

Environmental Clearance & Impact Assessment

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Manifest Pedagogy

In the debate of environment vs development , EIA tries to strike a right balance with an objective of sustainable development. EIA activity make developmental projects more acceptable among people. As a part of environmental questions in mains it would be an important area of preparation.

In news

SC suspends eco clearance of International Airport in Goa

Placing it in the syllabus

Environmental impact assessment

Static dimensions

- What is Environmental clearance (EIA)
- Stages of clearance

Current dimensions

Positives and Negatives of EIA

Content

What Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both

beneficial and adverse.

UNEP defines Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a tool used to identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of a project prior to decision-making. It aims to predict environmental impacts at an early stage in project planning and design, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts, shape projects to suit the local environment and present the predictions and options to decision-makers. By using EIA both environmental and economic benefits can be achieved, such as reduced cost and time of project implementation and design, avoided treatment/clean-up costs and impacts of laws and regulations.

While all industrial projects may have some environmental impacts all of them may not be significant enough to warrant elaborate assessment procedures. The need for such exercises will have to be decided after initial evaluation of the possible implications of a particular project and its location. The projects which could be the candidates for detailed Environment Impact Assessment include the following:-

- Those which can significantly alter the landscape, land use pattern and lead to concentration of working and service population;
- Those which need upstream development activity like assured mineral and forest products supply or downstream industrial process development;
- Those involving manufacture, handling and use of hazardous materials;
- Those which are sited near ecologically sensitive areas, urban centers, hill resorts, places of scientific and religious importance.
- Industrial Estates with constituent units of various types which could cumulatively cause significant environmental damage.

“Environmental clearance” is the procedure for obtaining

government clearance for certain projects to be ' installed ' and ' modified. ' For projects that can cause high environmental pollution, environmental clearance is mandatory.

Environmental Clearance on the basis of environmental impact assessment is mandatory for various development projects. A beginning in this direction was made in our country with the impact assessment of river valley projects in 1978-79 and the scope has subsequently been enhanced to cover other developmental sectors such as industries, thermal power projects, mining schemes, etc.

Stages of EIA



The EIA process involves a number of steps, some of which are listed below:

Project screening: This entails the application of EIA to those projects that may have significant environmental impacts.

Scoping: This step seeks to identify, at an early stage, the key, significant environmental issues from among a host of possible impacts of a project and all the available alternatives.

Consideration of alternatives

Description of the project/development action: This step seeks to clarify the purpose and rationale of the project and understand its various characteristics, including the stages of development, location and processes.

Description of the environmental baseline: This includes the establishment of both the present and future state of the environment, in the absence of the project, taking into account the changes resulting from natural events and from

other human activities.

The prediction of impacts: This step aims to identify the likely magnitude of the change (i.e., impact) in the environment when the project is implemented in comparison with the situation when the project is not carried out.

Evaluation and assessment of significance: This seeks to assess the relative significance of the predicted impacts to allow a focus on key adverse impacts.

Mitigation: This involves the introduction of measures to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for any significant adverse impacts.

Public consultation and participation: This aims to assure the quality, comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the EIA, as well as to ensure that the public's views are adequately taken into consideration in the decision-making process.

EIS presentation: This is a vital step in the process. If done badly, much good work in the EIA may be negated.

Review: This involves a systematic appraisal of the quality of the EIS, as a contribution to the decision-making process.

Decision-making:

Post-decision monitoring: This involves the recording of outcomes associated with development impacts, after the decision to proceed with the project.

Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC)

The EAC is a multidisciplinary sectoral appraisal committee comprising of various subject matter experts for appraisal of sector-specific projects. The EAC is the recommendatory body. Based on the recommendations of the Expert Appraisal Committee, environmental clearance is accorded or rejected to the project by MoEF&CC.

Advantages of EIA

By using EIA both environmental and economic benefits can be achieved, such as:

- Reduced cost and time of project implementation and design,
- Avoided treatment/clean-up costs and impacts of laws and regulations.
- Lays base for environmentally sound projects;
- Greater awareness of environmental legislation;
- Protection of Environment
- Optimum utilization of resources(balance between development and Environmental protection)
- Informs decision akers

Limitations of EIA

- Time-consuming
- Little public participation in actual implementation
- Sometimes too focused on the scientific analysis
- Compliance monitoring after EIA is seldom carried out
- Impact assessment processes are in place and applied in many countries, yet biodiversity is often inadequately addressed.
- There is a growing recognition of the need to better reflect biodiversity considerations in environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments.