

**Report on the 83rd
Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting**

Introduction

At its meeting held on 19 January 2004, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee received a briefing on the work of the Environmental Impact Assessment Training and Capacity Building Programme launched by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) since July 2002. In addition, the Subcommittee also discussed as to how the findings of the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) on the Hong Kong 2030 Study could be included in the public consultation of the Study so that the public consultation exercise was more transparent and that the public would be better informed when commenting on the Stage III public consultation document of the Study.

Advice Sought

2. Members are requested to note the points raised by Members at the meeting.

Views of the EIA Subcommittee

Support Services for the EIA Training and Capacity Building Programme

(ACE-EIA Paper 1/2004)

Background

3. One of the 2001 Policy Objectives was to enhance the advisory role of EPD in the implementation of the EIA Ordinance (EIAO) and to draw up a training programme for relevant government departments to enhance their understanding of the EIA mechanism. The EIAO Support Section was set up in July 2002 for a period of three years to deliver among others, the EIA Training and Capacity Building Programme.

4. The main tasks of the EIAO Support Section comprise -
- (a) provision of tailor-made EIA Training and Capacity Building Workshops;
 - (b) production of EIA training materials and manual;
 - (c) operation of an EIA Helpdesk Hotline to provide advice on the EIA mechanism;
 - (d) joint development of guidelines with government works departments; and
 - (e) promotion of better understanding of the EIA mechanism using web-based technologies.

Members' views

5. Members commended EPD's efforts in providing the training and the services which would enhance communications between the various parties involved in the statutory EIA process. Members' discussion at the Subcommittee meeting focused mainly on whether the conduct of tailor-made workshops for private sector organizations would be seen as the Government taking over the role of providing training for the staff of the organizations concerned; the priority of the workshops; whether the private sector organizations should be required to pay for the workshops; how parties concerned could make greater use of the training manual and materials; and the future programme for the workshops.

The role of Government in organizing tailor-made workshops

6. It was noted that tailor-made workshops were provided for government departments as well as private sector corporations, including contractors and professional associations. While Members fully supported the organization of workshops for project proponents to enhance their understanding of the EIA mechanism, there were concerns whether the Government might be seen as training the staff of the private sector organizations on their behalf. The representative of EPD explained that the workshops focused on the Government's requirements under the EIA mechanism and the regulatory angle and were hence different from the training provided by the private organizations. The EPD's representative further explained that the workshops in the programme were initially for government departments only, but the programme was extended to include the private sector proponents as a result of the recommendations in the Departmental Business Study in 2002.

Priority of the workshops

7. As regards the number of workshops organized for the private sector, the representative of EPD advised that as a general principle, they would accord higher priority to government departments and professional bodies and would strengthen liaison with the professional bodies.

Charging of a fee

8. On whether the private sector organizations should be required to pay for the workshops, the EPD representative advised that subsequent to the Departmental Business Study conducted in 2002, it was agreed that EPD would adopt a proactive approach and reach out to their clients as far as practicable. Hence, the private sector organizations were not required to pay any fees for the first round of the workshops. However, EPD would consider imposing a charge if in future, the private sector organizations would request for more workshops of that nature.

Greater use of the training manual and the training materials

9. On the greater use of the training manual and the training materials, a Member suggested further developing the materials for sale as teaching materials for the universities. However, another Member considered that the materials could be used by more institutes free of charge.

Future programme for the workshops

10. As regards the future plan, the EPD representative advised that they would prioritize the target organizations and accord higher priority to professional bodies. In addition, they would enhance the e-learning platform and promote the better understanding of the EIA mechanism using web-based technologies.

Conclusion

11. Members welcomed the EIA Training and Capacity Building Programme and hoped that the targets of the programme could be extended so that the parties concerned could have a better understanding of the EIA mechanism.

The strategic environmental assessment on the Hong Kong 2030 Study

12. Members expressed concerns associated with the Hong Kong 2030 Study

and asked how the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) findings could be included in the public consultation exercise. Members considered that the public could make “informed” comments on the development options, etc. during the Stage III public consultation if the SEA findings could be included in the public consultation document.

13. Members noted that the Hong Kong 2030 Study and the SEA study were conducted in parallel so that there would be broad environmental assessment on each stage of the Study. The broad-brush environmental comparison of the development options and an overview of the environmental issues related to the options were set out in working paper no. 30 of the Study which had been uploaded onto Planning Department’s website. Members agreed that working paper no. 30 should be included in the agenda of the next EIA Subcommittee meeting if time was available.

EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
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