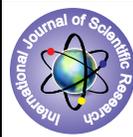


Environmental Impact Assessment: An over View of Theory and Policy Framework in Ethiopia



Environment

KEYWORDS : Environment, development, legislation, policy and society.

Mushir Ali

Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Mekelle University, Ethiopia, PB. 45

ABSTRACT

The different sectors of the economies in the world, particularly developing economies are under transition phases from one to another or within the sector, mainly industrial and agricultural sectors. To fulfill the different needs of commodities, food, and employment as well as help to improve the health and education. However, the consequences of the development have led to an undesirable impact on the local environment which has been more injurious than the benefit. In the view of deteriorating environmental conditions its adverse impact on the bio-physical and social-economic environment. The present work is an attempt to overview of Environmental Impact Assessment regarding theoretical, planning and policy level in Ethiopia where various development activities are existed/under the plans.

Introduction

Deforestation Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic process to identify, predict and evaluate the environmental effects of proposed actions and projects [1]. This process is applied prior to major decisions and commitments being made. So, Environmental impact assessment is considered to ensure that the environmental effects of a proposed development are fully considered, together with the economic or social benefits of the development, before the planning application is determined [2,3].

The formal phrase was used firstly in USA as 'Environmental Impact Assessment' in Section 102 (2) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1969. Some basics of EIA were contained even in early examples of environmental legislation [4]. However, Napoleon gave decision in 1910 those occupations were under noxious categories must be far removed from habitations, and permitted on the periphery of towns, and those which can be tolerated even close to settlements, having regard to the significance of the work and the importance of the surrounding dwellings [5,6].

Importance of EIA

Reducing the burden of environmental impacts is necessary if development is to become sustainable. These impacts are more complex, larger in scale and further reaching in their potential consequences. As a result, EIA has become of ever increasing importance as a tool for development decision-making [3].

According to the Rio Declaration (1992) on Environment and Development: Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority [7].

The purpose of EIA is to able decision maker by providing information on the environmental cost of proposed developmental works; and to support environmentally consequences and sustainable development by recognition of appropriate enhancement and mitigation measures [8]. Sustainable development leads a key concept that has got recognition at global level since last three decades. According to the Brundtland's report and FAO 1988, Sustainable development is the management and conservation of the natural resource base and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development (in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors) conserves land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, is environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable [9].

What is Environment Impact Assessment?

Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is a process or mechanism used to forecast and judge both positive and negative bio-

physical and social impacts of a proposed development project [3]. EIA can be defined in the following way:

"...systematic and interdisciplinary identification, prediction, evaluation, mitigation and management of impacts from a proposed document and its reasonable alternatives" - Canter 1996 [6].

"...an activity designed to identify and predict the impact on the bio-geophysical environment and on man's health and well-being of legislative proposals, policies, programmes, projects and operational procedures, and to interpret and communicate information about the impacts" -Munn 1975 [10].

"...a procedure designed to provide information about the potential impact on the environment of a proposed new development, before planning decisions are made" -EPLUA 2009 [11].

"...a mechanism for all interested parties to be consulted and provide a framework within which agreement may be reached between the developers causing the impacts and those who are affected by the impacts" -Turnbull 1992 [12].

The Environmental Impact Assessment Proclamation, Ethiopia (federal proc. No. 299/2002): has made it mandatory that all development projects should be subjected to the environmental scrutiny. It means that EIA is a legal requirement [13].

- WHEREAS, Environmental impact assessment is used to predict and manage the environmental effects which a proposed development activity as a result of its design sitting, construction, operation, or an ongoing one as a result of its modification or termination, entails and thus helps to bring about intended development;
- WHEREAS, assessment of possible impacts on the environment prior to the approval of a public instrument provides an effective means of harmonizing and integrating environmental, economic, cultural and social considerations into a decision making process in a manner that promotes sustainable development,
- WHEREAS, the implementation of the environmental rights and objectives enshrined in the Constitution would be fostered by the prediction and management of likely adverse environmental impacts, and the maximization of their socioeconomic benefits.
- WHEREAS, environmental impact assessment serves to bring about administrative transparency and accountability, as well as to involve the public and, in particular, communities in the planning of and decision taking on developments which may affect them and its environment.

Legal and Policy Framework in Ethiopia

The proclamation No1/1995 to pronounce the coming into effect of the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (issued on 21, August 1995) gave due consideration to environmental issues. These legislations have demand the

recognition of environmental rights and obligations in line with regional/country development. Article 43, 44 and 92 of the Federal Constitution states the following people's environmental concerns [11].

Article, 43: The Right to Development

- The peoples of Ethiopia as a whole and each Nation, Nationality and people in Ethiopia in particular have the right to improve living standards and to sustainable development.
- Nations have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community.
- All international Agreements and relations concluded, established or conducted by the state shall protect and ensure Ethiopia's right to sustainable development.
- The basic aim of development activities shall be to enhance the capacity of citizens for development and to meet basic needs.

Article, 44: Environment Rights

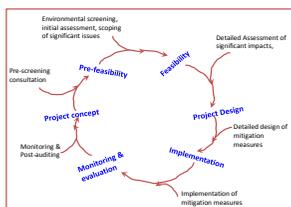
- All persons have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment.
- All persons who have been displaced or whose livelihoods have been adversely affected because of state programs have the right to commensurate monetary or alternative means of compensation, including relocation with adequate state assistance.

