Social Impact Assessment

Thought pieces from UK and International practice

Guest Editor
Eddie Smyth, Director, Intersocial Limited (Ireland)

GUEST EDITORIAL

Eddie Smyth

BSc MSc FIEMA

Director, Intersocial Limited (Ireland)

Social Impact Assessment

Social Impact Assessment (SIA), the theme of this edition, has emerged as a key area of impact assessment practice over the past 40 years. SIA is conceived as being the process of identifying and managing the social issues of project development and includes the effective engagement of affected communities in participatory processes of identification, assessment, and management of social impacts.[1] Social impacts can be defined as any impact from an intervention (policy, plan, or project) that impacts people's wellbeing, positively or negatively. Social impacts, according to the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) guidance, include changes to people's way of life, culture, political systems, environment, health, property rights, and fears and aspirations.[2]

My professional career started out as an environmentalist focused on technical solutions, but I soon realised in working with farmers on environmental projects in the UK and Ireland that people needed to be central to any project for it to work. So, I retrained as a social development specialist and embarked on an international career in negotiating voluntary agreements with communities impacted by large projects in the infrastructure, renewables, extractives, and conservation sectors. In this edition, I have brought together papers that focus on the challenges of integrating SIA into impact assessment practice.

From practice, I have found that while developers and governments focus on highlighting the economic benefits of projects, communities are also concerned about the social and environmental impacts and this often leads to polarisation and conflict. The governance of projects involves a process for project approvals, which is meant to allow all parties to have an input in the decision-making process and SIA can be key in ensuring that people's concerns are considered. Because I have developed a framework, the Sustainable Wellbeing Framework,[3] to communicate the social, environmental, and economic factors that contribute to the wellbeing of people and the planet, I include it here to highlight the polarisation of sectoral interests on projects. It is common in impact assessment practice for project stakeholders to operate in silos and fail to understand the broad range of sustainability impacts that need to be considered on projects.

We have seen major opposition to many projects globally, including in the mining, fracking, and onshore wind industries, and dismissal of affected communities' concerns as 'Not-In-My-Backyard' (NIMBY) reactions to resources used by society. In many cases, it is the very dismissal of community concerns that drives the divisions and opposition to projects as communities don't feel respected or listened to. This in turn leads to a fear that if the local community is not considered, what else is amiss? The environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht noted a consistent theme of distress caused by coal mining in Australia by the assault on the people's sense of identity, place, belonging, control, and good health. He identified a melancholia from the loss of solace and comfort connected with their home which he termed 'solastalgia' – a form of homesickness that one gets when one is still at 'home' associated with the major project impacts they experienced. Social impacts can therefore range from significant health impacts to the loss of a cherished landscape and associated loss of a sense of place.

The first group of articles in this edition explores SIA practice in the UK and Ireland. The first article by Juliet Clark outlines the ongoing evolution of SIA practice in England. Liz Holford then outlines how GB rail is addressing the social pillar of sustainable development through the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT). Robert Bain explores valuation methods for quantifying the socio-economic costs of litter in Scotland, which is important to incentivise firms and consumers to reduce the impacts of litter. Michelle De Waele examines the potential for cultural ecosystem services for Open Spaces as a trigger to sustainable waste and resource management in the Central Belt of Scotland. Nuala Carr outlines progress and challenges with SIA in Ireland, focusing on the onshore wind sector.

The second group of articles within this journal considers international SIA practice. Dr Richard Parsons presents the SIA guidelines in New South Wales in Australia, which has already proved influential in several decisions on mining projects. Asmita Kabra and Budhaditya Das assess lessons from eight years of SIA in India, which was introduced to address the negative impacts of land acquisition, rehabilitation, and resettlement. Finally, Ilse Aucamp outlines a practitioner's perspective on developing SIAs in South Africa, including gaps in practice and new ways of looking at impacts.

1. Reference for IAIA SIA Guidance: https://www.iaia.org › SIA_Guidance_Document_IAIA
2. Source: Vanclay, F. 2003. International Principles for Social Impact Assessment. Impact Assessment & Project Appraisal 21(1), 5-11. http://dx.doi.org/10.3152/147154603781766491
3. Smyth, E., Vanclay. F. 2017. The social framework for projects: a conceptual but practical model to assist in assessing, planning and managing the social impacts of big projects. Impact Assess Project Appraisal. 35:65–80. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14615517.2016.1271539

Juliet Clark
BSc MSc

Senior Associate

Health and Social Value Stantec

SIA in the UK - From tick box to ticket for success

From the early 1970's, SIA emerged as a separate concept to predict and record a vast range of social effects with a particular focus on large scale energy development projects in rural areas. However, British institutions have not yet introduced a demand for this practice in the national regulations. In 2014, the EU Directive on the evaluation of the impact of private and public projects on the environment asked member states to conduct EIA in such a way that allows them to discover, demonstrate, and evaluate the direct and indirect key impacts of a project on the "population and human health". This directive was employed in the UK legislation by spring of 2017 (The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations Act 2017), although it doesn't call for full scale of SIAs.

As we work on getting planning consent for significant developments, social assessment is rarely undertaken in isolation. Consideration of social impacts might appear within a socioeconomic assessment for environmental impact assessment of projects, or in the form of a last-minute health impact Assessment (HIA) that no one realised was on the planning validation checklist. SIA is a forgotten but, I would argue, an essential element of the process of designing and building places for people. But it needs to improve.

Anthropology is missing from the months (sometimes years) of research and creativity that goes into preparing a planning submission. Little time is spent understanding who will be in these developments (and adjacent communities) and the patterns and complexities of their daily schedule of work, school, caring, socialising. If we don't know what people are likely to need how do we know what to build and how to shape communities?

There are exceptions, but most developments focus on buildings and landscape rather than building community networks and establishing social capital. This is understandable given the planning system is based on land use. But, in the 21st century, a scheme compliant with building regulations ought not to be the bar for planning consent. Local authorities have the power to push the social impact assessment agenda through local plan policies, but they also need to ensure development control officers are on the same page as their strategic planners.

