Topic 4—Screening

Objectives

To introduce the concept of screening.

To describe different procedures and methods for the conduct of screening, and to compare their strengths and weaknesses.

To emphasise the importance of 'significance' in screening.

Relevance

Screening determines whether or not a proposal requires an EIA and, if so, what level of analysis is necessary. This process brings clarity and certainty to the implementation of EIA, ensuring that it neither entails excessive review nor overlooks proposals that warrant examination.

Timing

Two hours (not including training activity)

Important note to trainers

You should design your presentation with the needs and background of participants in mind, and concentrate on those sections most relevant to your audience. The session presentation timings are indicative only.

Time taken for the training activities can vary enormously depending on the depth of treatment, the existing skills and knowledge of participants and the size of the group.

☑ Information checklist

Obtain or develop the following, as appropriate:

- ❑ a description of current screening practice (where it exists) and how it fits into the whole EIA process;
- ❑ the responsibilities and roles of the various parties in screening;
- ❑ legal requirements, lists of included (and excluded) projects, threshold criteria, environmental overviews, guidelines for assessing significance, etc. used during screening;
- ❑ examples of the conduct of screening (locally if possible), application of mechanisms, completed reports etc. along with the final screening decision;
- ❑ contact list of people, agencies, organisations and environmental information/ data systems able to provide assistance in relation to screening; and
- ❑ other resources that may be available such as videos, journal articles, computer programmes, lists of speakers, and case studies.

Session outline

Welcome participants to the session by introducing yourself and getting them to introduce themselves. Outline the overall coverage of the session, its objectives, and why they are important.

This topic introduces the different procedures and methods for identifying whether or not an EIA is required for a proposal. It examines their relative strengths and weaknesses, and allows participants to gain initial familiarity with the concept of impact 'significance' and its importance in triggering the right level of EIA review.

Introduce the purpose of screening. Outline the characteristics and outcomes of the screening process, noting that full EIA is required only for certain types of major projects. Mention that in some EIA systems there is an overlap between the screening and the scoping stages of the EIA process (see also Topic *5 – Scoping*).

1

Screening is the first stage of the EIA process. Some type of screening procedure is necessary because of the large number of projects and activities that are potentially subject to EIA. The purpose of screening is to identify the proposals that require an EIA and exclude those that do not. It is intended to ensure that the form or level of any EIA review is commensurate with the importance of the issues raised by a proposal.

The conduct of screening thus involves making a preliminary determination of the expected impact of a proposal on the environment and of its relative significance. A certain level of basic information about the proposal and its location is required for this purpose. The time taken to complete the screening process will depend upon the type of proposal, the environmental setting and the degree of experience or understanding of its potential effects. Most proposals can be screened very quickly (in an hour or less) but some will take longer and a few will require an extended screening or initial assessment.

Similarly, the majority of proposals may have few or no impacts and will be screened out of the EIA process. A smaller number of proposals will require further assessment. Only a limited number of proposals, usually major projects, will warrant a full EIA because they are known or considered to have potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment; for example, on human health and safety, rare or endangered species, protected areas, fragile or valued ecosystems, biological diversity, air and water quality, or the lifestyle and livelihood of local communities.


2

The screening process can have one of four outcomes:

- no further level of EIA is required;
- a full and comprehensive EIA is required;
- a more limited EIA is required (often called preliminary or initial assessment); or
- further study is necessary to determine the level of EIA required (often called an initial environmental evaluation or examination [IEE]).


3

Screening establishes the basis for scoping, which identifies the key impacts to be studied and establishes terms of reference for an EIA. Many EIA systems have formal screening and scoping procedures. In some cases, however, these terms may be used differently or applied at the discretion of the proponent (as with scoping in the European EIA Directive). Also, on occasion, the screening and scoping stages may overlap, for example, when a further study (or IEE) is undertaken to determine whether or not the potential impacts are significant enough to warrant a full EIA.

Discuss the different procedures and methods used to screen proposals, highlighting their advantages and disadvantages. Indicate how they might be combined into a comprehensive approach to screening or extended as part of an initial assessment.

