

Social Impact Assessment Methodology

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The impacts of development interventions take different shapes. While significant benefits flow forth from different development actions, there is need to also identify and evaluate the associated negative externalities.

Social impacts are impacts of developmental interventions on human settlements. Such impacts not only need to be identified and measured but also need to be managed in such a way that the positive externalities are magnified and the negative ones minimized. This document provides a realistic methodology for appraisal of possible social ramifications through active stakeholder participation and their effective mitigation.

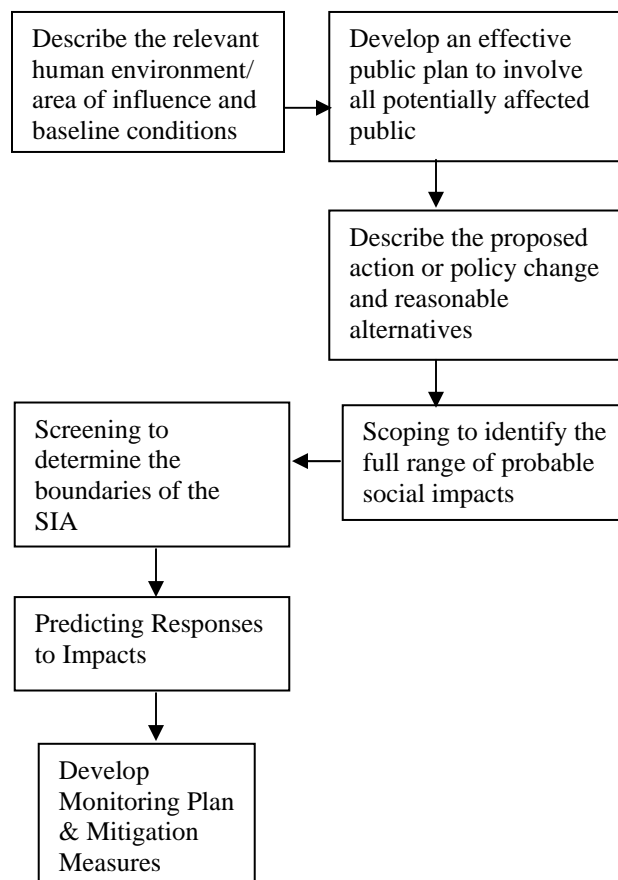
Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is predicated on the notion that development interventions have social ramifications and it is imperative that decision-makers understand the consequences of their decisions before they act and people affected get the opportunity to participate in designing their future. Social assessment helps to make the project responsive to social development concerns. Developmental initiatives informed by social assessment alleviate poverty, enhance inclusion and build ownership while minimizing and compensating for adverse social impacts on the vulnerable and the poor.

Social Impact Assessment can be defined in terms of efforts to assess or estimate, in advance, the social consequences that are likely to follow specific policy actions (including programs and the adoption of new policies), and specific government actions. It is a process that provides a framework for prioritizing, gathering, analyzing, and incorporating social information and participation into the design and delivery of developmental interventions. It ensures that development interventions: (i) are informed and take into account the key relevant social issues; and (ii) incorporate a participation strategy for involving a wide range of stakeholders.

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Stages in Social Impact Assessment



Step 1: Baseline Conditions

The baseline conditions are the existing conditions and past trends associated with the human environment in which the proposed activity is to take place. This varies with the type of project being taken up. For instance, in the case of construction projects, the baseline unit may be a cluster of population identified along with the distribution of special populations at risk. The relevant human environment may be a more dispersed collection of interested and affected public, interest groups, organizations and institutions. The generic set of dimensions for investigation should include (a) population characteristics (b) community and institutional structures (c) political and social resources (d) individual and family changes and (e) community resources.

Step 2: Public Involvement

This requires identifying and working with all potentially affected groups starting at the very beginning of planning for the proposed action(s). Groups affected by proposed actions include those who live nearby; those who will be affected by the development intervention; those who are forced to relocate because of a project; and those who have interest in a new project or policy change but may not live in proximity. Others affected include those who might normally use the

land on which the project is located (such as farmers who have to plough along a transmission line). Still others include those affected by the influx of seasonal residents who may have to pay higher prices for food or rent, or pay higher taxes to cover the cost of expanded community services.

Once identified, representatives from each group should be systematically interviewed to determine potential areas of concern/impact, and ways each representative might be involved in the planning decision process. Public meetings by themselves are inadequate for collecting information about public perceptions. Survey data can be used to define the potentially affected population. In this first step, the pieces are put in place for a public involvement programme which will last throughout the environmental and social impact assessment process.

Participatory design and impact monitoring in the Philippines – Water Districts Development

Project

The Water Districts Development Project focuses on surveying water users' willingness to pay as a crucial element in the development of water districts in the Philippines. All sewage, sanitation and drainage projects are developed in collaboration with households, communities and city councils. Engineering designs are presented case-by-case and implemented using a demand-based approach, according to individual and community willingness to pay.