Governance has become a more commonly considered aspect of a planning application, and in the context of this article, it relates to how the social infrastructure and open space will be managed.   This reflects renewed enthusiasm for the 'Garden City' and their need for governance structures and the ever-tightening local authority management budgets. A move towards community involvement placing control in the hands of

the people who use it is a welcome direction of travel, bringing social and health benefits above and beyond the practical outcomes of facilities management.

I have had the pleasure of working on several projects where the client has (perhaps with some prompting) recognised and has been willing to pay for social assessment early in the design process. For example, knowing the capacity of existing local amenities can lead to lower onsite provision, releasing valuable land for commercial or residential development. But there are many other projects where constraint and opportunities mapping does not include consideration of health, equality, anthropology, and other social issues. In effect, bats get first dibs on the budget, not people. Too often SIA is not done or left to an assessment once the scheme is fixed, and consultants plough on with unrewarding tick box exercises.

The future of Social Impact

I believe that times are changing and the future for SIA looks bright. There is more interest in this field as Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) becomes part of everyday corporate consciousness. Developers now need to meet the needs of both local authority planners and their funders. The SIA industry is expanding with a new cousin – Social Value, where a focus on quantitative accounting brings new traction and assessment opportunities, as well as challenges around reporting and assessment. This qualitative focus brings rigour to SIA and more widespread application, but SIA in the future should not exclude qualitative reporting – not everything can be measured in pounds and pence. Social value adds to the family of social assessments that includes Health and Equality Impact Assessments.

> *"If we don't know what people are likely to need, how do we know what to build and how to shape communities?"*

The notable increase in the 'S' of ESG in the last twelve months may be driven by responsible leadership but also reflects new financial legislation and frameworks pushing the investment and financial services industry to exact more sustainable behaviour.

- The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is considering regulations on ESG data metrics standards, to help investors make informed capital allocation choices.

- The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) will also seek to standardise reporting practices and data sources for ESG.

- Sustainable Disclosure Requirement (SDR) is expected in 2023 and will require firms to report on their impacts in several key sustainability areas, beginning with the environment and gradually expanding to social metrics.

This is driving time and investment into SIA which has the potential to build a fairer and more successful society. What's more, it is ensuring SIA is necessary for successful business and development.

To conclude, SIA deserves a place, not shoehorned into an economic assessment, or sliced into separate studies of health or equalities. It needs to be an integral part of the design and build process and engage/ be owned by those to which it applies. A new type of comprehensive social assessment supported by the plethora of research into measuring social value, will I hope help create successful places for people, not simply buildings and landscape.

Liz Holford

MBA, MCIPS, FIEMA

Sustainability Strategy Manager

Network Rail

Measuring and monetising social impacts in GB rail – the Rail Social Value Tool

Three milestones have driven the 'social' pillar of sustainable development to rise in prominence in the rail industry in Great Britain (GB):

- the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 [4]

- the concept of putting a monetary value to 'social', to both better understand the true impact of organisations and integrate this into decision-making, pioneered by the HACT Social Value Bank and Calculator[5] since 2014; and

- the 2020 UK Government Social Value Model (Procurement Policy Note 06/20).

The GB Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB)[6] has led efforts by the GB rail industry to standardise the measurement and monetisation of its social impacts. This has culminated in the development and launch of the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT).[7]

The development of the RSVT has drawn from existing social impact research, literature, tools, and approaches and is tailored to the needs of the rail sector. It excludes material that the industry uses within 'business as usual' economic business case decision-making and operational reporting, such as modal shift, passenger numbers, journey times, and revenue data.

The RSVT includes a library of 529 indicators,[8] which are grouped under 12 social impacts. These impacts were identified by the RSVT's developer, Loop, in consultation with GB rail stakeholders. They can be mapped across to the five themes of the UK Government Social Value Model (Table 1), adding rail-specific impacts and outcomes:

4. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-information-and-resources/social-value-act-information-and-resources
5. https://www.hact.org.uk/uk-social-value-bank
6. www.rssb.co.uk
7. https://www.rssb.co.uk/sustainability/social-sustainability/the-rail-social-value-tool
8. https://www.sparkrail.org/Lists/Records/DispForm.aspx?ID=27514

Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT) impacts	UK Government Social Value Model (PPN 06/20) themes and outcomes
Employment, training, and skills	**Tackling economic inequality:** Create new businesses, new jobs, and new skills
Educational attainment	
Economic development	
Supply chain resilience	**Tackling economic inequality:** Increase supply chain resilience and capacity
Supply chain capacity	
Rail accessibility	**Equal opportunity:** Tackle workforce inequality and reduce the disability employment gap
Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion	
Safety, health, and wellbeing	**Wellbeing:** Improve health and wellbeing
Community and charity	**Wellbeing:** Improve community Integration
Stakeholder engagement and customers	
COVID-19 recovery	**COVID-19 recovery:** Help local communities to manage and recover from the impact of COVID-19
Climate and environment	**Fighting climate change:** Effective stewardship of the environment

Table 1: Rail Social Value Tool's 12 social impacts of GB rail mapped to the UK Government Social Value Model (PPN06/20)

258 of the 528 indicators have monetised values (also known as 'financial proxies') associated with them. 238 values are considered 'robust' because they have been calculated in a manner compliant with Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD) and UK Treasury Green Book principles and take account of three considerations: social (e.g., wellbeing) benefit to individuals; fiscal savings to government and taxpayers; and economic benefits to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

An example of robustness relates to the valuation of 'workforce volunteering'. The monetised value within the RSVT is outcome-based. It appraises the wellbeing benefit to an individual of volunteering and the economic benefit of them doing so. This is a truer gauge of 'social value' than an alternative and less-robust approach, which is to value the cost to the employer of the employee volunteering for an hour. The latter is a useful measure of social investment but not social value.
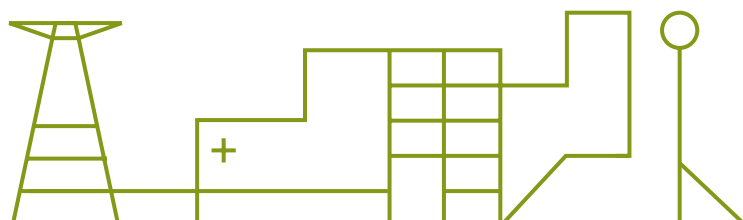
There are three key types of functionality within the RSVT. Network Rail [9] is starting to use them all (Table 2):

Forecasting	Monitoring	Evaluation
We're forecasting social value that could be generated by the redevelopment of four large railway stations.	We're collecting and analysing social value data from supply chain partners on the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) Programme and integrating it into reporting.	We calculated social return on investment achieved by the Rough Sleeping on Rail pilot outreach services in Manchester and Birmingham, delivered in partnership with Shelter. This contributed to the budget being allocated for a second year and informed the development of a bid for external funding to expand the work into additional geographical areas.
We're establishing how a forecast output from the RSVT can be integrated into the strategic and/ or economic (i.e., socio-economic appraisal) cases of a Five Case Model.		We're evaluating social return on investment achieved through a completed rail enhancement project in Oxfordshire.

