ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT
PRACTICE NOTE FOR PROFESSIONAL PERSONS

Application of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process to Major Development Projects

INTRODUCTION

Many development projects have the potential to cause environmental problems either because of the impact of the project itself on the environment or because the project involves locating a sensitive receiver near to a source of pollution. The potential environmental consequences of major projects need to be considered through the application of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process at all stages of project planning in order to prevent pollution problems, minimize environmental damage and avoid expensive remedial measures. The application of the Environmental Impact Assessment process to major private sector development projects is described in detail in the Environmental Protection Department's (EPD's) Advice Note No 2/92.

2. The EIA process is a structured and systematic approach to the assessment and control of possible adverse environmental effects arising from a project, and should be applied at the earliest possible stage of project planning. An EIA provides not only a rigorous method of assessing the environmental implications of a project but can also streamline the planning of a project, assist project decisions and design processes, and in many other ways avoid a "late focus" on potential problems.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) PROCESS

Project Notification & Environmental Review (ER)

3. If a development project (either a new project or a major modification to an existing installation) is likely to have an adverse impact on the environment, the project

proponent (any person, agency or company to whom responsibility for project implementation is given), shall notify the EPD at an early stage of project planning by submitting basic information about the project. This information takes the form of a project profile and its format and preparation is described in EPD's Advice Note No 2/92.

4. Project notification should be made to the Environmental Assessment and Planning Group (EAPG) of the EPD. Following receipt of the project profile, EAPG will undertake an Environmental Review (ER) of the proposed project. This is a preliminary screening and scoping exercise to decide whether an EIA study is required and what matters it will address.

5. The Environmental Review will normally be completed within two months of submission of an adequate project profile. The result of the review will fall into one of the following two categories :-

(i) that the project has a limited potential for creating environmental problems and no EIA study is required. Nevertheless, in some cases, environmental protection and pollution control measures may be recommended by the EPD for the design, construction and operation of the project; or

(ii) that the project is likely to cause significant environmental impacts or be susceptible to adverse impacts, and that these should be addressed in an EIA study.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study

6. If a formal EIA study is required, it is normal practice for an experienced environmental consultant to be engaged. The project proponent is responsible for the cost of the EIA study.

7. EPD's procedures for managing an EIA study are as follows :-

(i) the EIA Study Brief will be produced by the EPD, and agreed with the proponent and any Government Departments that may have an interest in the project;

(ii) the EIA study will be managed by the Environmental Assessment and Planning Group (EAPG) of the EPD. The EAPG will liaise with other specialist Groups within the EPD and relevant Government Departments with regard to the EIA study; and

(iii) the EPD may establish a Study Management Group (SMG) to oversee the EIA study if necessary. The SMG normally comprises representatives of EPD and relevant Government Departments, together with the project proponent. Its primary role is to guide the assessment and review its findings, but it provides also a focus for inter-departmental consultation on the project and advises on requirements for public consultation. This can assist in the early resolution of problems which would otherwise involve prolonged liaison with many individual offices within Government and in this way generally facilitate the development process.

8. An EIA study is normally undertaken in two stages :-

(i) an initial assessment to provide sufficient information to identify key environmental issues and problems to be subject to detailed assessment, and to identify any early implications for project development and design; and

(ii) an evaluation stage to study key issues in greater detail, quantify potential problems, identify necessary mitigation measures, and prepare environmental monitoring and audit requirements for the construction and operational phases of the project. Included also in the EIA study and the final report shall be consideration of the environmental and social benefits of the proposed project.

9. The findings and the recommendations of the EIA study should be documented in a Final Report which is then used as the basis for setting any environmental protection and pollution control conditions, or any licensing conditions which may be placed on the project. Mitigation measures and monitoring and audit requirements will be specified as an output of the EIA study, and should be documented in a monitoring manual contained in the Final Report. The requirements for public access to the report are described in Advice Note No 2/92.

10. Full details on the application of the EIA process to government and private sector projects are contained in Planning Environment and Lands Branch Technical Circular 2/92 and EPD Advice Note 2/92 respectively. Copies of these documents can be obtained from EPD Headquarters and should be taken into account by the project proponent at the earliest opportunity.

ENQUIRIES

11. Enquiries can be addressed to : Principal Environmental Protection Officer, Environmental Assessment and Planning Group, Environmental Protection Department (Telephone: 835-1102 , Faxline No : 591-0558).

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Addendum to the ProPECC Practice Note PN 3/93

Original	Amendments
Para 4 "Project notification should be made to the Environmental Assessment and Planning Group (EAPG) of the EPD. Following ....., EAPG will ....."	"Project notification should be made to the Environmental Assessment and Noise Division (EAND) of the EPD. Following ....., the EAND will ....."
Para 7 (ii) "the EIA study will be managed by the Environmental Assessment and Planning Group (EAPG) of the EPD. The EAPG will ....."	"the EIA study will be managed by the Environmental Assessment and Noise Division (EAND) of the EPD. The EAND will ....."
Para 11 "Enquiries can be addressed to: Principal Environmental Protection Officer, Environmental Assessment and Planning Group, Environmental Protection Department (Telephone: 835-1102, Faxline No: 591-0558)."	"Enquiries can be addressed to : Principal Environmental Protection Officer of Territory Assessment Group (Telephone: 2835 1102, Faxline: 2591 0558) or Urban Assessment Group (Telephone: 2835 1122, Faxline: 2591 0588), Environmental Protection Department."