

Getting value from the case studies

These case studies are organised to correspond broadly with the order of training topics in Section E of the *UNEP Environmental Impact Assessment Training Resource Manual*. For reference, Topics 1 to 3 respectively introduce the EIA process, the legal and institutional framework and public participation; Topics 4 to 11 cover the main stages of the EIA process from screening to implementation and follow up; and Topics 12 to 15 respectively address EIA project management, social impact assessment (SIA), strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and new directions. Each case is keyed to a particular Topic of the Manual.

This initial reference is designed to guide EIA trainers in their primary search for case materials. However, they also are encouraged to conduct a broader review of the studies, working through them systematically if time permits. As will become quickly apparent, many of the studies are relatively comprehensive in that a number of EIA steps or elements are covered. Others are more general in that they emphasise EIA trends or issues related to procedure and methodology in a particular country or project context. Key words at the end of each case indicate the main subjects covered.

Collectively, the 30 case studies in this compendium cover a diverse range of EIA experience from some 25 countries. These include poor, low-income countries where EIA is not well developed and more rapidly developing countries where EIA is on a sounder footing. Approximately half of the case studies relate to EIA of specific projects, with particular representation of hydro and road schemes. Inevitably, the treatment of EIA practice is uneven with respect to topics in the Manual and to aspects that are highlighted. Nevertheless, there is valuable material on the real world of EIA in developing countries, and cues as to how they can be related to Manual Topics.

Although others may find them useful, the case studies are primarily intended for EIA trainers and users of the Manual. Their particular use, in that context, will depend on the results of the training needs analysis (TNA), which is an integral part of the approach outlined in the Manual. When custom-designing EIA training courses, these findings will give pointers to which cases may be helpful and how they could be recast to make them more relevant, useful and interesting to participants. In sum, the compendium of cases is best seen as a menu of options, which can be selected and adapted to purpose.

Wherever possible, EIA trainers are encouraged to develop their own case studies based on local experience. A framework for this purpose, which was used to compile the case studies in this volume, can be found in Section D of the Manual. In the interim, trainers can use the case studies in this volume to

highlight EIA trends and issues of particular interest to their situation and participants' needs.

When selecting cases, trainers are encouraged to:

- compare case study characteristics with EIA experience in their country;
- identify the differences and similarities in the EIA arrangements and elements;
- consider if there are aspects that illustrate lessons that are applicable to issues of EIA practice locally;
- relate these, when appropriate, to internationally recognized standards of EIA good practice (which are set out in the training topics of the Manual); and
- ensure these comparisons are realistic and practicable, leading toward ways and means of improving EIA process and practice that can be implemented.

It may be useful first to incorporate into training materials EIA trends and lessons from neighbouring countries or regions that have similar capacities and issues. There are major differences in the development of EIA systems and standards of practice in the developing world, which need to be taken into account. Some developing countries have considerable EIA experience, predating that of many developed countries. Others have yet to introduce or implement their own EIA legislation, although they may apply EIA to projects that are financed by development banks and agencies.

It may also be useful to evaluate the case studies against internationally accepted EIA principles and standards of good practice. There are various benchmarks that could be used or adapted for such a review. One approach would be to adopt the guidelines of the World Bank or a regional development bank, which apply to borrowing countries for projects financed through their lending activities. Another would be to adapt the *Report Card* of the International Study of the Effectiveness of Environmental Assessment as a checklist. The fold-out at the back of the book provides an easy-use form of this checklist which can be viewed while reading the individual case studies. Most of the case studies include a section on lessons learned, which incorporates the report card approach.

Some things to look for

The Manual underlines the reciprocal relationship of EIA practice and training in the context of capacity building (see Section B). EIA good practice is identified as the basis for quality training. In turn, EIA training has an acknowledged role in improving EIA practice, including strengthening institutional arrangements as well as implementing them more effectively.

What are some of the things EIA trainers might look for in that regard when reviewing the case studies?

Using the yardsticks described above, both positive and negative aspects of EIA practice can be noted from a review of the case studies. Often, the experiences described indicate approaches that are systematic and appropriate, and in some instances, innovative (such as the Environmental Review Fund established in the Philippines). It is evident that EIA procedure and practice in many developing countries has more points of similarity than difference with that in the developed world, and the necessary expertise is available to carry out EIA methodology. Not unexpectedly, the case studies also highlight a number of areas where EIA arrangements are either deficient or their implementation wanting.

Take as an example public involvement in the EIA process, which, typically, is considered to be deficient in developing countries compared to practice in the developed world. Collectively, the cases show evidence of effective practice in this area, as well as examples where lack of public input has resulted in conflict over project implementation (both are described in the Ghana case). Some issues related to public consultation in EIA are distinctive to parts of the developing world, such as being sensitive to cultural and historical traditions and respecting rights and interests of stakeholders. In some cases, social impact assessment (SIA) methodology has proven useful in engaging youth, women and elders in traditional communities (see Nigerian experience).

The areas and aspects of EIA procedure and practice that require improvement can be divided into two categories. First, there are issues that are similar to those experienced in developed countries. Examples include lack of effective monitoring, limited or no analysis of cumulative effects and inadequate mitigation measures – compounded in developing countries by cost constraints (as exemplified in the EIA of the highway corridor in Mexico).

Second, other concerns are particular to developing regions and broadly reflect their stage of development and political traditions. Examples include poor compliance in implementing newly established EIA arrangements (as in the Syrian case), and the openness of decision-makers to taking account of information in an EIA report (as in the Yemen case). In some cases, this brings into question the whole credibility of the EIA process (as in the case of the proposal for prawn farming in Tanzania).

This second category of concerns are particular targets for EIA training and capacity building to strengthen institutions and core competencies. A perennial question in this regard centres on the portability of so called western EIA processes and procedures. With certain reservations, the case studies in this compendium indicate that EIA arrangements used by development banks or other countries can be used, provided that specific

care is taken to adjust these to the situation and circumstances of a particular country. Further guidance on this matter can be found in the Manual and the companion volume on *Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment: Towards an Integrated Approach*, which has particular reference to developing countries.