Table 2: Three key functions of the RSVT and examples of use within Network Rail

To Network Rail, the RSVT provides a step change opportunity to better understand and value the full scope of our societal impacts; to integrate this into deciding how we spend public money and into reporting our performance. Ultimately, this will be to the benefit of rail passengers and the communities we serve.

"The RSVT provides a step change opportunity to better understand and value the full scope of our societal impacts; to integrate this into deciding how we spend public money and into reporting our performance."

Robert Bain

MSc GradIEMA

Assistant Economist

Zero Waste Scotland

Who pays for your litter? Exploring valuation methods for indirect impacts

Accurately quantifying the socio-economic costs of litter is a pervasive issue. The direct costs of litter are well known, the indirect impacts much less so. Litter is a well-documented indicator of local environmental quality and can have significant environmental, economic, and health implications for populations. This article will draw attention to a widely used valuation method for one negative externality of litter: Assessing willingness to pay (WTP) for the reduction of the visual disamenity of litter.

More-accurate valuation leads to more-effective environmental policy, therefore incentivising firms and consumers to reduce the impacts of litter. The direct costs of litter are internalised in the market, such as clearance. Indirect impacts are externalised because those littering do not incur the cost. In Scotland, 15,000 tonnes of litter are disposed into urban and rural environments annually, comprised of around 250 million easily visible items. Scotland spends at least £53 million of public money on litter and flytipping every year for costs such as clearance, education, and enforcement. This figure, however, does not account for the myriad of indirect impacts.

The value from nature-based tourism in Scotland is considerable:

- estimated at £14 billion annually

- with 39,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and

- worth nearly 40% of all tourism spending in Scotland.

Focusing on beach litter, present along Scotland's 18,743km of coastline, provides an interesting case study and shows the imperative to better value the damage. Beaches are a boundary between terrestrial and marine environments, allowing litter to pass between both, and are thus particularly susceptible to litter being present.

Litter on beaches poses a significant visual disamenity for tourists and local visitors, lowering enjoyment and causing a decline in coastal tourism and corresponding revenues. Although tourism and recreation are affected by beach litter, they often contribute to litter on beaches. As there is limited incentive for those responsible to change their behaviour, we require a more-effective policy. To do this, greater insight is needed into the economic cost of the impacts of beach litter. A forthcoming policy is the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) which proposes

10. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/topics/plastics/single-use-plastics_en

action on 10 SUP items comprising of approximately 70% of marine litter products found on European beaches. Of particular focus is Article 5 of the Directive, which imposes market restrictions on SUP items, which the Scottish Government plans to implement.

I have worked closely on the Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) for the EU SUPD at Zero Waste Scotland and have seen the crucial role of accurately valuing visual disamenity. Plastic decomposes around 100 times slower than a biodegradable material such as paper. As such, the longer-term reductions to visual disamenity are significant, considering certain plastics can persist in the environment for hundreds of years before breaking down into still harmful microplastics, and potentially entering food chains. Switching to biodegradable alternatives can provide significant benefits.

Valuation techniques are still evolving. The most common methodology is through WTP surveys of the public. This looks at the social welfare benefits associated with reductions in litter and corresponding monetary values. The existing evidence base, however, is very limited. Zero Waste Scotland undertook research in 2014, Exploring the Indirect Costs of Litter in Scotland, which collated available evidence on WTP for local environmental improvements and visual disamenity of beach litter. For beach litter specifically, there are two studies which collected data in 2002 and 2011. In recent years there has been little update to these figures, which are still used as recently as 2020. Although there has been more recent research estimating WTP for reductions in beach litter, the overall evidence base is still patchy. There is a general consensus that no standardised methodology exists for estimating WTP. The reliance on survey data brings with it several problems including:

- ensuring adequate cross-sections of populations
- inherently subjective results and
- short-term focus which does not capture the longevity of materials such as plastic.

Future SIA practitioners in this area must seek to develop a well-evidenced standardised practice for estimating the WTP for reductions in the visual disamenity of litter. Practitioners could also seek to develop new methodologies which encompass a broader range of the indirect impacts of litter, universally understood to be undercounted. If we are to ensure that environmental policy protects future generations from environmental degradation, we must ensure that present damage is accounted for.

"More accurate valuation leads to more effective environmental policy, therefore incentivising firms and consumers to reduce the impacts of litter."

11. https://www.oecd.org/governance/cost-benefit-analysis-and-the-environment-9789264085169-en.htm

Michelle De Waele

Msc, GradIEMA

Project Co-Ordinator: My Climate Path

Developing Young Workforce Glasgow, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce

GLASGOW
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Examining the potential for Cultural Ecosystem Services in Open Spaces to be used as a trigger to sustainable waste and resource management in the Central Belt of Scotland

Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) represent the value of the non-material benefits derived from nature, such as aesthetic inspiration, cultural identity, sense of home, and spiritual experience.[12]

During 2021, I carried out phenomenological research examining the potential for Cultural Ecosystem Services in Open Spaces to be used as a trigger to sustainable waste and resource management in the Central Belt of Scotland. I wanted to better understand the socio-technical strategic weaknesses in the various drivers that should be accelerating net-zero and circular transitions. Why, after 50 years of research are we still seeing littering, loss of resource, pollution, and environmental damage in Scottish Open Spaces?

Stakeholder engagement guidance: Perceptions, values, knowledge, and attitudes

Stakeholder engagement data was gathered through a public survey, manager-level interview and PRISMA-directed analysis of campaign messages, all underpinned by FOI data, government reports and scientific papers. There was found to be a recurring theme of conflict being created by perspective-led consideration of social, economic, and environmental value, as well as conflicts in perceptions of delineations of responsibility.

