

PURPOSE and BACKGROUND

As part of IAIA's ongoing strategic planning process, this publication series was initiated to meet the needs of business and industry and to highlight the services and benefits available to business and industry through corporate membership in IAIA.

Hydro-Québec, ScottishPower, Anglo-American, Royal Haskoning, BHP Billiton, and Shell were directly contacted to produce this publication.

ESKOM, Norske Hydro, ExxonMobil, bp, and TotalFinaElf were indirectly consulted via their web sites to produce this publication.

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IMPACT ASSESSMENT in the CORPORATE CONTEXT

Impact Assessment, Sound Business Operation, and Corporate Responsibility for Sustainable Development

ELVIS AU PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Impact assessment is about making the best possible decision using the best available information in a systematic and proper manner. It is essential to a sound and sustainable business operation. It is also an essential part of good governance and a key to sustainable development.

In what ways is impact assessment relevant to a business operation?

Over the past 20 years, the emergence of widespread concerns about environmental, socio-economic, health and other global issues means that business managers or decision makers are confronted with far greater challenges and difficulties than their predecessors many decades ago. Many of these challenges are multi-disciplinary in nature. Any corporate decision nowadays may have far reaching environmental or social effects or far greater unintended consequences which could undermine the reputation or long term viability of a company.

Impact assessment is already a part of corporate management to anticipate, manage and respond to environmental, social and health risks; to position the company as an environmentally responsible corporate citizen; and to enhance corporate image and build trust with the community. Examples include:

- **Environmental Impact Assessment for major projects or investments:** already a mandatory requirement for the business sector to comply with in many countries;
- **Environmental Management System:** includes a requirement to assess environmental aspects of a company's operation and develop plans to manage significant environmental aspects;
- **Design for the environment:** assesses the life-cycle impacts of products and services on the environment and the society with a view to designing environmentally and socially sustainable products and services, and tracking the actual effects of the production and consumption processes;
- **Sustainability or environmental reporting or sustainability assessment:** requires an assessment of the impact of the company's policies, operations and practices on the biophysical and human environment, and formulate action and management plan;
- **Environmental/social risk/liability assessment:** assesses the short term and longer term environmental risks and liabilities that a company is exposed to, and formulate response plans to prevent or manage the risks involved;
- **Environmental accounting and audit:** requires the assessment of environmental costs and benefits of certain policies, measures, processes and practices.

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Corporate Needs in Environmental and Social Assessment

IAN VOGES AND WILLIAM VEERKAMP GUEST EDITORS

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF COMPANIES WHEN IT COMES TO IMPACT ASSESSMENT? OR, FORMULATED IN TERMS OF THE SUBJECT OF THE 2002 IAA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, HOW CAN THE IMPACT OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT BE ENHANCED FOR COMPANIES? WITHOUT CLAIMING TO BE EXHAUSTIVE, THIS ARTICLE PROVIDES A PERSPECTIVE ON THIS QUESTION BASED ON A SELECTED NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS WITH CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGERS.

Looking at the protests against economic globalisation taking place at meetings of international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, it becomes clear that we live in a world where people do not automatically trust companies and their ability to be a force for good in the developing world. People are increasingly demanding to participate in corporate decisions that will affect their lives and are demanding demonstrable evidence that companies are managing their environmental and social impact in the countries where they operate. In this context, the environmental and social impact assessment process, and specifically consultation with interested and affected parties, is becoming increasingly important to ensure the minimisation of adverse impacts and the optimisation of benefits to the host country and local communities.

Impact assessment traditionally tends to focus on the assessment of adverse impacts on the natural and social environment. However, the companies interviewed expressed the need for impact assessments to focus on positive impacts as well. It is important to identify, assess and determine appropriate ways of responding to opportunities for generating environmental and social capital in affected communities.

