

EIA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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The need to take environmental considerations into account to ensure economic development is increasingly recognized throughout the world. The realization of the importance of forecasting the environmental impacts of development has given rise to the activity known as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). EIA is concerned, basically, with identifying and assessing the environmental consequences of development projects, plans, programmes and policies in an attempt to ensure that the "best" alternative for development is selected.

EIA is an instrument which is used to aid and improve the decision-making process. In other sense, EIA is the systematic study, assessment and reporting of the impacts of proposed programme, plan or project, including a plan for dealing with negative impacts. Although there is no general and universally accepted definition of EIA, Clark (1989) proposes to describe it as follows: "Environmental impact assessment is a procedure for encouraging decision-makers to take account of the possible effects of development investments on environmental quality and natural resource productivity and a tool for collecting and assembling the data planners need to make development projects more sustainable and environmentally sound. EIA is usually applied in support of policies for a more rational and sustainable use of resources in achieving economic development"

Sustainable development is the prime need of the time over the globe but conception of it is pale blue in most cases that should not be. There must be a clear idea about what sustainable development is. Development that ensures preservation and enhancement of environmental quality, as well as sound and sustainable use of natural resources, thereby providing for economic growth that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (adapted from the Brundtland Commission, 1987).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

EIA was introduced in the United States as an action-forcing mechanism in the National Environmental Policy Act on January 1, 1970. Since then EIA has been introduced all around the globe in many different ways. On December 20, 1973, the first Canadian EIA process was established by the federal government with the introduction of the Environmental Assessment Review Process (EAEP). In March 1985, after many years of deliberation, the Environment Council of the European Communities approved Directive 85/337/EEC "on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment" which was formally issued on June 27, 1985. In the past eastern European countries like the former USSR, became regulated by the Resolution of the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers of 7 January 1988, NO. 32 "On the Radical Reorganization of Environmental Conservation Activity in the country". The Resolution of the USSR Supreme Soviet of 27 November, 1989 "On Urgent Measures for Environmental Restoration in the Country" is the latest to regulate EIA implementation. In Hungary, EIA was first introduced in 1985. Poland introduced EIA practically in 1989.

The need to incorporate environmental considerations into the development process is now a generally accepted principle in all developing countries and most of them have either a formal EIA system or are still in an experimental stage with the irregular preparation of EISs (Environmental Impact Statement).

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Under "Environmental Policy, 1992" and "The Environment Conservation Act, 1995" EIA has been made mandatory requirement for project clearance in Bangladesh.

IMPORTANCE OF EIA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Faced with the over growing population and standards of living that on the whole are marginal or subsistent, the developing countries are now engaged in major development efforts. In current global context, development effort has become an over-exploitation of available resources and industrialization at the fastest possible pace. The effect of such efforts has been the impact on the natural environment and progressively threting the resource base and the quality of life.

In Bangladesh where resource is very limited, management capacity is severely low, should think of environment as the most valuable resource and should launch allout efforts in order to ensure environmental protection and also upgrade it further. Environmental damage is very costly and hampers the economy too, because direct or indirect damage to the environment is ultimately loss of resources, money and health. It results in unsustainable development that can't be beneficial to poverty stricken and population burdened country like Bangladesh.

So EIA can play a vital role as a management tool in overall sustainable development of Bangladesh. Such kind of development is essential for the existence and survival as a respectable nation in the world.

HOW EIA CAN ENSURE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- * EIA assists decision-makers and their constituents in making informed decisions on project development and resource allocation.
- * EIA can identify issues early on in the project cycle so that these can be addressed before the project components become finallized.
- * Avoid or reduce harmful impacts through mitigation measures.
- * Increase beneficial impacts through enhancement programmes.
- * Lower project cost in the long term and improves future planning of economic development projects.
- * Ensure better protection of environment and minimize adverse social impacts via consultative process; preserved or enhanced quality of life.
- * Enhance public learning about environmental effects through peoples participation and provide input into the assessment process, thus leading to better decisions, acquire public confidence and that's why implementation of development programmes make sound and easier.

CONCLUSION

Environment and Human life are closely associated with each other. Destruction of environment means destruction of human existence. Development can not be stopped, rather must be continued but prior to implementation of any development project, programme or plan, planners should pay adequate attention to the environmental impacts on different natural resources including human beings. If natural resources lose their regeneration capacity due to over exploitation and mismanagement then sustainable development shall remain beyond our reach as before. So to achieve the most wanted sustainable development, EIAs are to be done properly, adequately and efficiently and a complete Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) must be prepared. Not only that recommendations of the report regarding Environmental Management Plan (EMP) should be materialized with due care and earnestness.