

Strengthening EIA in Asia

Key findings

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Research framework and methodology

- Primary data from local experts between September 2015 and February 2016 (including those from the International Workshop for EIA Systems and Implementation in Asia held on 24-26 February, 2015, in Tokyo, Japan and Asia EIA Symposium Preparatory Meeting held on 2 February, 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand.)
- Secondary data from existing literature, used as reference material
- Comparison or analysis was largely based on the descriptions or narratives
- Good practices were collected with the aim of learning from various approaches (no strict criteria were applied)
- More focus on environmental aspects than social aspects

Discussion in four segments

1. Quality of EIA:
 - Screening and scoping
 - Impact assessment and development of environmental management and monitoring plan (EMMP)
 - Review and approval of EIA
2. Information disclosure and public participation
3. EMMP implementation; and
4. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and upstream EIA
 - ⇒ Group discussion (in the morning)

Synthesis based on the above findings

⇒ Panel discussion (in the afternoon)

Screening and scoping

Screening

- **Common challenge:** Downsizing projects to avoid EIA
- **Good practices:** Amendment of line ministries' regulations, a site-visit for screening
- Could be used as an incentive to improve project design

Scoping

- **Common challenge:** Failing to scope out low-priority issues or overlooking important issues
- **Good practices:** Training, online GIS information on zoning, protected areas, etc.
- Scoping by more experienced experts or organizations

Impact assessment and environmental management and monitoring plans

Impact Assessment

- **Common challenge:** Compromised quality due to limited budget, time, scientific/laboratory analysis
- **Good practices:** training, integration of environmental and social risk management into credit/loan appraisal process, separate contract for EIA consultant
- Independence of consultants

Development of environmental management and monitoring plans (EMMP)

- **Common challenges:** Too general to implement, no mitigation hierarchy, no alternatives
- **Good practice:** A pre-EIA procedure to adopt mitigation hierarchy, a concession agreement for EMMP as part of EIA
- Net-positive impact

Review and approval of EIA

Review of EIA

- **Common challenges:** Technical knowledge of review staff, time and budget
- **Good practices:** training, external review system, support by development agencies
- Capacity and quality of review

Approval of EIA

- **Common challenges:** Permits issued or construction starts before EIA approval, inter-agency coordination
- **Good practice:** Requiring an environmental permit as a precondition of a project permit
- Approval procedure

Information disclosure and public participation

Information disclosure

- **Common challenge:** Disclosure of all relevant information for decision making
- **Good practices:** Provision of EIA and related spatial information databases
- Collaboration with local governments, organizations, NGOs

Public participation

- **Common challenge:** Effective, efficient and meaningful participation, not all key stakeholders are identified or invited
- **Good practice:** Guidelines, collaboration with local organizations and NGOs, adoption of Equator Principles
- Engagement from the early stage through to monitoring and closing stages