Pre-COVID, Scotland-wide research showed that 63% of individuals visited Open Spaces in nature at least once a week[13], in this study that figure was almost 95%. Survey results demonstrated that being outdoors is an established part of public routine, and that the overwhelming majority use the bins provided. This means a LOT of waste in Open Spaces.

12. United Nations FAO, 2021

13. Stewart, D. & Eccleston, J., (2020). Scotland's People and Nature Survey 2019/20 – outdoor recreation, health, and environmental attitudes modules: NatureScot Research Report No 1227 , Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report- 1227-scotlands-people-and-nature-survey-201920-outdoor-recreation-health [Accessed 19 02 2022]

The infrastructure cannot cope, contents overflow and contaminants spread, eroding the CES benefits that drove the public to use Open Spaces in the first place and lowering Open Space value at all stakeholder levels.

Broadscale communications such as #Binyourlitter and 'Tidyman' imagery only encourage the use of bins, they don't account for the personal responsibility we have to choose to consume less resources, or explain that binned waste continues to require natural resource input. It is necessary to overcome poor communications between academia and real-world practitioners, as well as rethinking marketing approaches which are creating inconsistencies, biases, and misaligned perceptions of responsibility.

Social participation projects have been shown to be useful educational tools during government programmes of change, but they ultimately require financial support and assisted autonomy to be effective at scale. A Land Manager interviewed during the study gave examples of Eco-School outreach programmes which have failed due to lack of investment *("I'll arrange for a school to come out … but it's pointless if they can't get funding … we can't get a 35-seater bus because we have no money") and poor spatial planning at site ("… I need a flat area for the kids to run around so I can do environmental education … but I'm being told to plant trees").*

My current role co-ordinates the Climate Hero project in the Glasgow City Region, which aims to create an educational legacy from COP26 by connecting sustainability experts into a 12-month mentor-style relationship with a secondary school. By utilising the existing passions of a specific individual, coupling it with the ESR/CSR resources of a business, and academically guiding the interactions with young people to reflect their interests, it is possible to transform the curriculum experienced by young people by re-orientating to climate emergency perspectives. This will create longer-term benefits across the 'triple bottom line' of people, planet, and profit, and smooth the transition away from a linear economy.

COVID-sponsored topophilia is not enough…

In a closed-loop system (such as a Circular Economy), choices that alter resource flows create symbiotic rebound effects at other points in the system. The fluidity of systems creates uncertainty and ambiguity, making the ultimate messages of restraint and consideration complex, and harder to embed. Broadening social engagement with CES is to be welcomed but, without accompanied understanding, social impact will not be optimal. Transformative thought is not achieved in a single learning module, but reinforced consistently within relationships.

Self-sustaining community relationships will require ongoing guidance and financial input but ecological education, rather than being economically consumptive, can actually generate revenue and create a deeper appreciation of the importance of ecosystem services long term. Failing to invest in place-specific educational outreach measures is not financially prudent, or of long-term benefit to sustainability practice.

Monitored social participation, co-created amongst local communities, can overcome inertia; retaining the passion but ensuring momentum. The Climate Heroes project is in its pilot year, but already hundreds of Scottish young people have taken part in conversations which will ripple through their communities, provoking thoughts and questions on resource use that would not have otherwise occurred.

"Transformative thought is not achieved in a single learning module, but reinforced consistently within relationships."

Nuala Carr

BSc MRes

PhD student

Queen's University Belfast & Atlantic Technical University

SIA in Ireland: progress and challenges

Brief overview of current policies and guidance

In Ireland, the current assessment of the impacts to host communities would appear inadequate compared to widely accepted guidance from the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA)[14]. Under the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process, mandatory for the development of certain infrastructure projects, a limited assessment under the heading 'Population and Human Health' is required with sections focused on employment, human health, and amenity referencing other headings such as air and water. The processes involved in the development of an onshore wind energy project will be used to outline some of the current policies, practices, and areas for improvement.

Wind energy development is still officially guided by Wind Energy Guidelines (WEGs) published in 2006. A draft revised version of (WEGs) was published in 2019 for onshore developments but has yet to be finalised. The adoption of revised guidelines, eagerly awaited by host communities, are expected to reflect the noise and setback standards required for the advancing turbine technology. Included in the draft WEGs is the requirement for a Community Report to be prepared and submitted with wind farm planning applications.

The first two Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auctions for onshore wind energy included the following community initiatives to increase community participation (i) financial support for community-led projects; and (ii) mandatory community benefit fund (CBF) and CBF register. Although a fund committee[15] will be set up comprised of the developer, administrator, and volunteer community representatives, ultimately, the management of the CBF scheme seems to be controlled by developers. The fund committee is established after the project has received planning permission, and so the process does not address community concerns before and during planning. The risk of a community split before the CBF scheme is assembled is therefore not addressed.

Summary of current practices and engagement approaches

In addition to an assessment of Population and Human Health, EIA reports for onshore wind energy projects require specific assessments of potential impacts on near neighbours including noise, shadow flicker, and visual impact. The EIA must also report on alternative locations for the development in addition to alternative layouts and designs to minimise potential impacts. While suitably qualified personnel are required to undertake most sections of an EIA, such as Noise, Hydrology, Flora & Fauna, assessments of impacts to host communities are not required to address social impacts. The social research methods and principles applied rely largely on Central Statistics Office (CSO) data rather than deliberative engagement with affected communities.

14. SIA_Guidance_Document_IAIA.pdf

15. As advised in Government of Ireland, 2021. Renewable Electricity Support Scheme Good Practice Principles Handbook for Community Benefit Funds. Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Dublin.

Current developer engagement practices adhere more to regulatory requirements, reflecting decide-announce-defend approaches, than the inclusive and meaningful engagement practices outlined in SIA standards. The engagement approaches used tend to exclude communities from decision-making processes and show a strong correlation with negative local responses to wind farm development.

