

Point of Information

H. Virji

For Session 8: Point of Information
by
Hassan Virji
International START Secretariat

on

**Training in Integrated Regional Assessments for Developing Countries and Countries
with Transition Economies**

In the 1995 Second Assessment report, the IPCC discussed the potential utility of Integrated Assessment Models (IAMs) to combine the knowledge from a wide range of disciplines into analysis of key issues related to policy formulation. As noted by Riordan and Jaeger (1996), "the role of climate change science is changing from networks of collaborating, but separately operating, natural and social scientists, to integrated modelling and the emergence of cross-scientific interdisciplinary assessments". This rapidly evolving methodology can be an effective communication tool between scientists and decision makers on the implications of international and domestic policies related to climate change. The IPCC also noted in the 1995 Second Assessment Report the still limited inclusion of scientific underpinnings. Especially, the lack of adequate portrayal of the social and economic dynamics of the developing economies, and economies in transition, limits the use of this important tool on a broader basis. Recognizing these needs, the IPCC Bureau has proposed that START (the Global Change SysTem for Analysis, Training and Research) develop and implement a concerted action on training in integrated assessment models for regions with developing economies and economies in transition.

START has taken up this important challenge. A Core Group of scientists has been convened which includes those from leading institutions involved in the use of integrated assessment modelling, scientists from the START regions, as well as the IAI (Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research) region. This group has developed an initial strategy with three objectives:

- To build capacity among researchers in developing countries and transition economy countries in the development and use of integrated assessment tools;
- To improve regional representation of developing and transition economy countries in leading integrated assessment models, and incorporation of the driving forces of global change and resource issues of importance to such countries;
- To inform policy makers in such countries on the use of integrated assessment methodologies to support analysis of climate change policy options.

Expected outputs of this effort would include:

- Enhanced capabilities in the developing countries and countries with economies in transition on the use of integrated assessment modelling tools;
- Collaboration with major IAM institutions on conduct of integrated regional assessments for specific sectors;
- Improved IAMs for regions with developing economies and economies in transition

Initial seed funding support for developing this effort has been provided by UNEP/GEF, START and the IAI. This support will enable the preparation of a framework of action, including a GEF Project Document for submission to GEF and securing partnership and support commitments from various organizations involved in the effort.

The Core Group met twice in conjunction with the March 1997 Tokyo IPCC Workshop on Integrated Assessment Modelling and the June 1997 Vienna Human Dimensions of Global Change Conference. In order to meet the objectives defined above, the Core Group is designing a broad-based training/capacity building program of 3-5 year duration, that will focus on training "trainers" who can be involved with national teams engaged in the use of integrated assessment methodology for national and regional decision making. A key facet of this effort would be engagement of regional inter-governmental partners, such as the Asia-Pacific Network and the IAI. The funding strategy for the effort is predicated on full partnership with such interested inter-governmental as well as non-governmental participants. For example, the Asia-Pacific network has committed funds for initial training in China and India and START is considering short-term fellowships and visiting scientists awards.

On the basis of discussion within the Core Group as well as with other interested parties, such as the UNEP Collaborating Centers and participants at the Tokyo and Vienna Conferences, the Core Group has recommended an initial effort targeted on an initial set of seven countries in Asia, Africa, South Central America, and Eastern Europe. At a later stage, on the basis of experience gained and a critical mass of user community formed, the effort could be expanded to other nations. Discussions are ongoing between START and potential collaborators from these countries to define country-specific training needs and options. The intent is to foster mobilization of country level teams at existing national and regional centers, with potential capability to engage in an active program of integrated assessments. The training effort would build on the underpinning of country studies and related training efforts already carried out by other organizations during the previous several years.

Success of this effort will critically depend on not mere expressions of interest to collaborate, but on firm commitments to participate at all levels. It is from this perspective that START welcomes constructive input from all participants in the IPCC process.

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Hassan Virji, International START Secretariat, 2000 Florida Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20009-USA, at e-mail address: hvirji@kosmos.agu.org

Reference:

T. Riordan and J. Jaeger (Eds), 1996: "Politics of Climate Change: European Perspective", Routledge Publishing House, London, 396 pp.