Local organizations act as monitors, relaying information about the progress of the projects under construction. Capacity building for community organizations is budgeted through the training programme of the sewage and sanitation development component. Local accountability also plays a role. Water supply and sanitation services provided by decentralized organizations are accountable to local officials, who work with community representatives at all stages of project

Source: World Bank Social Analysis Sourcebook, 2002

Step 3. Project Description & Identification of Alternatives

In the next step, the proposed action is described in enough detail to enable identification of the data requirements to frame the SIA. This should include:

1. Location;
2. Land requirements;
3. Needs for ancillary facilities (roads, transmission lines, sewer and water lines);
4. Construction schedule;
5. Size of the workforce (construction and operation, by year or month);
6. Facility size and shape;
7. Need for a local workforce;
8. Institutional resources.

It is equally important to identify feasible alternatives for proposed actions within the ambit of the project.

Step 4. Screening

Screening is done to determine the boundaries of SIA. It is concerned with selecting 'developments' that require assessment and avoiding 'developments' that do not require one. Conduct of screening thus involves making a proposal on the 'developments' in terms of its impact on people and of its relative significance. A certain level of basic information about the proposal and its location is required for this purpose. Screening procedures employed can be based on the already existing legal frameworks.

Step 5. Scoping

After initial screening, the SIA variables need to be selected for further assessment. Consideration needs to be given both to the impacts perceived by the acting agency and to those perceived by affected groups and communities. The principal methods to be used by experts are reviews of the existing social science literature, public scoping, public surveys and public participation techniques. It is important for the views of affected people to be taken into consideration. Ideally, all affected people or groups contribute to the selection of the variables assessed through either a participatory process or by review made by responsible officials.

Relevant criteria for selecting significant impacts include the

1. Probability of the event occurring;
2. Number of people including indigenous populations that will be affected;
3. Duration of impacts (long-term vs short-term);
4. Value of benefits and costs to impacted groups (intensity of impacts);
5. Extent to which the impact is reversible or can be mitigated;
6. Likelihood of causing subsequent impacts;
7. Relevance to present and future policy decision;
8. Uncertainty over possible effects;
9. Presence or absence of controversy over the issue.

Step 6. Predicting Responses to Impacts

"Social impacts" refer to the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions - that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs and generally cope as members of society. The term also includes cultural impacts involving changes to the norms, values, and beliefs that guide and rationalize their cognition of themselves and their society.

Adverse social impacts could be in the form of:

1. Loss of Land;
2. Loss of Structures;
3. Loss of Livelihood;
4. Loss of crops/trees;
5. Loss of access to community infrastructure/public utility lines.

After the direct impacts have been estimated, how the affected people will respond in terms of attitudes and actions must be taken into account. Their attitudes before implementation predict their attitudes afterwards, though there are increasing data that show fears are often exaggerated and that expected benefits fail to meet expectations. The actions of affected groups can be estimated using comparable cases and consultations and interviews. A lot depends on the nature of local leadership (and the objectives and strategies of these leaders) - this makes such

assessments highly uncertain. However, such an exercise enables policy makers to be aware of potential problems and unexpected results. This step is also important because adoption and response of affected parties can have consequences of their own - whether for the agency that proposes an action (as when political protests stalls a proposal) or for the affected communities, whether in the short-term or in the long-term.

Patterns in previous assessments guide this analysis, and expert judgment and field investigations are used to see whether the study case follows the typical patterns or is it developing uniquely. Being able to show potentially affected people that significant impacts are being incorporated into the assessment is critical to the success of this step.

Step 7. Management & Monitoring

Use of social impact assessment is not just to forecast impacts - it should identify means to mitigate adverse impacts. This includes the possibility of avoiding the impact by not considering the project at all, if the felt impact is likely to be too severe. Alternately if the predicted impact is minimal and can be managed, mitigation measures must be put in place. This could be in the form of:

1. Modification of the specific event in the project;
2. Operation and redesign of the project or policy;
3. Compensation for the impact by providing substitute facilities, resources and opportunities.

Ideally, mitigation measures should be built into the selected alternative, but it is appropriate to identify mitigation measures even if they are not immediately adopted or if they would be the responsibility of another person or government unit. Ideally effort should be to avoid all adverse impacts.

A Social Management Plan must be prepared. The components of the SMP must include the following:

1. Enumeration of the Project Affected Persons/Families;
2. Measures to Minimize Resettlement;
3. Consultation and involvement of PAPs;
4. Entitlement Framework;
5. Institutional Arrangements.

A monitoring programme should be developed that is capable of identifying deviations from the proposed action and any important unanticipated impacts. This should track project and program development and compare real impacts with projected ones. It should spell out (to the degree possible) the nature and extent of additional steps that should take place when unanticipated impacts or those larger than the projections occur.

References

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3. World Bank, Social Analysis Sourcebook, 2003, www.worldbank.org/socialanalysis