Deliberation with near neighbours to wind farms has indicated that the community report required by the draft revised WEGs would be a worthwhile document if co-produced by the developer and communities. Unfortunately, reports are produced by the developer, inviting little or no input from communities in the preparation. Early engagement with the community is recommended in the draft revised WEGs, which states consultation should be carried out *'in advance of and in addition to the statutory public consultation required as part of the planning process'*. An obvious question is why is early engagement not a statutory measure?

Ongoing challenges & solutions

The Irish government recognises the need for early participative and deliberative community engagement[16], acknowledging and listing the advantages to both communities (such as improving confidence in the openness and fairness of the planning process) and developers (such as allowing for the design to be refined to reflect a broadly based community perspective). However, early engagement has yet to be reflected in policy. More meaningful community engagement processes have become subsumed within the RESS CBF provision, which only happens once planning permission has been granted. If the initial engagement prior to planning is implemented inadequately, the CBF engagement runs the risk of causing further division and damage to community social fabric.

A potential solution to current practices could involve the co-creation of the Community Report to a best practice stakeholder engagement standard. Communities, having contributed to and agreed to the project design, would review, give input to and sign-off the Community Report before it is submitted with the planning application. Applying the Social Framework for Projects[17] within the Community Report would reflect all aspects of community life that can be affected, with a focus on near neighbours and sectors of the community most affected. The Social Framework helps to identify the inequities of project impacts. A deliberative engagement approach demonstrated in Ireland, termed Earning Local Support[18], works with both neighbours and developers to achieve meaningful and inclusive engagement in the development of successful wind energy projects for all. By incorporating the required improvements to the assessment of the impacts to host communities, the Irish government would not only be focused on achieving EU renewable energy targets but would also deliver the duty of care to host communities required to support local sustainable development.

> *"By incorporating the required improvements to the assessment of the impacts to host communities, the Irish government would not only be focused on achieving EU renewable energy targets but would also deliver the duty of care to host communities required to support local sustainable development."*

16. Stated in the Energy White Paper Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future (2015) as well as the draft revised Wind Energy Guidelines (2019)
17. Smyth, E., Vanclay, F., 2017. The Social Framework for Projects: a conceptual but practical model to assist in assessing, planning and managing the social impacts of projects. Impact Assess. Proj. Apprais. 35, 65–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2016.1271539
18. https://www.astoneco.com/earning-local-support-energy-projects-ireland

Dr Richard Parsons

Social Impact Assessment Specialist,

New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment, Australia

Using regulation to drive improvement in SIA

A new regulatory approach

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) can be an effective public policy tool for improving social wellbeing.[19] In 2021, the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia, released a comprehensive new guideline for SIA of large development projects.[20] This expands the 2017 guideline,[21] which was methodologically similar but applied only to extractive industries. Before 2017, little guidance existed, resulting in inconsistent practice, unclear methodological requirements, and uncertainty and scepticism among project-affected communities. Noteworthy attributes of the 2021 guideline include:

- It applies to all large development types including government projects, thereby supporting consistency.

- It aligns closely with international guidance[22] in its conceptualisation of social impacts and the SIA process.

- It promotes ethical social research methods and principles.

- It requires assessment of positive social impacts with the same methodological rigour as negative social impacts.

- It requires SIA authors to have suitable qualifications and/or proven experience and substantial competence.

- It requires SIA to be informed by respectful, inclusive, and meaningful engagement with communities.

- It requires consideration of First Nations' cultural values (which are ongoing and reflect interrelationships between land, community, and culture),[23] as distinct from Aboriginal cultural heritage (historical, physical artefacts).[24]

- It provides for monitoring and adaptive management of social impacts.

Some aspects diverge from international guidance. For example, there is no explicit discussion of human rights or impacts of climate change on people, not that this precludes their consideration. Equally, requirements for community engagement are extensive but differ from Canada, which provides funding for the public, scientists, and Indigenous peoples to participate in assessments.[25]

19. Ziller, A. 2019. Letter to the editor: SIA reviewers (in Australia) need different guidelines. Impact Assessment And Project Appraisal 37(2), 94-96, https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2019.1569193
20. https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/SIA
21. https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Guidelines/social-impact-assessment-guideline-2017-09.pdf
22. Vanclay, F., Esteves, A. M., Aucamp, I., & Franks, D. 2015. Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects. International Association for Impact Assessment. http://www.iaia.org/pdf/IAIA%202015%20Social%20Impact%20Assessment%20guidance%20document.pdf
23. e.g., NSW Government Architect (2020). Designing with Country. https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/resources/ga/media/files/ga/discussion-papers/discussion-paper-designing-with-country-2020-06-02.pdf
24. https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Practice-notes/Social-impact-assessment/SIA-Aboriginal-Engagement-Practice-Note.pdf?la=en
25. https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/public-participation/funding-programs.html

Nevertheless, the 2017 guideline had already proven influential, contributing to a landmark court judgement in 2019, in which the 'significant net negative social impacts' were judged grounds for refusing the proposed Rocky Hill Coal Project.[26] The analysis underlying this judgement relied substantially on the guideline.

The 2021 guideline supports close scrutiny of social impacts, which should lead to improvements in standards and better community outcomes over time. Indeed, some SIA practitioners are already working at or above the guideline standard. So, what aspects most need attention to meet the new requirements?

Opportunities for improvement

Based on reviews of around 100 SIA reports on diverse development applications[27] in NSW, three areas of current practice could be substantially improved.

Missing people

A key task in SIA is defining the 'social area of influence', called 'social locality' in the 2021 guideline. The SIA should specify where people may experience impacts, identify nuance and difference within this area, focus on places and people experiencing the most significant impacts, and contextualise this within potential broader social benefits. Yet, commonly, boundaries are defined too narrowly, excluding people and overlooking impacts, or differences and vulnerabilities are subsumed within an 'average' impact.

Conversely, when evaluating impact significance, sometimes the social locality is misleadingly expanded, thereby diluting the apparent overall significance. In turn, this leads to disproportionate mitigation or enhancement measures.

Missing parts

Many SIAs simply omit likely impacts,[28] especially if they are negative. Common examples are social cohesion, sense of place,[29] culture and connection, public health and its social determinants,[30] livelihoods (not just jobs), gendered impacts, decision-making systems and their procedural fairness, and distributive equity. Importantly, adverse impacts in these areas typically fall on society's most vulnerable and marginalised groups, who are already relatively invisible and easy to ignore.

