
Topic 13

Social impact assessment

Aims and objectives of SIA are to:

- analyse how proposals affect people
- identify and mitigate adverse impacts
- enhance benefits
- help manage social change

Scope of SIA

- SIA conducted under EIA legislation and procedure
- scope of SIA differs with jurisdictional arrangements
- initially limited to environmentally-related changes
- larger range of social impacts now considered
- comprehensive SIA often a separate process
- focuses on social issues of sustainable development, poverty alleviation and justice

Causes of social impacts

- demographic change, e.g. population size and composition
- economic change, e.g. employment and income
- environmental change, e.g. air and water quality
- institutional change, e.g. law and administration

Types of social impact

- **lifestyle – behaviour and relationships**
- **cultural – customs, values and religious beliefs**
- **community – infrastructure, services and networks**
- **amenity/ quality of life – sense of security, livability and futurity**
- **health – mental and physical well being**

SIA benefits can include:

- reduced impact on people
- enhanced benefits for those affected
- avoiding delays and obstruction
- lowering costs by timely actions
- better community and stakeholder relationships
- improved future proposals

Steps in the SIA process

- public involvement plan
- identification of alternatives
- profiling of baseline conditions
- scoping of key issues
- projection of estimated effects
- prediction and evaluation of responses to impacts

Steps in the SIA process

(continued)

- estimate indirect and cumulative impacts
- recommend changes to alternatives
- develop and implement a mitigation plan
- develop and implement a monitoring programme

Principles of SIA good practice

- involve the diverse public
- analyse impact equity
- focus the assessment
- identify methods and assumptions and define significance
- provide feedback on social impacts to project planners

Principles of SIA good practice

(continued)

- use experienced SIA practitioners
- establish monitoring and mitigation programmes
- identify data sources
- plan for gaps in data

Sources of SIA information

- data on the proposal
- experience with similar actions
- census and vital statistics
- secondary documents
- survey and field research

Methods commonly used for predicting social impacts include:

- trend extrapolations
- population multipliers
- use of expert knowledge
- scenario building
- comparative studies

Basis of good practice in prediction of social impacts

- understanding those affected and their likely responses
- comparisons with experience in similar cases
- use of appropriate expertise and knowledge base

Good practice in analysing impact equity

- predict adverse impacts
- specify for each group
- explain reasons for variations
- highlight impacts on vulnerable groups
- guard against representational bias

Good practice in impact mitigation and management

- identify mitigation measures for each impact
- customise them to the different groups affected
- give priority to avoiding social impacts
- then minimise them as far as practicable
- use compensation as a last resort
- ensure impacts are not borne disproportionately by one group

Good practice in impact mitigation and management

(continued)

- no one should be worse off than before
- treat relocation/resettlement as a special case
- livelihoods of those displaced should be improved
- enhance benefits for local people through job training and development packages