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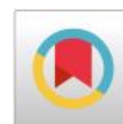


**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)-DECISION MAKING  
TOOL FOR PROJECT APPROVAL IN INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) can broadly be defined as a study of the effects of a proposed project, plan or program on the environment. A Strength, Weakness and Opportunity analysis taken up in this article has suggested that there are several issues that need to be readdressed. The opportunities are realized as increasing public awareness, initiatives of environmental groups and forward thinking to environmental plans and policies. Poor governance, rapid economic reforms and favors to small - scale units are threats the system. This paper concludes with EIA procedure in India.

**Keywords:**

*Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), India, Process, Beneficial and Drawback impacts.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The concept of environmental protection and resources management has traditionally been given due emphasis and woven in all facts of life in India. Past people to live in perfect harmony with nature. Now, some changing life style, increasing rate of urbanization, infrastructure development and industrialization development have caused environmental pollution and degradation (Chopra, et.al., 1993). EIA endeavors to make certain that budding impacts are acknowledged and attended to at a premature stage at some point in the project planning and design. Formal impact assessment may be governed by rule of administrative procedure, regarding public participation and documentation of decision making and may be subject to judicial review. Having read the winding ups of an environmental impact assessment, project planners and engineers can outline the project so as to achieve maximum benefits and sustainability without causing undesirable impacts.

**CONCEPT OF EIA**

EIA is a process used to examine the environmental consequences or impacts, both beneficial and adverse, of a proposed development project and to ensure that these effects are taken into account in project design. The EIA is therefore based on predictions. These impacts can include all relevant aspects of the natural, economic, human and social environment. The study therefore requires a multidisciplinary approach and feasibility stage of a project.

## **ORIGIN OF EIA IN INDIAN SCENARIO**

Indian familiarity with Environmental Impact Assessment commenced more than 20 years back. It went viatic in the year 1976-77 when the planning commission requested the Department of Science and Technology to pore over the river-valley projects from an ecological point of view. After 1970, comprehensive environmental laws were enacted by the Central Government in India. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. In September 2006, the union Ministry of Environment and Forest passed a new EIA legislation. It making mandatory for various projects such as mining, thermal power plants, river valley, infrastructure etc. to get environmental clearance (Mhaskar, 2005).

## **PRINCIPAL OF EIA**

A general principal of assessment and other processes that relate closely to the review of environmental impacts that may result from a proposed project. The following are well recognized processes: Risk Assessment, Environmental Management systems, Health Impact Assessment, Development Impact Assessment, Project Assessment, Climate Impact Assessment, Social Impact assessment, Technology Assessment, Ecological Impact Assessment, Demographic Impact Assessment, Economic and Fiscal Impact Assessment, Environmental Auditing, Environmental Impact Assessment, Public Consultation, Public Participation, Strategic Impact Assessment (Dutta and Bandopadhyay, 2010).

## **PROCESSING OF EIA**

The Environmental Impact Assessment entails nine steps, where in each step is equally significant in influencing the overall performance of the project, these steps are (Fig. 1):

**Screening:** First stage of EIA, which determines whether the proposed project, requires an EIA or not. If it does, then the level of assessment required.

**Scoping:** Scoping is identify problems that need to be mitigated or that may cause the project to be canceled. This stage also defines the boundary and time limit of the study.