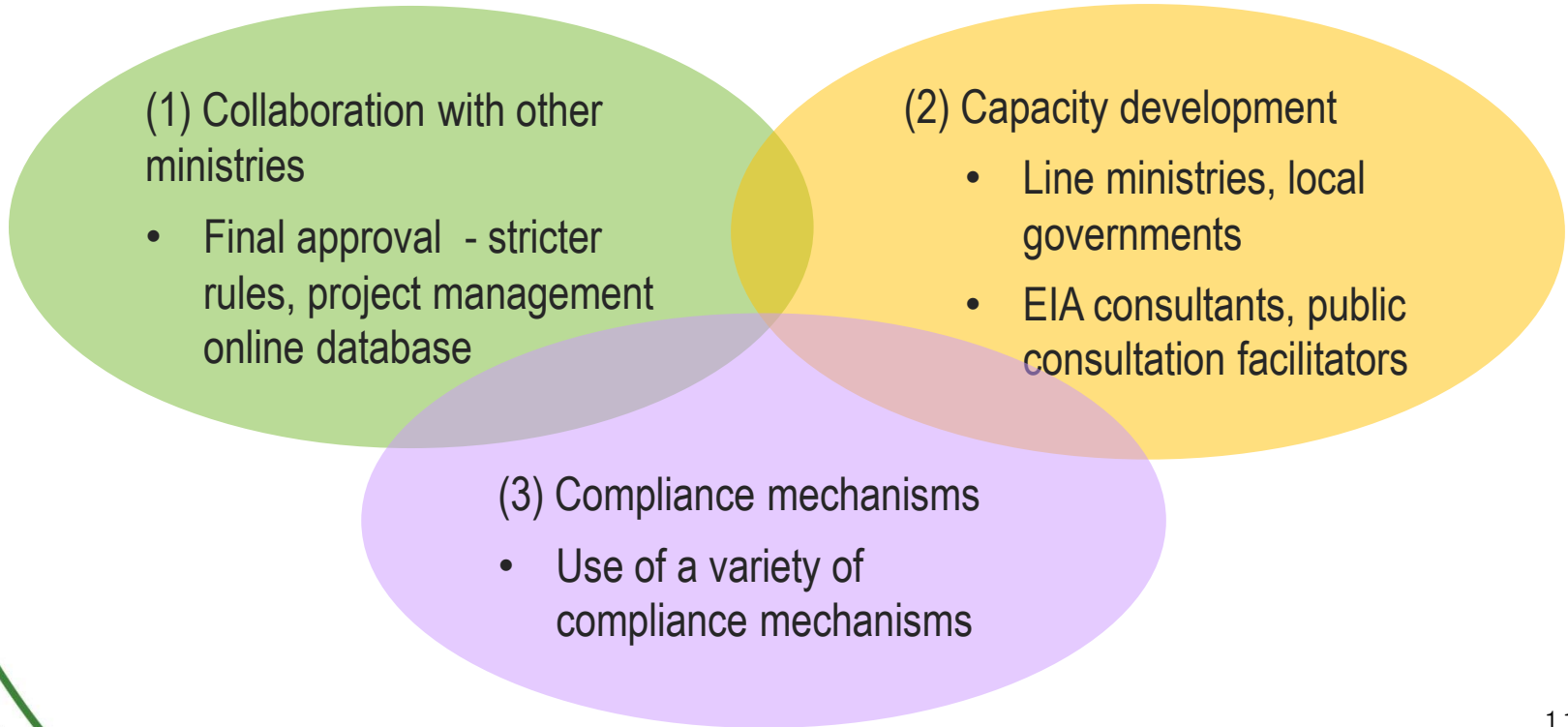
Environmental management and monitoring plans implementation

- **Common challenges:** Too generic or unrealistic EMMPs, lack of incentives
- **Good practices:** Stricter rules, a bottom-up approach/ NGO participation, prior deposit of the budget, prioritizing monitoring items, institutionalizing monitoring review
- Application of good practices

Strategic environmental assessment and upstream EIA

- **Common challenges:** Lack of or insufficient hands-on application/ baseline data, timing of upstream assessment
- **Good practices:** Application in spatial or land use planning for a larger territories
- Avoidance of project-level sub-optimal decisions from a macroscopic point of view, willingness to apply to materialize expected benefits

EIA as a project planning and management tool



EIA as a tool for participatory decision-making process

- Information disclosure is the foundation of public consultation but ‘meaningful’ participation for effective decision making still comes up short.
 - Involvement of experts in scoping, stakeholders in screening, NGOs in monitoring
- Longer-term risks and costs from insufficient consultation with the public
- Inclusiveness as a key to sustainable development

Implications for policy planning beyond project-level decisions

- Additional processes (such as SEA) for cumulative impacts, transboundary impacts, climate change impacts, impacts on biodiversity, vulnerability assessment
 - Integration of project planning into land use planning, zoning, and/or land ownership
 - Consistency of projects with other existing plans within a country or in the region
 - Environmental risk management
 - Data collection, harmonization (in the region), disclosure