

Recommendations on Environmental Impact Analysis for Developing Countries

On the basis of papers presented at the International Conference on Environmental Impact Analysis for Developing Countries* and the ensuing discussions, there was general agreement among the participants on the following recommendations:

1. EIA should be made mandatory in all developing countries. Those countries that do not at present have the necessary legislative frameworks should take immediate steps to make EIA compulsory. Laws and regulations, however, by themselves, are not enough. All efforts should be made to ensure that the legal requirements are actually and properly implemented. UNEP and UNDP should assist those countries that require assistance to develop appropriate legal framework and ensure due implementation.

2. Methodologies that are currently available for EIA are generally not appropriate for developing countries. Much of the work that is now being carried out in this area is somewhat academic in nature, such that its operational applications leave much to be desired. Most urgently needed are cost-effective and efficient means of carrying out, and then implementing, EIA as an integral component for achieving sustainable development. It is also necessary to ensure that the methodologies developed would enable developing countries to carry out EIA at limited cost and with the expertise available, and that it can be completed within a reasonable time-frame. Equally, EIA must consider both positive and negative environmental impacts. National and international organizations should work together to develop operational EIA methodologies. Special consideration should be given as to how best to handle the environmental impacts of small-scale industries.

3. While developing countries can get information on EIAs that are carried out in developed countries, south-south information transfer in this area is currently almost negligible. What is immediately needed is an objective and reliable review of the current status of the effectiveness of using EIA in developing countries, the methodologies employed and their relative merits and constraints, the main features of their implementation processes, and the emerging trends. As a first step, it is recommended that UNEP, UNDP, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), prepare such a review for the Asian region.

4. In many developing countries, considerable problems and constraints exist for carrying out EIAs. There is an urgent need to establish clear and unambiguous guidelines for EIA that would be acceptable to relevant Ministries, United Nations Agencies, Asian and other Development Banks, and bilateral aid organizations. It is recommended that National Workshops be organized, which would include all the relevant parties—including environmental nongovernmental organizations—to develop acceptable guidelines.

5. It is a very difficult, if not impossible, task for analysts in developing countries to find good case-studies as examples of cost-effective EIAs that have been carried out in other developing countries. It would be very helpful if good EIA case-studies from developing countries could be identified and then published as a Handbook that would be easily available to those who require them. It is accordingly recommended that:

i) UNEP, UNDP, and the International Society for Ecological Modelling (ISEM), work together to prepare such a Handbook;

ii) UNIDO and the International Association for Clean Technology (IACT) collaborate to prepare a Handbook of good EIA case-studies from industry; and

iii) UNDP, UNEP, and the International Water Resources Association, work together to prepare a similar Handbook for the water sector.

6. Very little monitoring and follow-up work has been done in developing countries to see how the forecasts made by the initial EIA studies compare with the actual impacts after the implementation of the projects. If the reliability of the EIA methodologies is to be improved, environmental impact monitoring after project implementation is an essential requirement. It is recommended that national and international organizations collaborate on a series of specific case-studies in which EIA forecasts made during the project-approval phase are compared with the observed impacts after implementation. Results of such intercomparison studies should be made widely available.

7. Risk analysis and social impact analysis should be integrated within the framework of EIA methodologies, risk and social impact analyses being still less advanced than is the case with EIA. UNDP, UNIDO, UNEP, and ADB, in collaboration with IACT and ISEM, should sponsor research to develop operational methodologies for risk analysis and social impact analysis.

8. Public participation being an important requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment, UNEP, UNIDO, and UNDP, should sponsor studies to review the extent of public participation and their relative effectiveness in conducting EIA studies in various developing countries. Such comparative studies would assist countries to determine the best alternative available to them to ensure public involvement in EIA.

9. Education and training in EIA are essential for all developing countries, with training of trainers needing priority attention. All international and national organizations should encourage education and training in EIA, to develop adequate expertise in developing countries. The ultimate objective of such education and training exercises should be to develop an adequate number of professionals in each country who would be able to carry out EIA with indigenous expertise.

10. The Pollution Control Research Institute of India should be complimented for organizing a very successful, productive, and much-needed Conference on EIA for Developing Countries. The Institute should be further encouraged to convene and conduct seminars, workshops, and training courses, on EIA for specific industrial sectors, individually or in cooperation with appropriate national and international organizations. One of the priority sectors could be EIA of thermal power-stations.

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* See pp. 66-9 of our latest issue.—Ed.

The World Association of Soil and Water Conservation: Activities in Europe

Europe needs an effective soil and water conservation lobby. At present, there is no single organization which can bridge the gaps between Europe's laboratories and its agri-

cultural lands, its academics and its engineers, its conservationists and its farmers, its specialists and the 'ordinary people'. There is no organization which can mount an