



This Guidance is the main outcome of the **flagship project “LCA of Organizations”**, within the Phase III of the **UNEP-SETAC Life Cycle Initiative**. The project aims to demonstrate that the benefits and the potential of the life cycle approach are not limited to the application on products and that the **application on organizations is relevant, meaningful and already possible**. The nearly 60 participants contribute to the drafting, consolidation and road-testing of the Guidance during the project period (2013-2015).

## Context

- The organization-level decision making has an influential role in shaping environmental outcomes.
- For the assessment at the organization level, the most applied and spread approaches have only recently considered the full value chain and mostly concentrate on a single aspect, like carbon footprints.
- The benefits and the potential of the life cycle approach are not limited to the application on products (i.e., goods and services).

## Scope of the Guidance

- Highlights potential of organizational perspective within life cycle thinking.
- Builds on existing internationally-agreed guides, methods and standards. It particularly aligns with upcoming ISO/TS 14072.
- Provides recommendations about challenging methodological issues.
- If the organization has already used other environmental systems analysis tools, this previous data may be useful. Several organization’s pathways (e.g. organization applied EMS, product-LCAs, GHG Scope1,2&3, etc.) are presented with adapted guidance for the application of O-LCA.
- It does not support comparative assertions intended to be disclosed to the public.

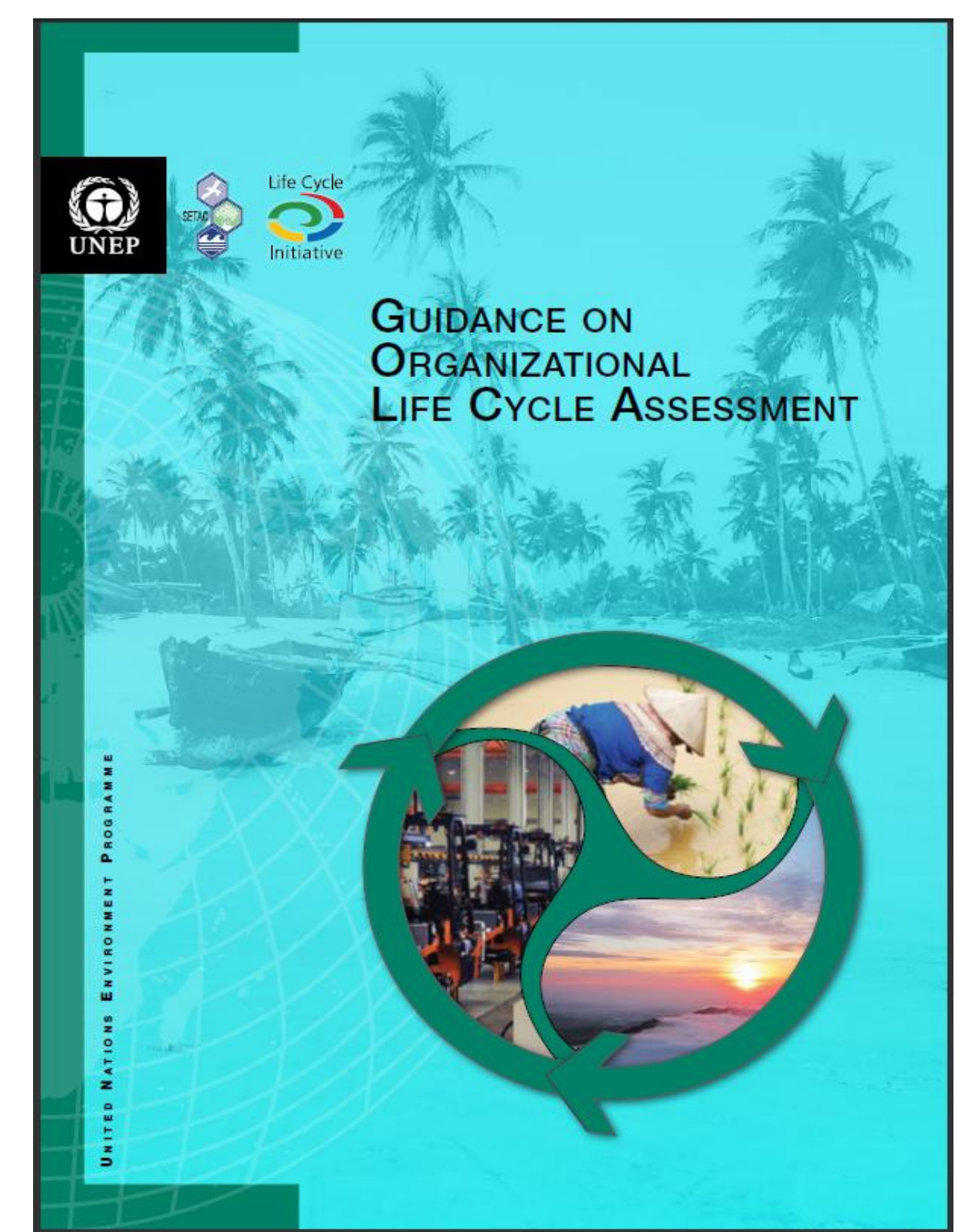


Fig. 1: Guidance on Organizational LCA (UNEP, 2015).

*“OLCA is a compilation and evaluation of the inputs, outputs and potential environmental impacts of the activities associated with the organization adopting a life cycle perspective” (ISO/TS 14072).*

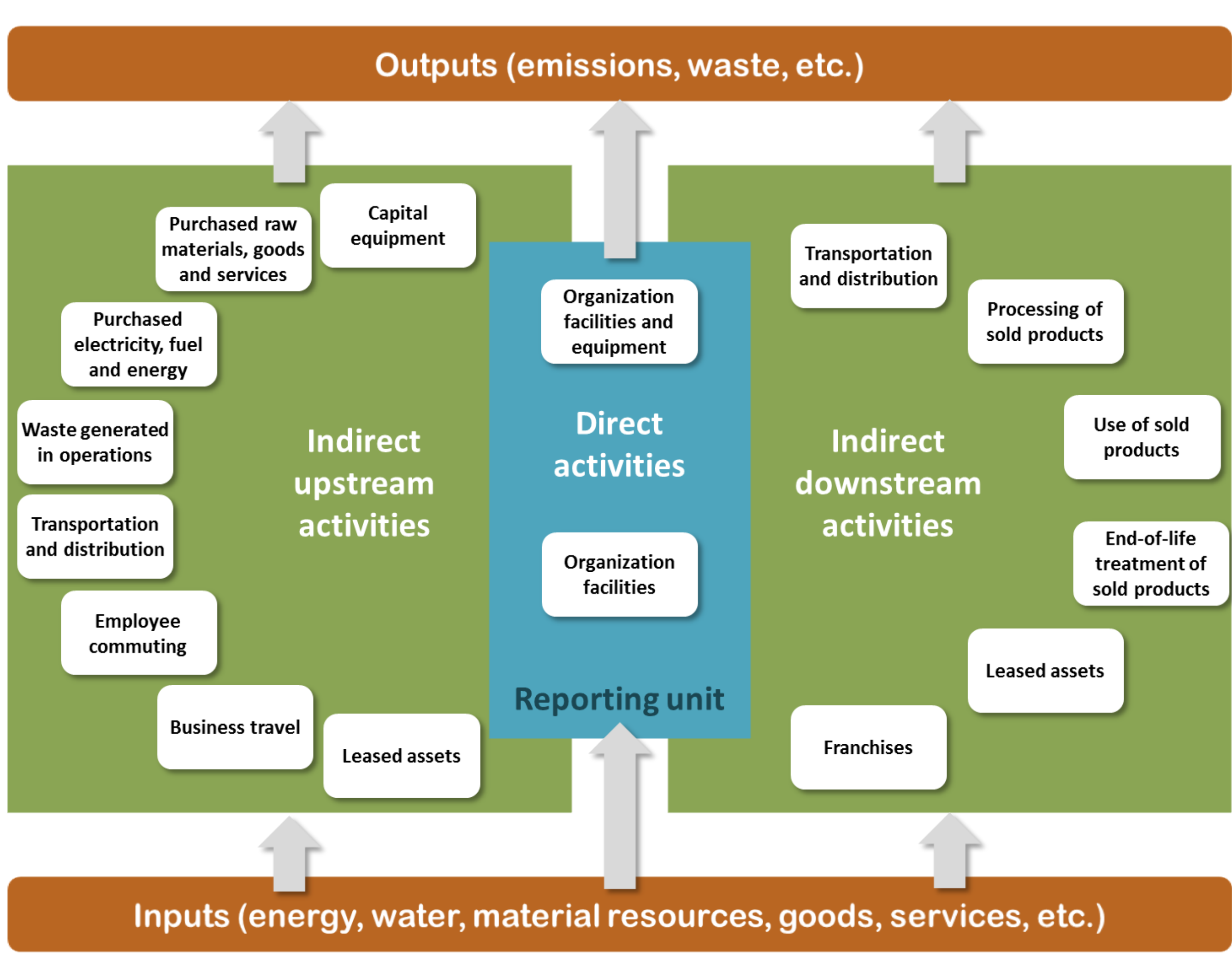
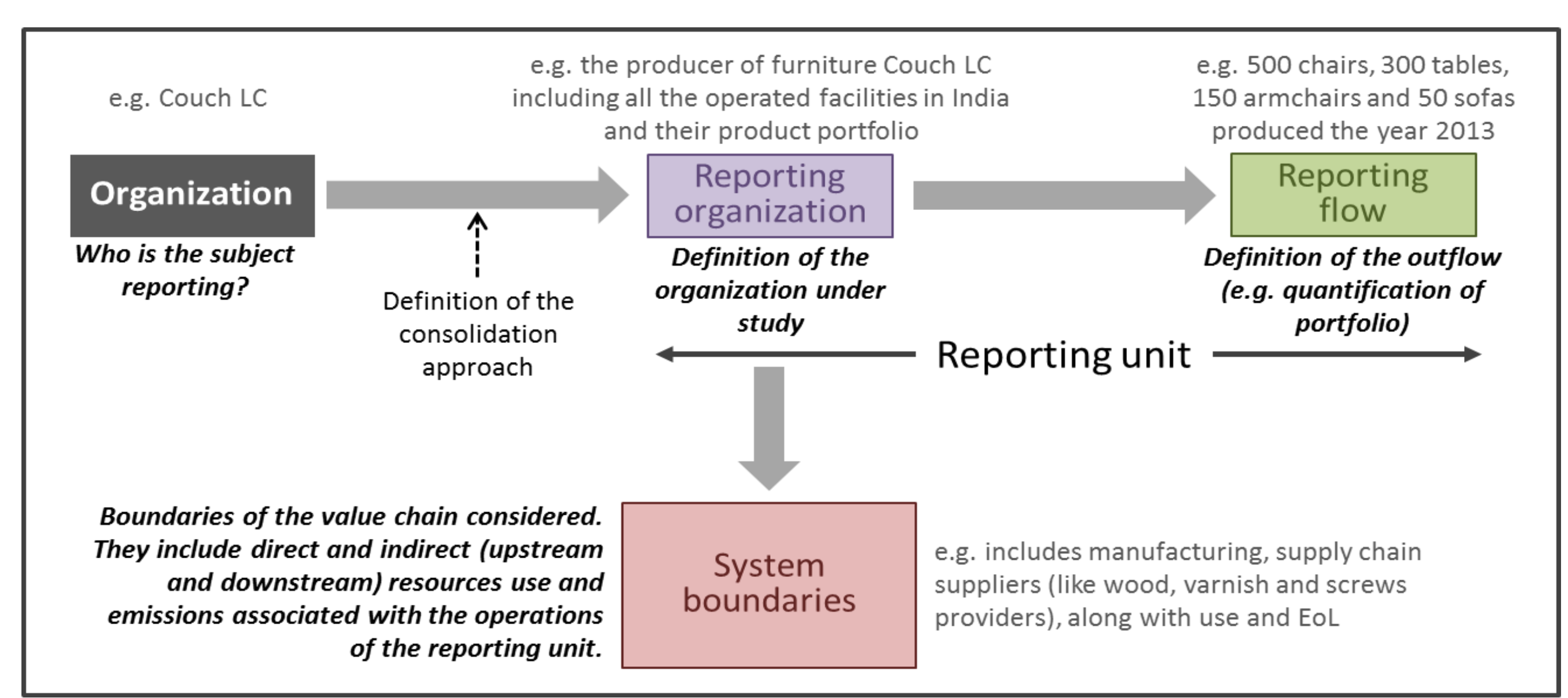


Fig. 3: Organizational system boundaries including direct and indirect activities.

## Key methodological issues of O-LCA

- O-LCA differs from previous methodologies because its object of study is the organization; its approach is the life cycle; and it is a multi-criteria environmental assessment.
- The four-step approach of LCA is used: goal and scope, inventory, impact assessment and interpretation.
- Main items that should be transparently described within the scope of O-LCA are summarized in Fig. 2.
- All the resources use and emissions of direct and indirect (upstream and downstream) activities should be taken into account, preferably with primary data (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2: Main elements in the scope definition of O-LCA.



## Future steps

- O-LCA may overcome some of the barriers for the spread of LCA in developing countries.
- O-LCA approach is a promising field for future advancements on social and economic LCA.
- The Guidance is now road tested by more than 10 organizations, public and private, from different sectors and regions. Outcomes from the pilot project are expected by beginning of 2017.