The requirements for screening and the procedure to be followed are often defined in the applicable EIA law or regulations. In many cases, the proposals to which EIA applies are listed in an annex. Usually, the proponent is responsible for carrying out screening, although this is done by the competent authority in some EIA systems. Whatever the requirements, screening should occur as early as possible in the development of the proposal so that the proponent and other participants are aware of the EIA obligations. It should be applied systematically and consistently (so that the same decisions would be reached if others conducted the screening process).

The screening procedures employed for this purpose can be classified into two broad, overlapping approaches:

- *prescriptive or standardised approach* – proposals subject to or exempt from EIA are defined or listed in legislation and regulations; and
- *discretionary or customised approach* – proposals are screened on an individual or case-by-case base, using indicative guidance.


4

Specific methods used in screening include:

- legal (or policy) definition of proposals to which EIA does or does not apply;
- inclusion list of projects (with or without thresholds) for which an EIA is automatically required;

- exclusion list of activities which do not require EIA because they are insignificant or are exempt by law (e.g. national security or emergency activities); and
- criteria for case-by-case screening of proposals to identify those requiring an EIA because of their potentially significant environmental effects.

Both prescriptive and discretionary approaches have a place and their specific procedures can be combined into a comprehensive procedure (as shown in Figure 1). Where inclusive project lists are used, the disposition of most proposals will be immediately apparent. However, some proposals will be on the borderline in relation to a listed threshold and for others, the environmental impacts may be unclear or uncertain. In these situations, case-by-case screening should be undertaken, applying any indicative guidelines and criteria established for this purpose. This process gives the proponent or competent authority greater discretion than mandatory lists in determining the requirement for EIA.

5

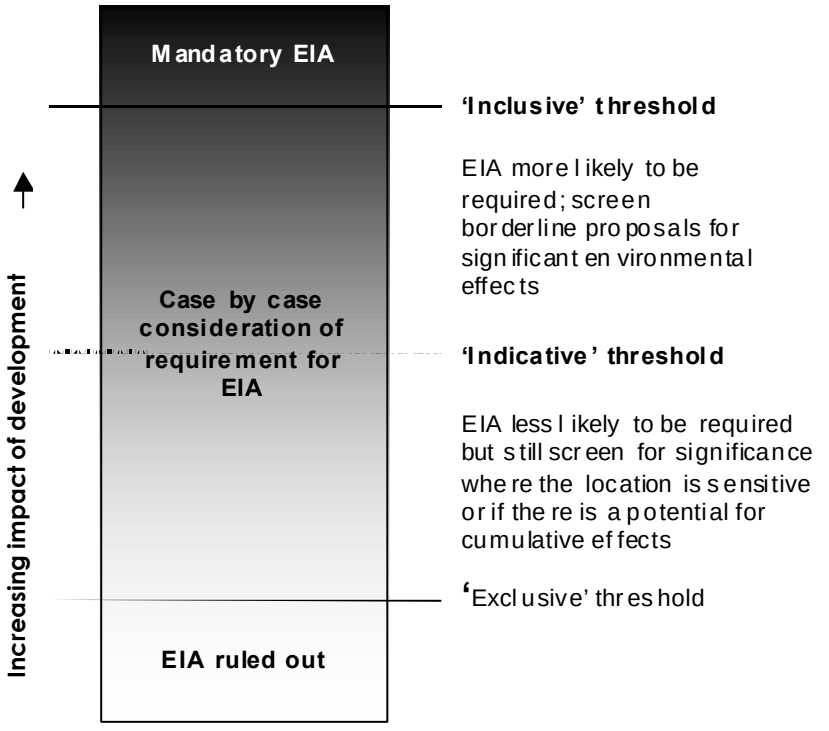

Figure 1: A framework for screening

6

In this context, screening is a flexible process and can be extended into preliminary forms of EIA study. These 'extended screening' procedures include:

- initial environmental examination – carried out in cases where the environmental impacts of a proposal are uncertain or unknown (e.g. new technologies or undeveloped areas);
- environmental overview – carried out as a rapid assessment of the environmental issues and impacts of a proposal; and
- class screening – carried out for a family of small projects or repetitive activities, where the environmental effects and means of mitigation are known but there is potential for cumulative impacts (e.g. dredging, road realignment, bank stabilisation).