Companies also expressed the need for the impact assessment process to move beyond mere data gathering and the assessment of impacts. Significant attention should be given to the development of practical and concrete impact management recommendations. Baseline studies and the assessment of impacts are not ends in themselves. These activities are a means to an end, that

end being the development of an environmental and social management plan that ensures that implemented projects contribute to sustainable development. A number of the companies interviewed felt that it would be of benefit if consultants used the development of the environmental and social management plan as an opportunity to provide strategic advice to the company on how to manage its adverse impacts and how to optimise environmental and social benefits to affected communities. Companies also stressed that plans need to be practical with timing of actions and responsible parties clearly indicated. In general, companies appreciated the fact that a high-quality environmental and social management plan depends on allowing enough time for meaningful consultation with interested and affected parties and the development of mitigation measures in cooperation with affected parties.

Amongst companies dealing with communities in the developing world, there is a growing recognition of the importance of “empowering” local communities. Merely making data available to less developed communities is not sufficient to ensure meaningful participation in the impact assessment process. Communities need to be “empowered” to understand and assess information, which does not come naturally to communities which might never have seen the kind of development being proposed, or which do not have the background to interpret the information on emissions and predicted impacts. The companies interviewed stress the importance of providing intelligible nontechni-

cal information and the use of visual aids (e.g., posters and videos). Some companies are going further in empowering locals to make informed decisions. A Southern African mining company assessing the impact of an aluminium smelter on a local Mozambican community which has never seen an aluminium smelter before flew the locals to a South African smelter, thereby helping them to interpret and understand the proposed development. Another example is that of a Canadian oil company which provided financial assistance to help locals acquire the skills necessary to interpret and meaningfully respond to the impact assessment report.

Companies highlighted the fundamental importance of high-quality, appropriate data that is verifiable and fit for its purpose. It was also noted that biodiversity issues are in general not adequately identified and assessed. Biodiversity issues need to be identified early in the process, data collection needs to take spatio-temporal variation into account, and appropriate mitigation measures need to be developed. In a similar vein, companies expressed a concern that the quality and appropriateness of social and health impact prediction and assessment provided by consultants is not always of the desired standard and not conducted by appropriately skilled people with relevant experience. This concern indicates that the increasing importance of integrated environmental, social and health assessments will require multi-disciplinary teams and the further professionalisation of the subdisciplines of social and health assessment.

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Benefits of Impact Assessment to the Mining Industry

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Mining projects can benefit significantly from undertaking thorough environmental and social impact assessments. With the output from these assessments, informed decisions can then be taken on the “cradle to grave” technical options, liabilities and costs. The main benefit is the improved understanding of a project and the ability to plan a project to maximise the long term benefits to the proponent. Providing appropriate cues for the integrated planning that sustainable development requires will also be a benefit.

Understanding a project and preparing a project description for all the activities within a mining operation are critical elements of the environmental impact assessment (EIA). The environmental aspects, as defined by ISO 14000, associated with these activities need to be identified and their significance rated. The management required to reduce their significance will become focused and therefore more effective as a result of this type of project evaluation. During this process, an environmental awareness culture is developed within the project team that spills over into the operational team if the project is approved.

As part of an EIA, a legal register is compiled for the construction, operational and closure phases of a mining operation. This register can be structured so that it relates the legal requirements to the project activities, the associated environmental aspects and the specific environments. The legal register can be broken down further into design/performance standards, administrative/approval requirements, guidelines and the consequences of non-compliance. This organisation of the legal requirements into an easy-to-follow register makes legal compliance more readily achievable.

It is of prime importance to both a project and an operation that the EIA provides the mechanisms to interact with, and build up trust between, communities, NGOs, interest groups and the project or mine. These interactions are invaluable in overcoming difficulties before they become real problems. Trust is not bought; it is earned.

Meaningful social obligations and expectations associated with a mining operation are often difficult to define. If these obligations and expectations are poorly understood and administered, particularly on mine closure, there could be considerable hardship for the surrounding communities. The social impact assessment (SIA) will make recommendations on how a mine, together with other businesses, the authorities and NGOs in the area, can assist the surrounding communities to become economically sustainable.

A good EIA will attempt to predict the closure impacts. This necessitates the development of conceptual closure plans and forces the designers of facilities to consider closure. There are substantial cost savings to be made if facilities can be designed with closure in mind.

The above benefits apply only where a comprehensive and professional impact assessment has been undertaken. Superficial assessments are of little value. If carried out properly, an EIA and an SIA, through the process of enlightened negotiations and discussions with the affected parties, will greatly improve the long-term quality of life of the surrounding communities and the viability of the project. At the same time, they will ensure that the company will receive its “licence to operate” from both the authorities and the communities with minimum delay.

