

Capacity Development for Environmental Protection

Towards Better Performing Environmental Impact Assessment Systems
in Low and Middle Income Countries



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Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this thesis was to identify the main factors that explain the performance of EIA in LMCs. In the conceptual framework three main groups of factors were distinguished: the EIA regulatory framework, the most important actors and their capacities, and finally contextual factors. Their relevance for and contribution to EIA performance are discussed below.

The ambitions as set out in the EIA legislation are important, as they determine the potential contribution of EIA to environmental protection (and other objectives). The development of the level of ambition reflected in the EIA legislation seems to be largely determined by the political system – the most important contextual factor. To what extent the ambitions are applied in practice is determined by the other two groups of factors identified: the key actors plus their key capacities, and contextual factors.

The research revealed that the proponent's motivation and, to a lesser extent, the motivation of the government organizations that take decisions during the EIA process and are responsible for permitting and compliance, are the most important capacities that seem largely to explain EIA substantive performance.

Other actors, such as donors and international finance institutes, can considerably influence the proponent's motivation. In this research, it was found that other organizations (including NGOs) had only limited influence on the motivation of the two key actors.

This research has thus contributed to a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of EIA in LMCs. Based upon these insights a diagnostic tool has been developed that provides systematic guidance for enhancing and securing capacities of those actors that limit the performance of EIA. The research also provides inroads for a debate about how ambitious EIA systems should be and about what is intended to be achieved with EIA in a certain country.

Finally, in order to improve substantive performance, two capacity development strategies have been identified. Firstly, indirectly increasing the proponent's motivation if donors or international financing organizations are involved: the latter can increase the motivation by making their funding conditional on compliance with conditions. Secondly, the government organization that issues permits on the basis of EIA should adopt a selective and pro-active strategy, focusing on those projects in which the largest contribution to environmental protection can be achieved and deploying the available capacity for this.