Discuss the use of project lists and thresholds, noting their strengths and weaknesses. Consider if these are locally applicable.

Project lists are widely used to screen proposals. These lists are of two types. Most are 'inclusion' lists, which describe the project types and size thresholds that are known or considered to have significant or serious environmental impacts. Usually, listed projects that fall within these predetermined thresholds will be subject automatically to full and comprehensive EIA. Some EIA systems also maintain 'exclusion' lists of activities that are exempt because they are known to have little or no environmental impact.

The inclusion lists used by countries and international organisations differ in content, comprehensiveness, threshold levels and requirements for mandatory application. In certain EIA systems, scale thresholds are specified for each type of listed project for which an EIA is mandatory. Other projects that may require an EIA are screened individually against environmental significance criteria, such as emission levels or proximity to sensitive and protected areas. Internationally, reference is often made to:

- Annexes 1 and 11 of the European EIA Directive, which respectively list projects subject to mandatory EIA and non-mandatory EIA; and
- Annex E of the World Bank Operational Directive on EA, which is illustrative and provides a framework for screening.

Use of these lists is reported by the World Bank to be a reliable aid to the classification of proposals into one of three categories (see Box 1):

- projects requiring a full EIA because of their likely environmental effects (see Box 2);

- projects not requiring a full EIA but warranting a further level of assessment (see Box 3); and
- projects not requiring further environmental analysis (for example health and nutrition, institutional and human resource development and technical assistance).

Listed projects provide a standardised framework for screening proposals. This approach is simple to apply, at least in its most basic form of identi-fying the type and size of project for which EIA is mandatory or almost certainly required. However, project lists should be used cautiously and with due regard to their weaknesses, especially if they are the sole basis for screening. The automatic application of EIA to proposals may be avoided by staying just below the predetermined size threshold; for example building a major road in 19 km sections when the threshold for inclusion is 20 km. Secondary project lists or other screening procedures should be in place to ensure such proposals are subject to the appropriate level of EIA.

World Bank and international experience indicates that project lists should be used flexibly in screening proposals. Reference should be made to the location and setting of the proposal, as well as its scale. A low-head hydropower dam or small-scale quarry (<100 ha) normally would not merit full EIA (e.g. by reference to the World Bank Annex E lists). However, the proposal may need to be reclassified if it is located in or near sensitive and valued ecosystems, or heritage resources, displaces people who are particularly vulnerable and difficult to resettle or has evident cumulative impacts (e.g. one of a series of quarries or dams). The methods available for this purpose are discussed below.

As necessary, project lists should be revised and updated over time to incorporate increasing experience and to respond to new demands. The reform of project lists and thresholds preferably should take place through a consultative process, involving government agencies, industry and the public. When developing project lists from scratch, care should be taken not to adopt those established elsewhere without adequate review of their suitability. Project lists are drawn up with reference to the developmental and physical characteristics that are particular to a country or jurisdiction, and it is unlikely they will to be directly transferable without alteration.

Box 1: Environmental screening – World Bank classification

- Category A: for projects likely to have significant adverse environmental impacts that are serious (i.e., irreversible, affect vulnerable ethnic minorities, involve involuntary resettlement, or affect cultural heritage sites), diverse, or unprecedented, or that affect an area broader than the sites of facilities subject to physical works. A full EIA is required.

- Category B: for projects likely to have adverse environmental impacts that are less significant that those of Category A projects, meaning that few if any of the impacts are likely to be irreversible, that they are site-specific, and that mitigation measures can be designed more readily than for Category A projects. Normally, a limited EIA will be undertaken to identify suitable mitigation and management measures, and incorporate them into the project.
- Category C: for projects that are likely to have minimal or no adverse environmental impacts. No EIA is required.

