



Government of Tamilnadu

Department of Employment and Training

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Subject : Environment, Biodiversity and Disaster Management
Topic : Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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Every country strives to progress ahead. One aspect of progress is economic development through manufacturing and trading. Every country build industry which provide employment, serve the consumers' needs and help to generate revenue. The dominant pattern of development that humankind has followed in recent decades has brought about large scale changes in the earth systems.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

EIA is a planning tool to achieve the goal of harmonizing development activities with the environmental concerns. Environment Impact Assessment in India is statutory backed by the Environment Protection Act in 1986, which contains various provisions on EIA methodology and process.

1. Serve as a primary environmental tool with clear provisions.
2. Apply consistently to all proposals with potential environmental impacts.
3. Use scientific practice and suggest strategies for mitigation.
4. Address all possible factors such as short term, long term, small scale and largescale effects.
5. Consider sustainable aspects such as capacity for assimilation, carrying capacity, biodiversity protection.
6. Lay down a flexible approach for public involvement.

The Objective of EIA

- (i) To identify, predict and evaluate the economic, environmental and social impact of development activities
- (ii) To provide information on the environmental consequences for decision making and

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(iii) To promote environmentally sound and sustainable development through the identification of appropriate alternatives and mitigation measures.

The important aspect of EIA

1. Risk Assessment
2. Environmental Management And
3. Post Product Monitoring

Rationale behind EIA:

EIA looks into various problems, conflicts and natural resource constraints which may not only affect the viability of a project but also predict if a project might harm to the people, their land, livelihoods and environment. Once these potential harmful impacts are predicted, the EIA process identifies the measures to minimize those impacts. Once the assessment is complete, the EIA findings are communicated to all stakeholders viz. developers, investors, regulators, planners, politicians, affected communities etc. On the basis of the conclusion of EIA process, the government can decide if a project should be given environment clearance or not. The developers and investors can also shape the project in such a way that its harms can be mitigated and benefits can be maximized.

Steps in the EIA Process

The eight steps of the EIA process:

- i. Screening:** First Stage of EIA, which determines whether the proposed project, requires an EIA and if it does, then the level of assessment required.
- ii. Scoping:** This stage identifies the key impacts that should be investigated. This stage also defines the time limit of the study.
- iii. Impact analysis:** This stage of EIA identifies and predicts the likely environmental and social impact of the proposed project and evaluates the significance.
- iv. Mitigation:** This step in EIA recommends the actions to reduce and avoid the potential adverse environmental consequences of development activities.

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- v. Reporting:** This stage presents the result of EIA in a form of a report to the decision-making body and other interested parties.
 - vi. Review of EIA:** It examines the adequacy and effectiveness of the EIA report and provides the information necessary for decision –making.
 - vii. Decision-making:** It decides whether the project is rejected, approved or needs further change.
 - viii. Post monitoring:** This stage comes into play once the project is commissioned. It checks to ensure that the impacts of the project do not exceed the legal standards and implementation of the mitigation measures are in the manner as described in the EIA report.

Benefits:

1. EIA provides a cost-effective method to eliminate or minimize the adverse impact of developmental projects.
2. EIA enables the decision makers to analyses the effect of developmental activities on the environment well before the developmental project is implemented.
3. EIA encourages the adaptation of mitigation strategies in the developmental plan.
4. EIA makes sure that the developmental plan is environmentally sound and within limits of the capacity of assimilation and regeneration of the ecosystem.
5. EIA links environment with development. The goal is to ensure environmentally safe and sustainable development.

Limitations of EIA

1. Time-consuming.
2. Little public participation in actual implementation.
3. Sometimes too focused on the scientific analysis.
4. Compliance monitoring after EIA is seldom carried out.

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5. Impact assessment processes are in place and applied in many countries, yet biodiversity is often inadequately addressed.
 6. There is a growing recognition of the need to better reflect biodiversity considerations in environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments.

Environmental Impact Assessment in India

EIA was introduced in India in 1978, with respect to river valley projects. On 27 January 1994, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MEF), Government of India, under the Environmental (Protection) Act 1986, made Environmental Clearance (EC) mandatory for expansion or modernization or for setting up new projects listed in Schedule 1 of the notification. Since then there have been 12 amendments made in the EIA notification of 1994. Both central and state authorities share the responsibility of EIA's development and management. EIA is now mandatory for 30 categories of projects, and these projects get Environmental Clearance (EC) only after the EIA requirements are fulfilled.

The MoEF&CC recently notified new EIA legislation in September 2006. The notification makes it mandatory for all projects to get environment clearance from the central government under the following categories:

1. Industries
2. Mining
3. Thermal power plants
4. River valley projects
5. Infrastructure and CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone)
6. Nuclear power projects.

However, the new legislation has entrusted the decision of clearing projects on the state government depending on the size/ capacity of the project. EIA appraises the environmental health and social implications of planned developmental projects. It thus links environment with development. The goal of EIA is to ensure environmentally safe and sustainable development.

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Questions:

1. What is Environment impact assessment? Explain the procedural steps involved in EIA?