Counterintuitively, some SIAs omit positive impacts – for example, social benefits of economic development. Often, they forecast a certain number of jobs, but overlook the associated social dimensions such as improving livelihoods, social cohesion, amenities, and community safety.

Another common omission is provision for monitoring, adaptive management, and public reporting. These elements support a life-cycle approach in which SIA is a process,[31] providing communities with adequate recourse to grievance and remedy systems, especially if impacts are unanticipated. The 2021 guideline requires rigorous attention to all these aspects.

26. https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/5c59012ce4b02a5a800be47f; Morris, D. 2019. Opening plenary at IAIA19 [accessed 18 February 2022.] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJewUZbHeBs

27. Some of these pre-date the guidelines, but all were required to assess social impacts, and most practitioners tend to use the Vanclay et al. guideline (2015) with which the NSW guideline closely aligns.

28. Ziller, op. cit.

29. e.g., Askland, H. H. & Bunn, M. 2018. Lived experiences of environmental change: Solastalgia, power and place. Emotion, Space and Society 27, 16–22, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2018.02.003

30. e.g., Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. 2012. The spirit level: why more equal societies almost always do better. London: Penguin.

31. e.g., Mottee, L. K. & Howitt, R. 2018. Follow-up and social impact assessment (SIA) in urban transport-infrastructure projects: Insights from the Parramatta Rail Link, Australian Planner, 55(1), 46-56, DOI: http://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2018.1506496; Vanclay et al. op. cit., p. 1.

Missing engagement

Engagement outcomes in SIA provide insights that help us understand how communities may experience change, and how their experiences may be shaped by power structures.[32] Only by reflexively listening to people – holders of local and Indigenous knowledge – can we better understand their concerns, aspirations, and values. Yet many reports contain sparse evidence of engagement or how it informed SIA findings, especially regarding vulnerable people. Others largely comprise 'informing' practices, or public relations material.

To support procedural justice, in which project-affected people are heard and can influence decision-making,[33] the 2021 guideline requires diverse engagement practices including genuine opportunities for community participation.

Countering influence and building trust

So, why do these gaps arise? Sometimes, they reflect inadequate skills or experience. More concerningly, proponents may exert undue influence on practitioners, for example by limiting the scope, restricting access to the community, and/or requesting authors to edit unfavourable content.[34] Such practices should be avoided because they compromise impartiality, diminishing trust in SIA as a practice and in SIA practitioners.

Contractual arrangements where proponents pay SIA practitioners unsurprisingly breeds community distrust, even when practitioners themselves act reflexively and impartially and subscribe to professional codes designed to counter bias. While the 2021 guideline does not mandate practitioner independence,[35] it does specify qualifications, experience, and competence required for SIA authors. Given the complexity and contestedness of social impacts, additional measures to support ongoing improvement may include community-based SIA,[36] independent peer reviews,[37] and institutional support such as certification schemes and 'ethics hotlines'.[38]

32. Parsons, R. & Luke, H. 2021. Comparing reflexive and assertive approaches to social licence and social impact assessment, The Extractive Industries and Society 8(2), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2020.06.022

33. Munday, J. 2020. Community guide to social impact assessment. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fd84a533ea9e15de736ac0b/t/60541d0d7db8ef1e23ce6d4c/1616125212404/Guide+to+Social+Impact+Assessment.pdf

34. Smyth, E. 2021. Is impact assessment ensuring proper prediction and assessment of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of projects – how to reduce bias? Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal 29(4), 352-353. https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2021.1905222

35. e.g., Smyth, op. cit.; Morris, op. cit.

36. Bice, S. 2020. The future of impact assessment: Problems, solutions and recommendations, Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal 38(2), 104-108. https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2019.1672443

37. e.g., New South Wales Government, 2020. Seeking approval from the Department for the appointment of independent experts: Post approval guidance for infrastructure projects. https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/sites/default/files/documents/2020/Seeking%20Approval%20of%20Independent%20Experts.pdf

38. e.g., https://www.eianz.org/membership-information/ethics-hotline

Asmita Kabra,

Professor

School of Human Ecology

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi, India

Budhaditya Das,

Assistant Professor

School of Human Ecology

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi, India

Using regulation to drive improvement in SIA

Overview

Until 2013, governments in India acquired private land for development projects under a colonial law which was heavily tilted against the interests of landowners and land-dependent rural communities. Land acquisition became increasingly embroiled in conflicts, with farmers resorting to social movements and court cases against unfair land acquisition. Escalating project costs, stalled acquisition and pressure on political parties from rural voters caused the Indian Parliament to repeal the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) 1894 and enact the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (LARRA) in 2013.

This law widened the definition of project-affected families and inserted safeguards for vulnerable groups like women and Indigenous communities. Under LARRA, Social Impact Assessment (SIA) by an independent agency is mandatory for all public and private sector projects involving land acquisition. The SIA is supposed to determine the public purpose of the project, enumerate its social costs and benefits, identify affected families, and recommend mitigation measures for diverse social impacts. While SIA has become a key component of land acquisition, its transformative promise remains under-fulfilled.

Lessons from eight years of SIA in India

The national government itself tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to undermine the safeguard provisions of LARRA through an amendment in 2014 that sought to dilute/remove SIA. Similar attempts have been made by several state governments. Land is a concurrent subject in the Indian Constitution, allowing the national government as well as all 28 state governments to legislate on it independently. The subnational scale is therefore critical to understand the diverse outcomes of SIA in practice. State governments competing to attract private investment have diluted the safeguards laid out in LARRA to make land acquisition for industry faster and cheaper. States like Telangana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh have curtailed SIA through amendments in the LARRA. Some other states have circumvented SIA, bypassing LARRA entirely by (1) using special national laws meant for land acquisition for highways, railways and coal mines (Tamil Nādu); or (2) using land pooling schemes or 'voluntary sale' agreements (Maharashtra, Delhi).

Our experience of conducting SIA in Delhi, the national capital, illustrates other systemic limitations. SIA is often seen as a procedural compliance requirement that can be met post facto, and not as a serious exercise meant to determine the public purpose of projects or mitigate their adverse social impacts. Land acquisition is presented as fait accompli to the affected families as well as the SIA agency. The land bureaucracy is not legally mandated to take into account findings and recommendations of the SIA and Social Impact Mitigation Plan (SIMP) while preparing the formal rehabilitation scheme.