Source: World Bank (1993)

Box 2: World Bank Category A projects/components

The projects or components included in this list are likely to have adverse impacts that normally warrant classification in Category A

- dams and reservoirs
- forestry and production projects
- industrial plants (large scale)
- irrigation, drainage, and flood control (1arge scale)
- land clearance and levelling (large scale)
- mineral development (including oil and gas)
- port and harbour development
- reclamation and new land development
- resettlement and new land development
- river basin development
- thermal and hydropower development
- manufacture, transportation, and use of pesticides
- other hazardous and/or toxic materials

Source: World Bank (1993)

Box 3: World Bank Category B projects/components

The following projects and components may have environmental impacts for which more limited analysis is appropriate.

- agro-industries
- electrical transmission
- aquaculture and drainage (small-scale)
- irrigation and drainage (small-scale)
- renewable energy

- rural electrification
- tourism
- rural water supply and sanitation
- watershed projects (management or rehabilitation)
- rehabilitation, maintenance, and upgrading projects (small-scale)

Source: World Bank (1993)


4-1

An example of a project list for screening can be found in the resource material at the end of this topic (Handout 4-1).

Discuss the use of indicative guidance and criteria for case-by-case screening, noting any constraints and issues that might need to be addressed. Consider if these are locally applicable.

Case-by-case screening is carried out when the significance of the potential environmental impact of a proposal is unclear or uncertain. This process typically applies to proposals that fall just below or close to the thresholds established for listed projects. In addition, non-borderline proposals may be subject to screening if they are located in sensitive areas or there is a potential for cumulative effects in combination with other current and foreseeable activities. The framework outlined in Figure 1 contains a sieve of screening applications with a progressively finer mesh for including proposals. It has gained a degree of international acceptance as a standard of good practice.


7

The specific criteria for case-by-case screening differ from country to country. Typically, however, they are based on a number of common factors related to the consideration of the significance of environmental impacts. These include the location of proposals, environmental sensitivity and any likely health and social effects on the local population. In this context, reference may be made to the screening criteria listed in the European Directive, which apply to the selection of listed projects for which EIA is not mandatory.


8

These criteria may be adapted to wider use in case-by-case screening. A proposal can be tested for significance by taking account of:

- location near to protected or designated areas or within landscapes of special heritage value;
- existing land use(s) and commitments;
- the relative abundance, quality and *regenerative capacity* of natural resources;
- the *absorption capacity* of the natural environment, paying particular attention to wetlands, coastal zones, mountain and forest areas; and
- areas in which the *environmental quality standards laid down in law have been exceeded already*.

Using the emphasised aspects above, consideration can be given to sustainability criteria when carrying out case-by-case screening. However, this approach demands considerable information about the environment, which is unlikely to be available at a relatively early stage in project development. In these circumstances, only a qualified determination of the environmental significance of a proposal may be possible and screening decisions must be open to change if new information indicates the advisability of reclassification. (One means of doing so is to incorporate a 'bump-up' or 'bump-down' provision into the screening procedure.)

Discuss the use of extended screening and initial assessment, noting any constraints and issues that may need to be addressed. Consider if this approach is locally applicable.

Certain proposals may be subject to an extended screening or initial assessment (also called a preliminary EIA). Such an approach can be used when the requirement for EIA could not be reasonably determined by the application of the screening procedures described previously; for example when a proposal involves use of a new technology or is located in an near-natural or frontier area or involves discharges into a water body that may exceed health or environmental standards. Often, this process, itself, may be sufficient to complete the requirement for EIA established by a particular country. In this case, a screening report should describe the results and identify any mitigation measures or actions that need to be taken.

9

When undertaking this type of preliminary EIA study, the proponent or competent authority may need to assemble considerable information. A checklist of the types of information that could be relevant for such a study are summarised in Box 4. This is accompanied by a framework of criteria and questions that can help in the conduct of a preliminary EIA (see Annex 1). It is based upon Australian and New Zealand EIA practice and provides a detailed procedure for undertaking an extended screening or initial assessment. As and where necessary, it could be adapted to wider application in conjunction with the methods described below.