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TRUST IS NOT BOUGHT
IT IS EARNED

Social Impact Assessment: More than Ever a Business Need

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Shell International believes that focused attention to the social dimension shows definitive business returns.

Social impact assessment (SIA) remains a weak link in the impact assessment process being applied to new projects. Much as the subject of environmental impact has been discussed for more than 30 years and social issues have been identified as important for nearly as long, business, consultants and government continue to grapple with the scope and content of good social impact assessment. And perhaps more importantly with how to use the results of the social impact processes to truly minimise impacts and enhance benefits.

From a business perspective, Shell International has, since the mid-1990s, provided increasing attention to the social dimension. The company has seen that social issues such as human rights, gender, marginalized peoples, economic development, resettlement, land acquisition and health impacts have all become of foremost importance to a wide variety of stakeholders. Indeed, environmental issues are now often looked at from the human direction as neighbours and communities look from the anthropogenic point of view toward the use of biodiversity, effects of low level toxic exposure, food chain effects of contamination of the environment and loss of human enjoyment resulting from destruction of wildlife.

Accompanying the need for improved social impact assessment is the need to enhance the ability to consult and engage with a wide variety of stakeholders. Social impact assessment and consultation is essentially an unbreakable partnership. It is recognised that stakeholders are those who are impacted by a project but also those who can impact the project. A wide variety of voices is increasingly heard, with stress being placed on not limiting those that can and should be involved, but listening and responding to all. Open consultation leads to identification of the relevant issues in a timely manner which in turn provides the ability to address the issues through proper impact studies. Opening the impact studies from first scoping through final draft reviews provides the ongoing ability to truly include the relevant issues, reflect the learnings and ensure impacts are minimised while benefits are maximised.

This process is of great benefit to the company. Early identification of issues and resolution during the planning stages has shown to deliver projects on time and with much wider stakeholder support. It also minimises delay further on due to surprises and allows for the incorporation of the communities into the benefit stream as a partner.

To address this need, Shell has promoted increasing attention to SIA through guidelines, training and staffing. Consultation and engagement has become the recognised tools to ensure issues are identified and managed. We are, however, finding we have much to learn. What is evident and of concern is the ability to find the right quality of assistance from outside parties in NGOs, government and consultants to execute good social assessments in a timely way with the right resources and competencies. A recent call for consultant submissions stressing the need for competency in EIA, SIA and HIA showed that less than 25% were able to respond in a manner that indicated both understanding and the ability to execute in the field.

Shell International believes that focused attention to the social dimension shows definitive business returns. Activities that have been integrated with our projects have provided wide-ranging benefits that have included sustainable energy in China, youth training in the U.S.A., agricultural development in Brunei, biodiversity in Gabon, business enterprise in Canada, literacy in South Africa and job skills in the Philippines. These are the results of intensive efforts on behalf of the company in concert with neighbours, NGOs, multilaterals, governments and others to ensure that our projects deliver true benefit.

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It's Good to Talk: The Importance of Consultation in SIA

ROSS MARSHALL SCOTTISHPOWER

Social impact assessment (SIA) has become one of the most challenging aspects of current practice. In all communities, the manner in which local people utilise the natural environment for subsistence, recreation, cultural and industrial activities will be myriad and complex to quantify. Since the cultural and social aspects of the local environment, and their perceived values, exist largely in people's minds, interaction across all levels of an affected community is essential. Whilst experience and the use of accepted methodologies have taught practitioners how to handle many of the issues and controversies linked to physical environmental impacts, social aspects are often more subjective, controversial in nature, and tend to polarise opinion. Insensitive or unsympathetic approaches can jeopardise the likelihood of any future objective communication with stakeholders.

Since the Rio Summit in 1992 when the call went out to businesses to embrace the concept of sustainable development, ScottishPower has grown from an electricity company generating, distributing and supplying electricity to captive customers in Scotland to an international energy utility and a member of the E7 Group.

