competences;
4. Strengthen GRID-Arendal as an institution by increasing capacity and financial resources.

While being cognizant of the framework provided by the MoU GRID-Arendal aims to diversify its financial base, exploring new funding opportunities.

A strategic action plan will be produced to enable GRID-Arendal to implement this strategy document.

Strategic Objective 1. Make GRID-Arendal's support to the UN system more effective; reinforce the UNEP profile of the organization

UNEP affiliation should be further developed, as it is one of the main assets of the organization and the original reason for its foundation. At the same time support should not be limited to UNEP, but be seen in the broader context of fulfilling UNEPs mandate. GRID-Arendal will also cooperate with other UN agencies, thus strengthening the "One UN" policy. Thereby GRID-Arendal will:

- Develop its existing capacity, particularly in the following Sub Programmes of UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (as it relates to GRID-Arendal's three focus areas): Climate Change, Ecosystem Management and Environmental Governance, and build capacity in the area of Resources Efficiency – sustainable consumption and production.
- Support the UNEP Green Economy Initiative.

- Support communication, outreach and capacity building activities of UNEP within GRID-Arendal's key focus areas specifically on: data organization and visual presentation of information, analysis, assessment, training and capacity building for developing countries.

Strategic Objective 2. Strengthen existing partnerships and identify and collaborate with new partner institutions to build stronger long-term relationships

GRID-Arendal will:

- Create broad partnerships and maintain and develop expert networks;
- Establish closer cooperation with UNEP collaborating centers and other UNEP-partners. Of key importance are expert networks in research and educational institutions, as well as focal points in Ministries of Environment (or their equivalents) in countries where GRID-Arendal works. Collaboration and partnerships with non-UNEP partners such as academia, environmental NGOs, associations of indigenous peoples, cities, big public events, etc will also be developed;
- Strengthen its relationship with the private sector. Partnerships with companies must be strategic and selective. GRID-Arendal needs to work with private sector actors that are aligned with the organization's focus areas;

Strategic Objective 3. Deliver credible products and services with measurable impact, targeting specific audiences, which build on GRID-Arendal's strengths and competences.

In a world of information overload and increasingly complex decision-making, the effectiveness of information, or its impact, is crucially important. By impact we mean the measurable effect of our products and services on policies and/or actions of target groups. Focus on impact is in line with transformational processes in UNEP, shifting from an activity-driven to a results-oriented organization.

GRID-Arendal will:

- Strengthen its communication capacity and ability to reach target audiences, especially journalists and opinion leaders
- Concentrate on building relations with the media, including training and raising the profile of

journalists covering environmental issues, and use all relevant communication channels for delivery of key messages, thus increasing impact and organizational outreach capacity.

- Continue to provide services in capacity building and training which have been some of its core activities from its inception. It will continue to develop the capacities of its clients in information management, assessment, reporting, communication and outreach through a combination of traditional and internet-based education and training;
- Achieve a better understanding of the decision making processes of its clients/audiences/target groups, especially governments, donors, the UN system, private sector, etc; enabling the development of products tailored and suitable to support such processes.

Strategic Objective 4. Strengthen GRID-Arendal as an institution by increasing capacity and financial resources.

In order to achieve its goals, GRID-Arendal needs to upgrade its internal capacities (human and material resources). Financial robustness is a prerequisite and long term planning is needed for the successful implementation of strategic objectives set out in these documents. GRID-Arendal will:

- Re-organize its human resources covering all thematic areas and geographical regions of GRID-Arendal's planned activities, backed up by an approved strategic network of partners with a wide range of complementary expertise.
- Promote "cross-pollination" between programmes taking advantage of different skills, drawn from across the organization in order to enhance creativity of the staff.
- Develop and upgrade staff competencies and capacities.
- Plan for sustainable, financially backed limited growth
- Diversify its financial base, exploring new funding opportunities while being cognizant of the framework provided by the MoU.