Article, 92: Environmental Objective

- Government shall endeavor to ensure that all Ethiopians live in a clean and healthy environment.
- The design and implementation of programs and projects of development shall not damage or destroy the Environment.
- People have the right to full consultation and the expression of views in the planning and implementation of environmental policies and projects that affect them directly.
- Government and citizens shall have the due to protect the environment.

The Environmental Policies and Strategies

National environmental policies, conservation strategy provide a number of guiding principles that indicate and require a strong adherence to sustainable development. Concerning the needs of EIA, the basic issues are contained; an early consideration of environmental impacts in project and program design, Reorganization of public consultation including mitigation and contingency plans, and provision of auditing and monitoring is a legally binding requirement [13].



Activities of EIA process in the project cycle (EPLUA 2009)

Principles of EIA

International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA 1999) developed guiding principles for EIA/IA cited Ogola [3].

Early Application: Proactive consideration and integration of environmental concerns at the earliest stages of the conceptualization of the projects, programs and policies.

Participation: Appropriate and timely access and opportunity to the process for all interested and affected parties.

Issues Based: The focus of an EA is on the resolution of major issues of significant impacts.

Alternatives: All feasible options to a project, policy, program or their components like site, processes, products, raw materials, designs etc should be considered.

Accountability: Refers to responsibility of proponent, consultant and environmental agencies for their respective roles and responsibilities.

Credibility: Assessments and reviews are under taken with professionalism and objectivity.

Time and Cost Effectiveness: The assessment process, its outcomes and decision making will ensure environmental protection at the least cost and within reasonable time.

Transparency: All assessments, decisions & their basis should be open and accessible to the public.

Practicality: The information and out puts provided by the assessment process are readily usable in the decision making and planning.

Objectives of EIA

Environment Impact Assessment is conducted with the immediate objective of EIA is to update the process for decision maker by identifying the potentially significant environmental effects and risks of development projects. The overall objective of EIA is to promote sustainable development by ensuring stability of critical resources and ecological function, welfare, lifestyle and livelihood of the communities/peoples [8].

Benefits of EIA: Environment Impact Assessment leads to multiple benefits; to improve project design for environmentally sustainable, to enhance compliance with environmental standards, to minimize capital and operating costs, and to avoid later plan adaptations, to trim down health costs and enhance acceptance of the project [8].

Limitations of EIA: EIA is systematic procedure to recognize the potential environmental impact of undertaking a project and the other advantages and disadvantages for making decision. EIA is a normal process to enhance and maintain quality of environment it does not lead to environmental "veto" power into administrative decision-making processes. EIA process presents an advice to the decision-makers but it does lead to a final decision [3].

Conclusion

The analysis of the present work concludes that the environmental impact assessment is used to predict the positive and negative consequences on the environment of the proposed development project that facilitates to decision makers to minimize the adverse effects and to make suggestions for mitigation to get optimum development. NEPA, UNEP, UNICED, many developed and developing countries and various scholars described many concepts, theories, methodologies, policies and frameworks to develop effective assessment the impact on the environment. In Ethiopia, the policy frame works have been developed regarding principles of the EIA, the rights to the development, environment rights, environment objectives and environmental policy, strategies, monitoring and legally bindings, to provide development either without compromise the biophysical and socio economic environments or with mitigation measures. A development project is required to pre-screening, screening, a detail assessment, consequences their significance, implication of mitigation mentoring and auditing phases.

REFERENCE

1. UNEP (1988). Environmental Impact Assessment. Basic procedures for developing countries, UNEP Regional Office Nairobi. | 2. Lee, N. (1995). Environmental Assessment in European Union: a tenth anniversary project appraisal. (7), 123-136. | 3. Ogola, P. F. A. 2007. Environmental Impact Assessment: General Procedures, UNU-GTP, Kenya. | 4. Anderson, F. R. 1973. NEPA in the courts: a legal analysis of the National Environmental Policy Act. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. | 5. Kolhe, P (2008). Environmental Impact Assessment, Report on Water Resources Department, 2007-08, Government of Maharashtra. | 6. Canter, L.W., (1996). Environmental Impact Assessment (Second Edition), Published by McGraw-Hill Inc. New York. | 7. UNICED 1992: UNICED Report A/CONF. 151/5/Rev 1. | 8. UNEP (2002). Environmental Impact Assessment: issues, trends and practice. EIA Training Resource Manual. Second edition. http://www.unep.ch/etu/publications/EIA_2ed/EIA_E_top1_body.PDF (accessed 12/3/2011) | 9. FAO (1988). Aspects of FAO's policies, programmes, budget and activities aimed at contributing to sustainable development. www.fao.com (accessed 5/3/2011). | 10. Munn, R.E. (1975) Environmental impact assessment: principles and procedures. John Willy and sons, New York. | 11. EPLUA (2009). Environmental protection land administration and use authority, general Environmental impact assessment guideline, Ethiopia | 12. Robert G.H. Turnbull (1992). Environmental and health assessment of Development, WHO Region office, London. | 13. Federal Negarit Gazeta (2002). Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 9th Year No.7 ADDIS ABABA. |