Energy services are vital to society's well-being. Fuel poverty and social exclusion bring misery, and so energy must be available and affordable. But massive capital spending is required to maintain and upgrade electrical infrastructure, and proposed new infrastructure may bring the company into dispute with those whose services it seeks to ensure or whose custom it hopes to provide for.

There is no requirement for widespread consultation within the provisions of the EU's EIA Regulations nor the UK's Electricity Act 1989, but since the introduction of the EIA Regulations, ScottishPower has attached importance and commitment to consultation with stakeholders whose interests are likely to be affected, and believes that a formal and ongoing consultation process assists

all parties. This approach, outlined for overhead transmission routeing, was presented in a paper given at IAIA'01 and is summarised for large-scale developments in Table 1.

Through these means, ScottishPower seeks to address the difficult question of "What is a stakeholder's *opinion*?" against "What is *information* of direct relevance to the EIA process?"—i.e., concerns that really count, not those that are just easy to count!

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TABLE 1: SCOTTISHPOWER'S CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINES

Stage	Phase	Actions & Objectives
1	Pre-project notification	Meetings with local planning authorities, environmental agencies and other statutory consultees to introduce the need for the project, the project proposals and the process to be followed for gaining consent.
2	Information collection	All statutory and identified consultees provided with project information and formally invited to provide information and comments on the proposed route corridor. Baseline constraint maps produced by independent environmental consultants recording all potentially significant environmental and social aspects.
3	Discussion with statutory consultees	Discuss development of project proposals with all key statutory consultees and interested parties to review project thoroughness.
4	Document for public consultation	Preparation of a Consultation Document recording all identified environmental issues and comparing route options, and the justification for the selection of the preferred route.
1st Community Consultation Exercises & Exhibition held at Local Centers		
5	Appraisal of consultation feedback	The results of the consultation process and public exhibitions are considered, evaluated, and used to re-appraise the preferred route. Personal responses to all public comments prepared. Feedback is provided to stakeholders on propose route amendments.
2nd Community Consultation Exercises & Exhibition held at Local Centers to outline significant routing amendments		
6	Appraisal of consultation feedback	The results of the consultation process and public exhibitions are considered, evaluated, and used to re-appraise the preferred route. Personal responses to all public comments prepared. A further round of discussions with statutory consultees may take place, and following this the proposed route is nominated. A proposed route is identified, on which the EIA is then performed by independent environmental consultants.
7	Publication of the environmental statement	The EIA is reported in the form of an Environmental Statement.

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The adoption and application of this approach is intended to ensure that:

- overhead transmission line routeing is carried out in a systematic manner, resulting in the selection of a route which is technically feasible and economically viable and causes the least disturbance to people and the environment;
- the EIA is seen to be undertaken in an objective and systematic manner based on a thorough review of potential social and environmental effects;
- information on how the preferred route was selected can be presented in a logical, comprehensive and objective manner;
- the information in the Environmental Statement is presented in a clear, comprehensive and objective manner.

Where a Consultation Document (see Table 1) is issued to all statutory consultees, copies are placed at relevant local sites in public libraries, and its availability to the public is advertised in the press.

Since the primary reason for SIA is to determine and address the concerns of local people, public involvement is essential. One of the hardest lessons for industry to learn is that time and resources must be given to the development programme before the detailed design stage. Too often EIAs seem to start from a fixed concept of what is to be constructed and how the environment must be altered to accommodate it. Successful projects begin with a careful assessment of the existing environmental baseline and how the project must be modified to accommodate it. As the process above outlines, it should be active and integral to the EIA process, and where possible act as a precursor to the EIA itself. Proponents should never lose sight of the fact that social impact is a valid material consideration in the determination of developmental consent, and legitimate grounds for refusal.

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The new challenges and difficulties and the highly complex physical and socioeconomic environment call for a systematic, well-managed impact assessment process to be developed and incorporated into any organisation's decision making and follow-up system. It also calls for a much greater degree of due diligence and due care on the part of business managers and decision makers to systematically appraise all relevant socioeconomic and environmental factors in order to make a sound business decision.

There is a real need for professionals or managers working in the business sector to keep themselves abreast of the new developments, the international practices and trends, and the diverse perspectives relating to the field of impact assessment, and to develop sufficient capacity and knowledge to deal with these new challenges.