**Public Involvement:** This aim to assure the quality, comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the EIA.

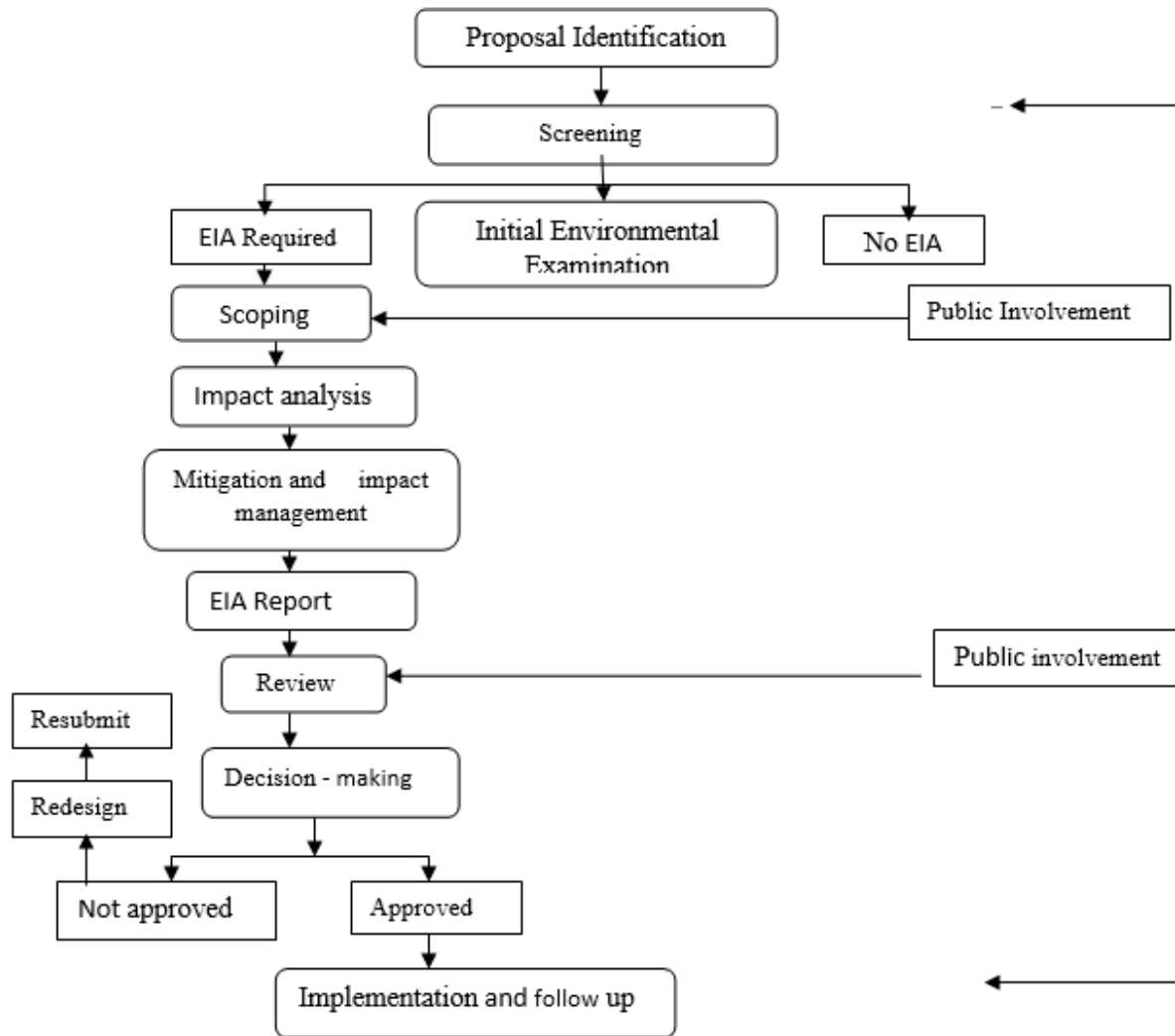
**Impact Analysis:** This stage of EIA identifies and predicts the likely environmental and social impact of the proposed project and evaluates the significance.

**Mitigation:** EIA, mitigation measures are proposed to avoid or reduce environmental and social impacts.

**Report:** Report is summarizes the description of the project, baseline conditions, important findings, regional setting, and impact prediction of the study.

**Review of EIA:** It examines the adequacy and effectiveness of the EIA report and provides the information and effectiveness decision-making.

**Decision-making:** It decides whether the project is rejected, approved or needs further change. The assessment has to be completed within a period of 90 days from the receipt of the requisite documents from the project authorities and completion of public hearing. The decision has to be conveyed to the proponent within 30 days thereafter.



**Figure 1:** Generalized EIA Process.

**Post Monitoring:** Post Project Monitoring aims to ensure that an action had been implemented in accordance with the measures specified, while providing the Environmental Clearance.

### **BENEFITS OF EIA**

EIA is a universally accepted observable fact for setting off impact of a project as its preliminary phase. Some most important forms criterion are: Specific legal requirements (e.g. national laws, standards conventions, relevant policies, International agreements etc.), Cost of mitigation, Public views and complaints, Geographical extent of the impact (e.g. has Trans boundary implications), Reversibility of impact, Duration, Likelihood or probability of occurrence (Very likely, Unlikely).

### **DRAWBACK OF EIA**

Present of EIA practice in India is restricted to project level. It also has several drawbacks, (Lohani et al., 1997; Rao, 1997). These are: Improper monitoring and Implementation, Screening and Scoping processes are not well defined, Inadequate public participation, Insufficient data, Lack of

coordination and poorly defined decision-making process, Poor governance and Corruption, Poor quality EIA reports and non-accountability of EIA professionals.

## CONCLUSION

EIA is an important tool in assuring that projects and plans will not give an adverse impact on the environment. The aim is not to produce the reports that describe the impact. “Make things happen” i.e. initiate a process that gives the opportunity to implement the alternative that is regarded as “best” by as many involved as possible. Social aspects come into focus together with scientific and technical aspects. This paper concludes with some contemplation on the potential steps considered necessary to improve the effectiveness and strategy of the EIA process. These suggestions are not only felt significant for Indian System but may also prove helpful for other developing countries those are undergoing similar developments.

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