

Guideline to Review the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report

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Abstract -Organizations involved in construction and development projects often have to use a systematic process called Environmental Impact Assessment procedures. The EIA is a process for identifying the (negative/positive) environmental effects of proposed developments prior to major decisions and commitments are granted. Thus EIA involves a technical and non-technical evaluations and mitigations intended to contribute to the decision making of EPA, to promote environmentally sound and sustainable developments through the identifications of appropriate alternatives and mitigation measures for overall development successes. The aim of EIA is to predict and evaluate the direct and indirect environmental, socio-economic and public health impacts of the proposed developments in a report or statement and ensure that a local public or competent authority has the full knowledge of the likely significant effects, for its own decision making process. The environmental concerns have become one of the major global issues that affect all nations individually and collectively. This paper attempts to address the main consolidation areas concerning improving and reviewing the quality control within the EIA process, and provides guideline for reviewing the quality of the Environmental Impact Assessment screening checklist and statement documents. The objectives of this guideline are to ensure the existence of key requirements in the EIA documents, to screen, determine the important environmental issues, to develop alternatives and/or mitigation measures that should be examined in EIA report. Also to Identify the nature and severity of the significant environmental impacts associated with the project along with the economic and social factors, and provide appropriate alternatives and mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for any environmental, socio-economic and public health impacts in a detailed terms of reference or scoping of work to ensure a high level of quality in EIA reports in order to achieve the desired success of HSEMS measures in the development projects.

Keywords: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); Terms of Reference (TOR); Health, Safety and Environment measurement system (HSEMS); Environmental Public Authority (EPA); International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA).

1. Introduction

The EIA process is generally marked by the following major phases, Pre-EIA stages including Project Screening and Scoping/TOR of the project.

This consist of EIA screening in the process by which a decision is taken on whether or not a full fledged EIA is required for a particular project. This ensures that a full EIA is only performed for projects with potentially significant adverse impacts or where impacts are not sufficiently known. Upon confirmation, scoping is the process of determining the content and extent of the EIA studies; including regulation and policies aspects. The Terms of Reference (TOR) provides clear instructions

to the project proponent on the information that needs to be submitted to the competent authority for EIA, and the studies to be undertaken to compile that information.

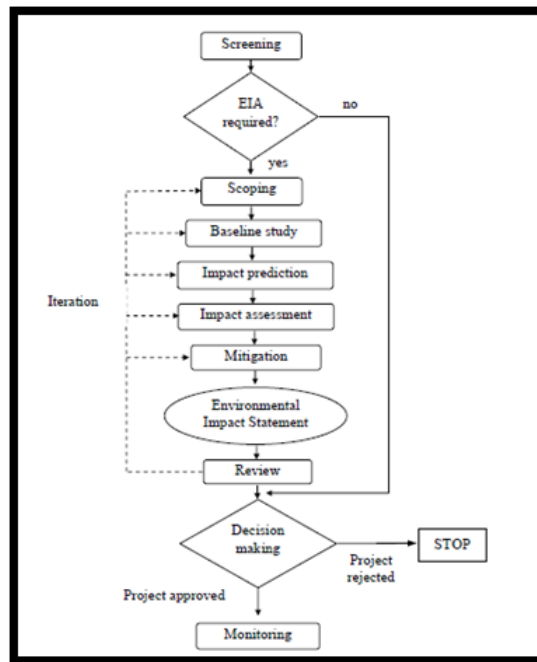


Fig. 1. Flow Chart (1) EIA Steps

Environmental Impact Assessment EIA, The process of identifying, predicting, evaluating and mitigating the geo-environmental and biological, social, and other relevant effects of development proposals prior to major decisions being taken and commitments made." International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). This paper provides Guidelines process outline for reviewing the quality of the Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) document.

The objectives of this paper are:

- To Ensure existence of key requirements in the EIA document.
- To establish baseline data or studies to support the project planning and construction if needed.
- To determine the important issues alternatives and mitigation measures that should be examined in EIS report.
- To identify the nature and severity of the significant environmental impact associated with the project.

2. Decision-Making and EIA Review:

- To determine whether the information is adequate for decision making process
- To assist in the review EIS reports and ensure a high level of quality.
- To enhance the quality of the EIS report in order to achieve the desired success of the HSE measures in projects.
- To approve or reject the proposed development or project.
- To impose of additional impact mitigation measures and monitoring.

3. Guidelines of Good Quality EIA Report

It is important to emphasize that the main aim of an EIS is to provide good quality information for tangible decision makers the main characteristics to meet this objective:

- A table of contents at the beginning of the document.
- Has a Non-Technical Summary, which does not contain technical terminology.
- A clear description of the development consent procedure and, how EIA fits within it.
- Reads as a single document with appropriate cross-referencing.

- Is concise, comprehensive and objective.
- Is written in an impartial manner without bias.
- Includes a full description of the development proposals.
- Makes effective use of diagrams, illustrations, photographs and other graphics to support the text.
- Uses consistent terminology with a glossary.
- References all information sources used.
- Has a clear explanation of complex issues.
- Contains a good description of the methods used for the studies of each environmental topic.
- Covers each environmental topic in a way, which is proportionate to its importance.
- Provides evidence of good consultations and model calculations.
- Includes a clear discussion of alternatives.
- Makes a commitment to provide
- Mitigation actions and continuous monitoring programme.

4. EIS Review Checklist

This checklist is designed to review the quality of EIS organized in the following elevation sections:

- Non-Technical Summary (Executive summary)
- Description of the project
- Alternatives
- Scoping and screening
- Regulatory Aspects
- Description of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project
- Description of the likely significant or major effects of the project
- Description of Mitigating Measures Of Negative Impacts
- Description of Environmental Monitoring Plan Quality of presentation
- Environmental management and training plan.
- Appendices

Within each section there are numbered Review Questions. For some questions, notes are provided to assist the reviewer.

5. The Review Process and Outcome

Having assessed the Review Areas, assigned assessment symbol to the Statement as a whole, and checked compliance against the relevant Regulations, it remains to summarize the judgment of ES quality in one or two paragraphs. This summary should list the main strengths and weaknesses of the Statement, especially those omissions that should be rectified before impacts can be satisfactorily assessed or evaluated. It should also record whether the Statement complies with minimum requirements and whether it complies more broadly with both the local and State Regulations, at the project location. Use the following symbols when completing the EIA screening.

Table. 1. Evaluation Symbols of EIA.

Symbol	Description
A (90-100)	Excellent provision of information with no gaps or weaknesses
B (80-89)	Good provision of information with only very minor weaknesses which are not of importance to the decision
C (70-79)	Adequate provision of information with any gaps or weaknesses in information not being vital to the decision process
D (60-69)	Weak provision of information with gaps and weaknesses which will hinder the decision process but
E (less Than 50)	Very Poor provision of information with major gaps or weaknesses which would prevent the decision process proceeding and require major work to complete

6. Conclusion

These guidelines offers better checks on quality EIA report based on the extent to which the environmental impacts identified, evaluated, and mitigated throughout project stages. Use Guidelines provide process and outlines for reviewing the quality of the Environment Impact assessment (EIA) document for any project or development with little or more complexity. Further, a complete and comprehensive EIA report provides valuable information for speedy decision-makings for sustainable development.

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Web sites:

- Web-1: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/eia-guidelines/g-review-full-text.pdf>
- Web-2: <http://www.sed.man.ac.uk/planning/research/publications/wp/eia/documents/OP55.pdf>
- Web-3: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/v9933e/v9933e00.HTM>
- Web-4: www.njv.com.fj/wp-content/uploads/EIA_process.jpg