In what ways can IAIA serve corporations or professionals working in the business sector?

Being a truly international, multi-disciplinary organization, established since 1981, the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) brings together practitioners, researchers, managers, and policy makers with a wide variety of backgrounds from over 100 countries. IAIA's mission is to advance innovation, development and communication of best practice in impact assessment. Through annual conferences, journals, newsletters and electronic discussion groups, IAIA promotes practicable and effective approaches, methods and tools for making better decisions through impact assessment and for sustainable development.

To promote the participation of the business sector in this global professional network, a special task force on business and industry has been set up by IAIA, and this special publication is issued for such a purpose. Within IAIA, a special Section on Environmental Management Systems has already been established. The annual conference, held June 2002 in The Hague, was designed with various components to address the needs of the business sector.

IAIA provides an excellent opportunity for international networking and knowledge sharing among professionals and managers. IAIA aims to meet the needs of the business sector, among others. We wish to see more professionals or managers from the business sector taking an active part in this global network for mutual learning and knowledge sharing. Proper impact assessment is essential to any organization aspiring to sustain itself in a highly complex socioeconomic and biophysical environment in the 21st century.

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- Focus on Business and Industry *is intended to be a publication by industry for industry on environmental issues of concern to industry. If you have an article you would like to submit, or if you would like to suggest a business/industrial sector for a future edition of this series, please contact Bridget John at IAIA Headquarters (bridget@iaia.org).*

Are EIAs a Waste of Energy?

EIA Experiences of Dutch Waste and Energy Companies

MARIËLLE DE SAIN ROYAL HASKONING

IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) ALWAYS THE MOST APPROPRIATE INSTRUMENT TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE CASE OF NEW PROJECTS OR EXPANSION OF EXISTING FACILITIES? THE WASTE AND ENERGY SECTOR ENDORSES THE APPLICATION OF INSTRUMENTS THAT ASSESS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THEIR ACTIVITIES ON THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT THEY DOUBT WHETHER AN EIA IS ALWAYS THE BEST INSTRUMENT TO USE.

Leading part for EIA

In most countries, companies need an “environmental” permit to build a new or expand an existing plant. Generally speaking, the permit is the framework and an EIA has become one of the obligatory appendixes. Nowadays, authorities are demanding very elaborate EIAs. This is shown in the steadily increasing length of EIA reports and the growing amount of additional editions during the EIA procedure. The result is often repetition: environmental permits and EIAs more often then not contain similar information.

This is supported by another argument. The energy and waste sectors, like most other industrial companies in The Netherlands, are confronted with tight and very detailed statutory requirements. Furthermore, extensive research is put into the development of new abatement technologies. In other words: a lot of information is already available, which is essential for companies to make management decisions in relation to new investments. It therefore may be questionable whether EIAs will always provide new and valuable information for the decision process within companies. An option may be to execute detailed EIAs and incorporate the results into a so-called umbrella permit, where companies, based on their own environmental management system and assessment, ensure no unacceptable impacts on the environment. Alternatively: have a very detailed environmental permitting process with a limited EIA, but ensure compliance with all statutory requirements.

Project EIA versus strategic EIA

The most important feature of an EIA is the description and comparison of alternatives. In most project EIAs, this has limited value. In the majority of cases, there are no real different alternatives, one reason being that the location of the activity has already been determined. Furthermore, the statutory requirements require the application of best available techniques (BAT) as abatement technology in addition to emission and discharge limits.

From a managerial point of view, this would suggest the introduction of an EIA on the strategic level, for example: an EIA for a regional or national waste or energy plan, where locations for new plants or expansions can be compared and indicated. The regional or national government is the obvious owner for such an EIA. Another advantage of a strategic EIA is that environmental impact can be measured in a larger area and more factors can be taken into account. This will also lead to a more independent perspective, as companies normally focus on a business perspective and project economics.

Companies can use this strategic EIA to decide to develop an activity in a certain area. The environmental permit is a good instrument to protect the environment on a project level and can be based upon the strategic EIA. This will save valuable time and money and can prevent unfair competition. Companies often complain about the negative consequences of the statutory requirements and hence blame the EIA for hampering the process of getting permits and the definition of the permit requirements.

