



## Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Impact Assessment, CBBIA- IAIA BOSTON 05 Role Playing Exercise on 'Reaching Decision Makers'

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Lucy Emerton, IUCN**

IAIA's Capacity Building for Biodiversity and Impact Assessment (CBBIA) programme organized two days of training prior to IAIA '05 on 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Impact Assessment'. During the final session, Peter-John Meynell and Lucy Emerton facilitated a role-playing exercise which was very well received with excellent involvement and participation of all concerned. The purpose of the exercise was to explore ways of reaching decision-makers and influencing them with respect to incorporation of biodiversity issues and concerns.

The process was as follows:

1. **Objective:** To illustrate the different ways and means that are used to influence the decision makers
2. **Materials:** Sketch Map on a flip chart of a hypothetical project to build a hydropower dam in a country – Potatostan, to supply power to Powa City. In the process, Scroodup Village would be flooded. This village and the proposed project are located in part of a national park, the breeding site of endangered species. A proposed power transmission line would cross an elephant migration route. The project would disrupt migration of commercial fish species, and deprive the downstream area – Nowata District- of water.
3. The participants were divided into 8 groups to represent:
  - a. Prime Minister – PJM
  - b. Donor agency – Royal Netherground Embassy
  - c. Dam proponent – Power company
  - d. Ministry of Finance and planning, and Ministry of Energy
  - e. Ministry of Wildlife and Environment
  - f. Scroodup Village
  - g. Nowata District
  - h. Hugatree NGO
4. One person from the participants was nominated to be the leader of each group, and then the other participants were allocated to each group by simple numbering except for the Prime Minister, who was by himself.
5. Each group was allowed ½ hour to discuss between themselves the strategy that they would adopt to try to influence the decision and to elaborate on 5 main points that they would make at a public meeting. Negotiations and alliances between groups were allowed.
6. After ½ hour, the Prime Minister called the public meeting to order and gave the floor to each of the stakeholder groups, starting with the Power company and ending with the Ministries and finally the donor. Each group had 5 minutes to present.
7. Each group entered into the spirit of the role play and each group came up with very different strategies illustrating clearly their points of view. It was fascinating how, given a stakeholder brief they were able to come up with very different approaches.

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8. The proponent stressed benefits to the community ('powa to the people'), especially in terms of job generation and downplayed impacts on biodiversity, though offering funds for conservation and mitigation projects. Local community representatives helped their elder to a seat where the respected gentleman, in a quavering voice, stressed the long history of Scroodup village and the spiritual dependence of the community on water, wetlands and wildlife. The Ministries were not in agreement, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Energy being strongly in support and the Minister for Wildlife and the Environment stressing the need for better information about the impacts on water supply, particularly for downstream wildlife and communities. Hugatree NGO had focused on forming strong stakeholder alliances to develop opposition to the project, rather than stressing specific biodiversity concerns. The Donor maintained an objective stance. Certain representatives (who shall remain nameless) mentioned their desire for a larger house.. Finally the proponent stressed the need for investment in the current financial year and indicated that alternative locations for the project were available in neighbouring countries which were interested in the benefits the project could bring.
9. The Prime Minister then summarized the presentations and approaches used by the different groups. He queried the failure of the proponent to produce a comprehensive Environmental Statement and concurred with the suggestions from the Minister for the Environment, stakeholders and the NGO that further studies were required!!

Photographs are provided to show the sketch chart, a participant meeting, the entire meeting, an example presentation, and one example of role playing (tribal elder being helped back to his seat).

### **Assessment**

The role play worked very well and was enjoyed by all and caused a great deal of comment and discussion afterwards – hence the need to document the exercise.

It could be improved by

- a) Providing each group with common information prior to the exercise, together with specific selective briefs about the proposed development, containing exclusive information for each group, so that they could be a bit better prepared
- b) Providing say one hour instead of ½ hour for discussions and negotiations
- c) Allowing a ½ hour session at the end for joint analysis and reflection on what the participants observed about the process, the strategies used and their effectiveness.

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