

Session 4.

Skill-Building in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Field visit and practical exercise

Summary

This session consists of a small-group oriented exercise based on a shorter, focused field visit to a nearby project site. Participants will observe and assess activities underway and practice the EIA skills required to characterize baseline situations and identify potential impacts of concern. Through facilitator-led observation and discussion, participants are also prepared for the workshop's more extensive field-based exercise.

Session 4a: EIA Skill-Building Exercise—Briefing and Classroom Preparation (30 min's)

During this pre-field visit session participants will receive instruction on the methodology and the objectives of the skill-building exercise. This classroom preparation will enable participants to understand the general project scenarios to be assessed, and it is during this time that they will be divided into small groups for the exercise.

Scenario and Instructions

- Listen carefully to the project scenarios presented by the facilitator(s). Understand the structure and objectives of the exercise.
- Observe the note card on your table with the project site to which your group has been assigned.

Session 4b: EIA Skill-Building Exercise—Field Visit (2.5 hrs., including return)

Participants will use group transportation and proceed to the designated project site. Each group will be accompanied by at least one workshop trainer/facilitator. The field visit will enable participants to practice observation and EIA skills needed to characterize the baseline situation and identify impacts and issues of concern.

Scenario and Instructions

- At your project site observe the key elements of the baseline situation and identify potential environmental impacts. You should be on the lookout for health and safety issues as well as any socio-economic considerations that may not immediately strike one as 'environmental' in nature, but could nonetheless affect community health and safety.
- Discuss baseline situation and identify potential environmental impacts of the project scenarios as a small group in course of the field visit. Solicit stakeholder input, as appropriate.
- Take notes.

Session 4c: EIA Skill-Building Exercise—Group Work and Dialogue (1.5 hrs.)

This component is designed to expand participants' understanding of baseline characterization and environmental impact identification through small-group collaboration based on the preceding field visit. During this time, participants will work as part of their small group to synthesize field observations and prioritize impacts/issues of concern that were observed at the project site. The small groups will also discuss possible approaches for limiting the adverse effects of potential impacts of concern.

Scenario and Instructions

Using the observations and information gathered during the field visit, each small working group will:

- **Review and characterize** the most relevant aspects of the baseline situation, including ongoing environmental management efforts and measures (if any); and
- On this basis, decide which of the potential adverse impacts and other potential “ESDM failures” are real and present serious concerns.

Small groups should record their findings. Facilitators will serve as resources throughout the process.

Note that:

- This group work and dialogue is intended to practice basic EIA observation and impact identification skills—not to practice development of Reg. 216 environmental documentation.
- For participants who already know these terms, working group outputs are **not** expected to be in the form of an IEE outline or phrased in terms of “recommended determinations.”

Session 4d: EIA Skill-Building Exercise—Presentation and Discussion (approx. 1 hr.)

This component will provide an opportunity for each working group to present its finding (and recommendations, as applicable) based on the field visit and subsequent small-group synthesis and collaboration. Findings will be presented to the training group at large and key elements or aspects of the EIA process and outputs discussed in plenary form.

Key Lessons

At the conclusion of this exercise, participants will be equipped to:

- Characterize a project baseline situation
- Identify and/or prioritize environmental impacts of concern
- Develop an approach that will limit or mitigate impacts of concern, or that will promote ESDM in project implementation