Lessons to be learned

Waste and energy companies see the importance of an instrument that protects the environment, but they also have to fit these instruments into the business process in order to run the company effectively.

Therefore, some tips for EIA makers and authorities:

- Early EIA: an EIA on the strategic level can serve the environment better than an EIA on the project level
- Think before production: choose the right instrument to prevent the repetition of steps
- Standardisation of basic information (information that can be used in different projects) leads to more objectivity and saves resources

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Will Impact Assessment Become Extinct and Disappear as the Dinosaurs Did,

or

Will Impact Assessment Adapt to the New Challenges?

A PERSPECTIVE FROM HYDRO-QUÉBEC

PETER LEONARD

E7 NETWORK OF EXPERTISE FOR THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

It is with great pleasure and pride that I accept the opportunity to respond to your request to participate in the special publication on business. We are honored to have been solicited by our peers to contribute to such an endeavor.

Hydro-Québec has been extensively involved in impact assessment (IA) since its beginnings in the early 1970s when regulatory processes were being put together in the U.S.A. and Canada to require environmental impact assessments. If the sheer amount of resources invested in impact assessment at Hydro-Québec roughly over the past 30 years can be used as accurate indicator of our commitment, we can simply bring to attention the thousands of EIA and study reports produced, the several hundred consultants hired over the decades, and the nearly 200 permanent employees at Hydro-Québec who specialize in environmental matters.

Why such a strong commitment to impact assessment? One can argue that it makes good business sense to have projects that are considered not only economically and financially viable, but also environmentally sound and socially acceptable. With impact assessment, environment issues and social concerns also became central parts of the decision making process; projects were being evaluated not only by their financial and technological components, but also on the basis of their environmental and social impacts. Overall, this was considered by many an improvement, a step in the path to achieving a more sustainable development.

However, impact assessment has tremendously evolved in the past thirty years. Although much has been learned and accomplished, much is still yet to be done to improve its efficiency.

The relevance of IA is dependent on its

In fact, *capacity to* if IA is not able to better adapt *improve* to rapid economic and social changes and substantially improve its efficiency short term, it is in danger of becoming more and more marginal in the decision making process. On the other hand, never has IA become so potentially relevant to complex, intertwined and critical issues such climate change, biodiversity and poverty reduction that need to be addressed both on a global scale and locally.

Furthermore, the role and overall importance of impact assessment is rapidly changing. The shortcomings of impact assessment—mainly its project based approach and lengthy delays—have sprung a more recent generation of environmental processes, procedures and tools designed to be more responsive to the management of environmental concerns on both a global level and a day to day basis. Two outstanding examples are the recent developments of environmental management systems and the push towards strategic environmental assessments of policies and programs.

Improving the efficiency of impact assessment should be at the forefront of IAIA activities and debates. We must simultaneously enhance the quality and effectiveness of impact assessment while addressing the pressing need to reduce lengthy delays and unnecessary uncertainty to be more closely in sync with development concerns and constraints. Encyclopedic studies require streamlining where core matters that influence policy and decision making become the focus. Strategic IA cannot be effective if nearly a decade is required by policy makers to carry through assessments. Full life cycle

project assessment must become part of the IA process. And many other considerations need to be taken better into account in IA.

The relevance of IA and its influence on the decision making process is largely dependent on its capacity to continuously improve the quality and efficiency of IA. I believe IAIA provides a unique and exceptionally credible international forum to bring together experts, policy makers and decision makers from academia, consulting, government, large and small organizations, industry and elsewhere to contribute to the improved efficiency of IA.

Industry and impact assessment

The mere quality and diversity of IAIA members is its driving force. IAIA remains the only international professional organization of its kind in the field of impact assessment. However, to reach its full potential and increase its efficiency and influence, IAIA must provide an inclusive forum that brings together all stakeholders.

As an international professional organization, IAIA brings together academics, practitioners, government representatives and a wide range of organizations and NGOs from both developed and developing countries. Industry, however, is still not as sufficiently represented as it should be. To reach its full potential and increase its efficiency, more industry—as a major stakeholder with experience and expertise in impact assessment—must join and support IAIA.

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