While the LARRA recognises the rights of livelihood losers and aims to pay market value for acquired land, in reality the land bureaucracy continues to undervalue the price of land. The entrenched legacy of the colonial era LAA continues to guide the mindset of the bureaucrats tasked with land acquisition under LARRA. In practice, fiscal conservatism is preferred to fair compensation, and the wider definition of project-affected persons enshrined in LARRA and SIA is usually ignored.

The individuals and institutions responsible for carrying out SIA are governed by perverse incentives. Quick, incomplete, and compromised SIAs are more likely to gain favour with the land bureaucracy than unbiased and professionally conducted ones. Not surprisingly, few incentives exist to deploy state-of-the-art SIA concepts and methodologies. Ensuring safeguards for affected families is not seen as a necessary step in efficient and equitable land acquisition for development.

"Procedural delays and legal complications... will arise if SIA does not maintain fidelity to the provisions of the Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act in letter and spirit."

Way forward

There is an urgent need for training and capacity building of the stakeholders involved in implementing LARR and SIA. Officials of the land bureaucracy and public/private agencies seeking land must recognise that SIA is not a mere formality, but is supposed to ensure fair compensation for all livelihoods affected adversely by development projects. They should understand the procedural delays and legal complications that will arise if SIA does not maintain fidelity to the provisions of LARRA in letter and spirit.

Training resource material that simplifies complex provisions of the law need to be created in multiple languages and accessible formats. Independent funding mechanisms and quality monitoring of SIA agencies are necessary to establish and implement best practices and benchmarks. The legal status accorded to SIA is an important achievement for land governance, but it is only the first step. To ensure equitable development, India's policymakers, SIA practitioners, and industry groups need to come together to change the way SIA is implemented.

Ilse Aucamp DPhil

M Env Man

Director

Equispectives Research and Consulting Services
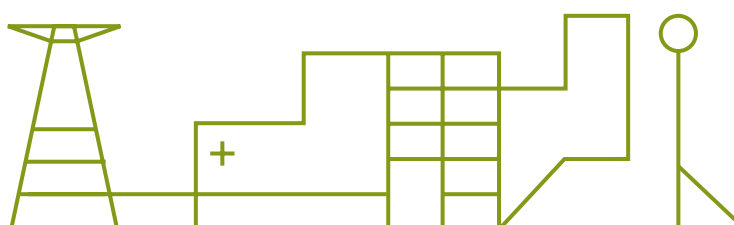
Social Impact Assessment in South Africa – a practitioner's perspective

Regulatory approach

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) process, and associated public participation, is legislated through the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998 – NEMA), and while Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is not a legal requirement, the authorities can request that an SIA be conducted. Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa (No. 108 of 1996) consists of a Bill of Rights, which explicitly spells out the rights of every South African citizen, and SIA is an explicitly human rights-based approach.

Things are a little different in the mining industry, which is regulated by the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (No. 28 of 2002 – MPRDA). The MPRDA is the only environmental act in South Africa that explicitly requires a social development output, in addition to a public participation process, in the form of a Social and Labour Plan. Women and vulnerable groups are an explicit focus of the MPRDA. Social and Labour Plans require applicants to develop and implement comprehensive Human Resources Development Programmes including Employment Equity Plans, Local Economic Development Programmes and processes to save jobs and manage downscaling and/or closure. The management of downscaling and/or closure is aimed at minimising the impact of commodity cyclical volatility, economic turbulence and physical depletion of the mineral or production resources on individuals, regions or local economies.

Guidance and registration

There are no prescribed protocols for SIA in South Africa. The former Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism published an Integrated Environmental Management Information Series that included a volume on Socio-Economic Impact Assessment in 2006[39]. The Western Cape province produced a *Guideline for Involving Social Assessment Specialists in EIA Processes in 2007*[40]. Some practitioners choose to use the *Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for Assessing and Managing the Social Impacts of Projects*[41] document produced by the IAIA in 2015. The *Sustainable Wellbeing framework*[42] is also gaining popularity as practical assessment framework in South Africa due to the way it interlinks the social, economic and environmental aspects of wellbeing. The lack of clear guidance from the authorities is a problem when it comes to quality and consistency of SIA reports, and also presents challenges when considering registration of SIA practitioners.

39. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. 2006 Socio-economic Impact Assessment: Integrated Environmental Management Series 22 Pretoria: Government Printer
40. Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning. 2007. Guideline for involving Social Assessment Specialists in EIA Processes. EIA guideline and Information Series. Provincial Government of the Western Cape.
41. Vanclay, F., Esteves, A.M., Aucamp, I. & Franks, D. 2015. Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects. Fargo ND: International Association for Impact Assessment.
42. Smyth, E. 2021. Sustainable Wellbeing Framework. Intersocial Consulting.

Environmental Assessment Practitioners are legally required to register with the Environmental Assessment Practitioner Association of South Africa (EAPASA)[43]. EAPASA has started to engage with SIA practitioners in South Africa on introducing a special field for Social Impact Assessment practitioners to be included in the registration process. It will take some time for this to happen, as a number of aspects must be investigated and agreed on including competency, qualifications, recognition of prior learning, and pathways to progression.

Gaps in practice and new ways of looking at things

There are many challenges and gaps in SIA in South Africa and globally, and a lot has been written about it. Disappointingly, some issues keep on arising despite being known for decades. Some of the issues that immediately spring to mind are briefly mentioned below. In South Africa the gaps between legislation, policy, practice, aspiration, and reality are acute. SIA and public participation are seen as different processes, and despite clear requirements for public participation it is not always done with the interest of the communities at heart. Corruption is rife, and the standards of practitioners vary between highly competent, and newcomers to the field without any understanding or training on the subject. South Africa's level of unemployment is now 46.6% and, in this environment, it is easy for proponents or those with political agendas to take advantage of people, or to create factions in communities to ensure projects are approved at all costs.

