



Biodiversity is life



Biodiversity is our life

Impact Assessment

When an individual, private company or public organisation wants to develop a project there is much to consider. Services provided by natural ecosystems are often costly to replace, and sometimes irreplaceable. For example, converting a forested area to agriculture often means cutting down trees, which can lead to soil erosion, flooding and other problems. Repairing the damages could prove costly for society if the project is poorly planned and unsustainable in the long term.

To plan a project correctly you need an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to minimize unnecessary impacts on the environment resulting from human activities. Implemented by making changes to project or activity plans, or if necessary, by preventing a project from going ahead, EIAs help ensure that planned projects are effective, safe, economical, socially beneficial and environmentally sustainable.

Just as those undertaking projects need to be aware of the potential impacts of their actions, decision makers need to be aware of any consequences of their policies before spending public funds that may negatively impact people and the environment. One approach is to use the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which incorporates environmental issues into policies, plans and programmes.

National, regional and international legislation and policies on EIA and SEA are at different stages of development. The Convention addresses impact assessment and aims to minimize negative impacts on biodiversity. It asks governments to require environmental impact assessment of proposed projects, assessing the consequences of programmes and policies, and to collaborate with other countries, in developing areas beyond national jurisdiction, to prevent or minimize potential biodiversity loss.



Convention on
Biological Diversity

www.cbd.int/impact



Fast Facts

- ▶ Impact assessment legislation is designed to minimize negative impacts on biodiversity
- ▶ Most countries have impact assessment legislation, but some are still limited when it comes to addressing biodiversity issues
- ▶ Many countries have national mechanisms for emergency response to imminent danger to biodiversity
- ▶ The Conference of the Parties examines the issue of liability and redress, including restoration and compensation for damage to biodiversity
- ▶ Loss of ecosystem services caused by environmental degradation jeopardizes development options
- ▶ Of 24 ecosystem services evaluated globally, 15 are degraded and four have been enhanced
- ▶ Degradation can be the main factor causing poverty and social conflicts, and is likely to become much worse over the next 50 years if nothing changes.

Learn More

International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) ▶ www.iaia.org

Article 14.1 of the CBD ▶ www.cbd.int/convention/articles.shtml?a=cbd-14

The OECD DAC policy

▶ www.oecd.org/document/59/0,3343,en_2649_33721_35423803_1_1_1_1,00.html

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context

▶ www.unece.org/env/eia/eia.htm

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ▶ www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm

European Union directives on environmental impact assessment

▶ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/home.htm>

Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources ▶ http://untreaty.un.org/English/UNEP/landbased_english.pdf

Legislation and procedure on environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) ▶ www.unep.ch/etu/publications/textONUBr.pdf

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

▶ www.cbd.int/doc/reviews/impact/EIA-guidelines.pdf

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