Box 4: Information that may be required for a preliminary EIA study

- a description of the proposal
- applicable policies, plans and regulations, including environmental standards and objectives
- the characteristics of the environment, including land use, significant resources, critical ecological functions, pollution and emission levels etc.
- the potential impacts of the proposal and their likely significance
- the degree of public concern and interest about the proposal.

Initial environmental evaluation or examination (IEE)

In some EIA systems, an IEE is required when the potential environmental impacts of a proposal cannot be established by the application of standard screening procedures. Typically, an IEE is a relatively low-cost analysis that makes use of information already available. It is carried out using EIA procedures and methods, which are scaled to purpose. (Further information on the various steps involved can be found in the topics that follow.)

For example, key issues can be identified by a rapid scoping exercise, based on consultation with local people and agencies. A site or area visit should take place to survey the current situation and obtain 'baseline' information. Simple methods, such as a checklist or matrix, are used in impact identifi-cation and often focus on appropriate mitigation measures. Depending on its findings, the IEE report can be used either as a scoping document when a proposal is referred to a full EIA or to support environmentally sound planning and design when a proposal does not require further review.

10

An IEE is a preliminary EIA study that:

- describes the proposal and the environmental setting;
- considers alternatives to improve the environmental benefits;
- addresses the concerns of the local community;
- identifies the potential environmental effects;
- identifies measures to mitigate adverse impacts; and
- describes, as necessary, environmental monitoring and management plans.

Environmental Overview

The *Environmental Overview* was developed by UNDP as an in-house tool to integrate environmental considerations into its proposed activities at either the project or strategic level (see Topic 15 – *Future directions*). Strictly speaking, the Environmental Overview is not equivalent to a preliminary EIA study. However, it is based on similar steps, involves key stakeholders and leads toward the same ends. An Environmental Overview can be completed quickly through the interaction of a mix of specialists. It follows a structured sequence of questions, draws primarily on the more important data sources and conforms to strict guidelines on the organisation and length of the final document.

The Environmental Overview is used by UNDP in the stage of formulating proposals. It leads to early identification of the following:

- the environmental and social baseline conditions of the target area;
- the major environmental and socio-economic impacts and opportunities associated with the implementation of the proposal;
- the modifications or alternatives to the draft proposal; and

- the measures that are necessary to address the environmental impacts and issues.

The purpose of the overview is to incorporate environmental objectives into the design of the proposal, rather than produce a report. Recently, the Environmental Overview has been promoted as an effective tool for programme design, and, specifically, one that is designed to overcome the 'checklist mentality' of EIA. So far, however, the Environmental Overview has been subject to little testing outside of UNDP initiatives. A copy of the table of contents for the Environmental Overview can be found in the resource material at the end of this topic (Handout 4-2) and may be reviewed in light of the above comments.


4-2

Class screening

A class screening may be undertaken for any type of project or activity where there is a reasonably sound knowledge of the environmental effects and the mitigation measures are well established. This approach is used in certain countries, notably Canada (at both federal and provincial levels), and aspects are also evident in the EIA procedure of the World Bank (see Box 3). It is applicable to small-scale projects that are routine and replicable, such as dredging, installation of culverts and realignments to an existing road.

A class screening will document the accumulated information on their likely impacts and standard mitigation practices. This report then serves as a model in the conduct of future screening of other projects of the same type. It does not relieve a proponent or competent authority of its responsibility for screening and, where necessary, of factoring additional information on site-specific and cumulative effects into a class assessment report or preparing a separate document if a project does not meet all of the previously agreed requirements for mitigation. However, in such cases, class assessment can greatly simplify and streamline the screening process.

Discuss how screening is initiated and how issues might be 'referred', focusing on the applicable EIA process.

