

Overview of Study and Key Issues for Discussion at Bath Forum on EIA Effectiveness

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Study profile

- What: review and update the study of EA effectiveness completed in 1996
- Why: major changes taken place in EA and the world in which it operates
- How: use the final report as a baseline against which recent progress can be evaluated

Study profile (cont)

- Who: lead collaborators; recognised experts and practitioners (focus workshops), IAIA membership at large (survey monkey) and related networks (eg IEMA, EIANZ)
- When: to be completed by year end



Is EIA practice still on the right track today?

courtesy of Peter Croal, CIDA, Canada

Goal posts have shifted.....

- **Environment: climate change, biodiversity loss**
- **Economy: financial meltdown, massive stimulus, infrastructure projects**
- **Equity: poverty and persist**





The world is changing: Will EIA practice?

courtesy of Peter Croal, CIDA, Canada

Purpose of the update

- To take stock of the status of EA practice :
 - a) major trends and developments
 - b) critical issues >> longstanding and emerging (global change, resource security)
 - c) future directions to improve EA process, practice and performance
- Specifically what can practitioners do?

EIA Component

- Overshadowed recently by other developments
- Still critical particularly in developing countries; importance of the BRICS
- Focus on benchmarking good practice in leading countries
- Taking stock in progress in BRICSAVI

SEA Component

- Increasing adoption including among donor agencies and emerging economies
- Family of approaches and brand names
- Mainstream influence of EC Directive and SEA Protocol
- Policy level application more prevalent than conventional wisdom dictates

Sustainability appraisal

- Emerging as new ‘poster boy/ girl’ of impact assessment
- Applied at EIA and SEA level
- Practice is patchy and variable; diluting environmental is a concern
- Lessons from UK SEA practice expected to be instructive

Effectiveness triage (three clearance bars)

- Enabling conditions (what must or should be done) – legal and institutional framework and methodological realities
- State of practice (what is done) – macro and micro level (cases of good practice) (what is the art of the possible)
- Effectiveness and performance (what is the outcome) – contribution to decision making; environmental benefits

Unpacking EIA good practice

General issues

- What works well, what works less well, what needs work?
- How to build sustainability considerations into key elements of EIA process?
- Examples that demonstrate good practice/sustainability innovation

Consultation

- Procedural cornerstone or overrated and underperforming?
- Finding the right mix of procedures
- Balancing efficiency and fairness
- From consultation to mediation in sustainability discourse?

Screening and scoping

- Laying the basis for good or bad practice?
- How to focus on the impacts that matter?
- Role of scoping in identifying alternatives (BPEO)
- Taking account of sustainability issues

Significance

- Evidence based determination or generalized claim?
- Use of criteria to substantiate significance
- Attribution of significance before and after mitigation
- Incorporating sustainability thresholds (safe minima or bottom lines)

Mitigation

- Impact-tailored solutions or usually prescribed measures?
- Precautionary principle and the mitigation hierarchy
- Use of offsets to compensate for all residual losses (maintain natural capital at current levels)

Follow up

- Core component or weak link?
- Practical approaches to impact monitoring, evaluating effectiveness of mitigation measures and learning from experience
- Protocols for managing toward sustainable outcomes

Future directions

- Macro level scenarios: business as usual, moderate reform or time for a fundamental rethink ?
- Micro level implications for good practice
- Individual skills and competencies to deliver sustainability assurance
- Training for the new practitioner