Social footprint and realistic mitigation

Another issue is that SIA is done on project level in practice, while the social area of influence can stretch far beyond the project footprint or local area. To address mitigation measures by large industrial organisations and promote social development, several private sector entities have started Impact Catalyst to create mechanisms to drive large-scale, socio-economic development initiatives through public-private partnerships. Impact Catalyst is joining forces with the government to ensure collaborative regional development. This is seen as part of South Africa's Just Energy Transition. However, on a project level SIA practitioners are not linked to these initiatives, which means that assessments are still conducted in silos and cumulative impacts are not addressed efficiently.

SIA still not achieving its full potential

One of the biggest risks is that SIA is used as a tick box exercise and does not contribute to strategic decision-making and social development. SIA should be conducted at a strategic level and mitigation should be planned by a number of role players in order to reach its full potential. Instead of using a "recipe" to conduct an SIA, a practitioner should ask why the proponent wants to do an SIA – is it a grudge purchase, a planning tool, or simply a public relations exercise. To the initiated the social environment often seems vague and difficult to quantify. In practice, using a pragmatic tool such as the Sustainable Wellbeing Framework assists with asking the right questions, and also with identifying and partitioning the things that affect the social environment into digestible chunks. Registration for SIA practitioners would enhance their credibility in professional and local communities. In the end, SIA is all about giving a voice to the voiceless, and trust, ethics and credibility amongst SIA practitioners and those that they serve are not negotiable.

43. https://eapasa.org/site/process/
44. https://www.impactcatalyst.co.za/

Do you make effective use of ALL of IEMA's IA member resources?

IEMA's website contains a treasure trove of IA-related content, as well as information about IEMA's volunteer network groups, blogs, webinars, and policy. But not everyone makes the most of this free member content, including:

- future events and webinars

- recordings of past webinars, with over 24 hours' worth of IA content

- IA guidance and advice: such as recent EIA guides on climate change, both GHG and adaptation, and soils and land

- the Proportionate EIA Strategy

- over 400 EIA articles and 200 case studies related to EIA, developed by EIA Quality Mark registrants in recent years

- individual and organisational recognition specific to EIA, through the EIA Register and EIA Quality Mark schemes respectively

- contact details to engage with the Steering Group members for the:

  • IA Network

  • GESA Group (Global Environmental & Social Assessment)

  • Geographic/Regional Groups.

www.iema.net

Summary
Eddie Smyth - Guest Editor

It is clear from this series of articles that SIA is still an emerging area of practice with considerable potential to balance the traditional focus on economic and environmental impacts with those on people. SIA is being used in the UK and Ireland to deepen the understanding of the social impacts of projects as varied as rail, waste management, and onshore wind. Internationally, SIA is increasingly becoming a regulatory requirement; however, SIAs still commonly omit impacts such as social cohesion, sense of place, culture, public health, livelihoods, decision-making systems, and distributive equity. These omissions can be due to inadequate skills or experience, but proponents may also be exerting undue influence on practitioners to edit unfavourable assessments. Clearly, a requirement to conduct an SIA for a project is inadequate if the power differences between developers and communities are not balanced in terms of access to independent expertise and democratic decision-making processes. The governance of SIA dictates which impacts are considered and whose voices count. Considerable conflict on projects could be avoided if projects took more time to listen to the social concerns of people and build these into their overall approach to impact assessment and management. Although SIAs have been around for decades, this is still an evolving area of practice. We need to further understand what should be considered as impacts on 'population' in impact assessment legislation and who should be considered as a competent person to undertake this work. IEMA has established a working group which I am co-chairing on developing guidance on social and community impact assessments and we look forward to furthering engagement on developing practice in this area.

Over the page, you can find out more about IEMA's Impact Assessment Network. Over the next year, the SIA Working Group will be developing more content for members, as well as seeking to engage with opportunities to further enhance SIA's application, including the English review of EIA and SEA in the planning system and what this will mean for SIA practice. SIA is adaptable and we look forward to working with IEMA, its members and other practitioners to respond to the challenge and opportunity presented to practice by the climate emergency, development of a Circular Economy, response to the biodiversity crisis, and the need to address inequalities across society.

If you are interested in being involved in the IA Network SIA Working Group, IEMA members can email ia@iema.net to express an interest in joining the Group.

Acknowledgements

IEMA's EIA Quality Mark - a scheme operated by the Institute allowing organisations (both developers and consultancies) that lead the co-ordination of statutory EIAs in the UK to make a commitment to excellence in their EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed. The EIA Quality Mark is a voluntary scheme, with organisations free to choose whether they are ready to operate to its seven EIA Commitments: EIA Management; EIA Team Capabilities; EIA Regulatory Compliance; EIA Context & Influence; EIA Content; EIA Presentation; and Improving EIA practice. In April 2021, IEMA celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the EIA Quality Mark.

Celebrating 10 years of the IEMA EIA Quality Mark

IEMA
Transforming the world to sustainability
- EIA -

Year Anniversary

Social Impact Assessment

This thirteenth edition of the Impact Assessment Outlook Journal provides a series of thought pieces on the consideration of Social Impact Assessment. In this edition, the Guest Editor (Eddie Smyth) has selected eight articles produced by IEMA professionals and EIA experts. The result is a valuable yet quick read across some of the different aspects of UK and international practice exploring Social Impact Assessment.

About the Guest Editor: Eddie Smyth BSc, MSc
Director at Intersocial Limited (Ireland)

Eddie is a Fellow of IEMA with higher qualifications in social development and conservation and a board member of the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA). He has over 25 years of experience working in 37 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and South America in negotiating agreements with communities on major projects in the mining, hydropower, wind, oil & gas, conservation, and infrastructure sectors. He has co-authored a practitioner handbook on resettlement and is a leading trainer on this topic. He is co-chairing an IEMA working group on SIA guidance and currently finalizing a Ph.D. in resettlement at the University of Groningen.

IEMA

Transforming the world to sustainability

About IEMA

IEMA is the professional body for everyone working in environment and sustainability. We're committed to supporting, encouraging and improving the confidence and performance, profile and recognition of all these professionals. We do this by providing resources and tools, research and knowledge sharing along with high quality formal training and qualifications to meet the real world needs of members from their first steps on the career ladder, right to the very top.

We believe that together we can change perceptions and attitudes about the relevance and vital importance of sustainability as a progressive force for good. Together we're transforming the world to sustainability.

iema.net