Except where exempt by law, all proposed activities should undergo screening to determine whether or not they are subject to EIA. Because of their numbers, the screening procedure needs to be efficient, transparent and robust. In most EIA systems, the proponent or competent authority is responsible for all aspects of the screening process, from initiation to making the final decision on whether or not an EIA is necessary and, if so, at what level. Normally, this process will be undertaken in compliance with the applicable EIA legislation and requirements.

Leading EIA systems have established a number of procedural 'checks and balances' for this purpose. They include provision for:

- public notification and record of screening decisions;
- access to relevant information and documentation; and in some cases
- right or avenue of third party appeal for those who consider that the screening procedure has been applied inappropriately.


11

Briefly recall the possible outcomes from the screening process, referring to the flow chart of the EIA process.

Usually, screening has one of four outcomes:

- no further EIA requirement applies – the proposal will have an insignificant impact;
- a preliminary EIA study is required – the proposal will have an environmental impact that must be addressed but can be mitigated;
- a full or comprehensive EIA is required to complete the screening process – the proposal will have a potentially significant environmental impact; or
- an IEE is required – the potential environmental effects of the proposal are unclear or uncertain.

Certain types of proposals often fall automatically into one of these particular categories. For instance, large dams, power stations and oil refineries are nearly always environmentally significant and require full EIA. By contrast, social development or community health proposals rarely demand further assessment. An extended screening process (or IEE) may be undertaken for proposals for which the potential environmental impact cannot be identified readily.

For proposals that require full or further EIA, the next step in the process is to identify the key issues and impacts that need to be analysed. This process of defining the issues to be considered is called 'scoping'. It is dealt with next in Topic 5– *Scoping.*

Include a training activity to reinforce the topic (if desired).

Conclude by summarising the presentation, emphasising those key aspects of the topic that apply locally.

Annex 1: Criteria for the determination of the need for, and level of, environmental impact assessment

Character of the receiving environment

Consider:

- Is it, or is it likely to be, part of the conservation estate or subject to treaty?
- Is it an existing or potential environmentally significant area?
- Is it vulnerable to major natural or induced hazards?
- Is it a special purpose area?
- Is it an area where human communities are vulnerable?
- Does it involve a renewable or a non-renewable resource?
- Is it a degraded area, subject to significant risk levels, or a potentially contaminated site?

NOTE: Off-site (out of area) as well as on-site (local) characteristics should be considered, where relevant.

Potential impact of proposal

Consider:

- Will implementation or construction, operation and/or decommissioning of the proposal have the potential to cause significant changes to the receiving environment (on-site or off-site, transboundary, short term or long term)?
- Could implementation of the proposal give rise to health impacts or unsafe conditions?
- Will the proposal significantly divert resources to the detriment of other natural and human communities?

NOTE: This should include consideration of the magnitude of the impacts, their spatial extent, the duration and the intensity of change, the total life cycle and whether and how the impacts are manageable.

Resilience of natural and human environments to cope with change

Consider:

- Can the receiving environment absorb the level of impact predicted without suffering irreversible change?
- What are the implications of the proposal for bio-diversity?
- Can land uses at and around the site be sustained?
- Can sustainable uses of the site be achieved beyond the life of the proposal?
- Are contingency or emergency plans proposed or in place to deal with accidental events?

NOTE: Cumulative as well as individual impacts should be considered in the context of sustainability.

Confidence of prediction of impacts

Consider:

- What level of knowledge do we have on the resilience of a given significant ecosystem?
- Is the proposal sufficiently detailed and understood to enable the impacts to be established?
- Is the level and nature of change to the natural human environment sufficiently understood to allow the impact of the proposal to be predicted and managed?
- Is it practicable to monitor the predicted effects?
- Are present community values on land use and resource use known or likely to change?

Presence of planning, policy framework and other decision-making processes

Consider:

- Is the proposal consistent with existing policy frameworks?
- Do other approval processes exist to adequately assess and manage proposal impacts?
- What legislation, standard codes or guidelines are available to properly monitor and control operations and the types or quantity of the impacts?

