

# International Development Planning Review

## Environmental impact assessment in developing countries

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### Abstract

Developing country environmental impact assessment (EIA) dates back to the mid-1970s and, although it varies significantly from country to country, its performance generally falls far behind that of EIA in developed countries. It is crucial that this performance be improved in order to help to protect the environment of three-quarters of the world's land area. This paper reviews developing country EIA against a set of robust evaluation criteria to determine its strengths and weaknesses. The criteria relate to legal basis; coverage; consideration of alternatives; screening; scoping; EIA report preparation; EIA report review; decision making; impact monitoring; mitigation; consultation and participation; system monitoring; costs and benefits; and strategic environmental assessment (SEA). Developing country EIA meets few of the 14 evaluation criteria, and recommendations relating to each are advanced. Urgent generic issues relating to training and capacity building, diffusion of EIA experience, donor policy and political will also need to be addressed if EIA is to fulfil its potential

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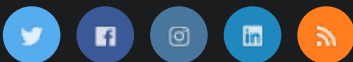
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Sida's guidelines for environmental impact assessments in development cooperation shall provide practical guidance for the EIA process at Sida. They follow the Guidelines on Environment and Aid: Good Practices for Environmental Impact Assessment which OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has adopted<sup>1</sup>.

1.1 Basic principles.

1. Environmental impact assessments (EIA) shall be included in project proposals which are submitted to Sida for assessment.

2. The scope of the EIA will vary depending on the expected impacts of the project on the environment. The partner country's environmental legislation, EIA rules and environmental standards shall constitute a point of departure for EIAs.

VI Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Both of these landmark events became a driving force behind the consideration of the environmental component in economic development planning, aiming to achieve environmentally sustainable benefits. The nations of the world who signed conventions and agenda at the Earth Summit of 1992 immediately integrated the application of EIA into their national plans and programs. This was followed, in most of the cases, by drafting of environmental legislation, regulation, and developing institutions in the form of Ministries or Councils to deal with environmental Introduction The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, which originated in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has been adopted extensively in the rest of the world. The U.S. model and that of other developed countries share basic principles and reflects commonly agreed-upon approaches to similar problems. While EIAs in developing countries are based on the same set of principles, their implementation often falls considerably short of international standards. They frequently suffer from insufficient consideration of impacts, alternatives, and public participation. In