Degree of public interest

Consider:

- Is the proposal controversial or could it lead to controversy or concern in the community?
- Will the amenity, values or lifestyle of the community be adversely affected?
- Will large numbers of people require relocation?
- Will the proposal result in inequities between sectors of the community?

Based on criteria developed by the Australian and New Zealand Environmental and Conservation Council (ANZECC) 1996

Reference list

The following references have been quoted directly, adapted or used as a primary source for major parts of this topic.

Australian and New Zealand Environmental and Conservation Council (ANZECC) (1996) *Guidelines and Criteria for Determining the Need for and Level of Environmental Impact Assessment in Australia.* Working Group on National Environmental Impact Assessment, ANZECC, Canberra.

Brown A (1998) The Environmental Overview as a Realistic Approach to Strategic Environmental Assessment in Developing Countries in Porter A and Fittipaldi J (eds) *Environmental Methods Review: Retooling Impact Assessment for the New Century,* pp. 127-134. The Press Club, Fargo, USA.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) (1995) *Guide to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.* CEAA, Ottawa.

Jones C (1999) Screening, Scoping and Consideration of Alternatives. in Petts J (ed) *Handbook of Environmental Impact Assessment (Volume 1),* pp. 201-228. Blackwell Science Ltd. Oxford, UK.

OECD (1992) Guidelines on Environment and Aid: Good Practices for Environmental Impact Assessment of Development Projects. OECD, Paris.

UNDP (1992) *Handbook and Guidelines for Environmental Management and Sustainable Development*. Environment and Natural Resources Group, UNDP, New York.

World Bank (1993) Environmental Screening, *Environmental Assessment Sourcebook Update No 2,* Environment Department, The World Bank, Washington D.C.

Further reading

Bulleid P (1997) Assessing the Need for EIA. In Weston J (ed) *Planning and Environmental Impact Assessment in Practice*, (pp. 26-41). Longman, Harlow, UK.

Canter L (1996) *Environmental Impact Assessment (Second Edition).* McGraw Hill Publishing Company, New York.

Commission of the European Communities (CEC), Directorate-General for Development, (1993) *Environment Manual Development Procedures and Methodology Governing Lome IV Development Co-operation Projects - User's Guide. CEC, Brussels..*

Donnelly A, Dalal-Clayton B and Hughes R (1998) *A Directory of Impact Assessment Guidelines, (Second Edition).* International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Russell Press, Nottingham.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) (1992) *Environmental Procedures.* EBRD, London.

Kristoffersen H and Tesli A (eds) (1996) *Environmental Impact Assessment in the BalticCountries and Poland – Screening and Quality Control.* Nordic Council of Ministers, NORD 12, Copenhagen.

OECD /DAC (1994) *Towards Coherence in Environmental Assessment: Results of the Project on Coherence of Environmental Assessment for International Bilateral Aid.* Vol. 1. Canadian International Development Agency, Ottawa.

Training activities

Training activities will be more instructive if they are framed around a local proposal. Consider inviting prospective course participants to make a presentation if they have expertise in this area of EIA.

Discussion themes

4-1 What are the strengths and weaknesses of the screening procedure used in the local EIA process?

4-2 Discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the following screening methods: project lists with thresholds; case-by-case screening; initial environmental evaluation (IEE) and other types of preliminary EIA study.

4-3 Consider if a list of projects that must always undergo EIA is a useful approach? How would you go about drawing up or amending such a list and choosing the projects to be included?

4-4 What are the benefits and disadvantages of proponents making screening decisions? Is it necessary to make the reasons for the decisions available to the public?

4-5 What are the benefits and disadvantages of allowing an appeal process for screening decisions?

4-6 If a country's EIA legislation or policy prescribes/designates activities in terms of project type only, what are the advantages and disadvantages of also specifying projects by size (e.g. a reservoir or mine lease area more than a certain number of hectares)?

4-7 How might cumulative effects and/or sustainability criteria be incorporated in screening decision-making?

Speaker themes

4-1 Invite a speaker who has been involved in the conduct of screening to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the system used locally, giving examples.

4-2 Arrange for speakers representing different stakeholders in the EIA process (e.g. the screening decision-maker, the proponent, the public) to participate in a panel discussion focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the applicable process of screening and how it could be improved.

Group Activity 4–1: Screening

Title: **Comparison of screening methods**

Aim: To gain familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of different screening methods.

Group size: Four to six participants

Duration: Three hours

Resources required:

- ❑ Three local case studies providing background information used for or relevant to screening the proposals.
- ❑ The screening method and any criteria used for these proposals and one or two other sets of criteria (from donors or other countries) that can be used for comparison. (Handout 4–1 can be used).
- ❑ The screening decisions on these proposals and, if possible, the reasons for these decisions.

Description of activity:

Applying the different types of screening method to the three case studies, answer the following questions:

- ❑ What differences were evident in the way that the different methods operated?
- ❑ What further information would you have liked to have, or other aspects that you would like to have considered, before you had to make the screening decision?
- ❑ Which method was the easiest to use?
- ❑ Which method do you feel gave the most reliable answer to whether EIA was necessary or not? Why?
- ❑ What limitations did each of the screening methods have?
- ❑ What could be the repercussions of these limitations?
- ❑ Compare and discuss the groups' findings with the actual decision made, where available.
- ❑ Suggest modifications that could be made to the local screening process to improve its accuracy, reproducibility, certainty of outcome and accountability.

Group Activity 4–2: Screening

Title: **Screening proposals**

Aim: To understand how screening is conducted.

Group size: Class or small group activity

Duration: Three hours

Resources required

- ❑ Five short case studies, one suited to extended screening.
- ❑ Background information, with associated maps, for the proposals that could be required to support the screening decisions.

Description of activity

- ❑ Provide the class or groups with the five short case studies and ask them to screen the proposals, giving reasons for their decisions.
- ❑ Bring the groups back together after the first hour to discuss progress.
- ❑ As a group, develop a list of information which would be required in order to screen projects adequately.

If appropriate, the above activity can include an extended screening process referring to Handout 4–2, and would benefit from being undertaken in conjunction with a site visit to a project.


1

The purpose of screening

The purpose of screening is to determine:

- whether or not a proposal requires an EIA
- what level of EIA is required


2

Outcomes of screening

- full or comprehensive EIA required
- more limited EIA required
- further study needed to determine EIA requirement
- no further requirement for EIA


3

Screening and scoping compared

Screening – determines the requirement for EIA
– establishes the level of review necessary

Scoping – identifies the key issues and impacts
– establishes the terms of reference


4

Screening methods

- legal/policy definition
- inclusion list of projects (with/without thresholds)
- exclusion list of projects
- criteria for case-by-case screening


5

Figure 1: A framework for screening


6

Extended screening methods

- initial environmental evaluation or examination (IEE)
- environmental overview
- class screening


7

Typical proposals requiring full EIA include:

- dams and reservoirs
- (re)settlement and urban development
- infrastructure (e.g. transport and sanitation)
- industrial facilities (e.g. manufacturing plants)
- energy and minerals extraction (e.g. oil & gas, coal)
- waste management and disposal of hazardous and toxic materials
- energy development (power stations, transmission lines, pipelines)


8

Location and environmental criteria for case-by-case screening

The following are important in determining significant effects:

- assimilative capacity of the natural environment
- environmental sensitivity, e.g. wetlands, coastal and mountain zones
- environmental standards and objectives
- existing land uses
- adjacent to protected or designated areas
- within landscapes of special heritage value
- abundance and quality of natural resources


9

Extended screening – information required by decision-makers

- description of the proposal
- conditions and characteristics of the environment
- applicable policy planning and regulatory objectives
- identification of potential impacts
- degree of public concern and interest


10

An initial environmental examination

- describes the proposal
- considers alternatives
- addresses the concerns of the community
- identifies potential environmental effects
- established mitigation measures
- includes mitigation and follow up if necessary


11

Flowchart of the process
