



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

2. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

—

Location · Month Year



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

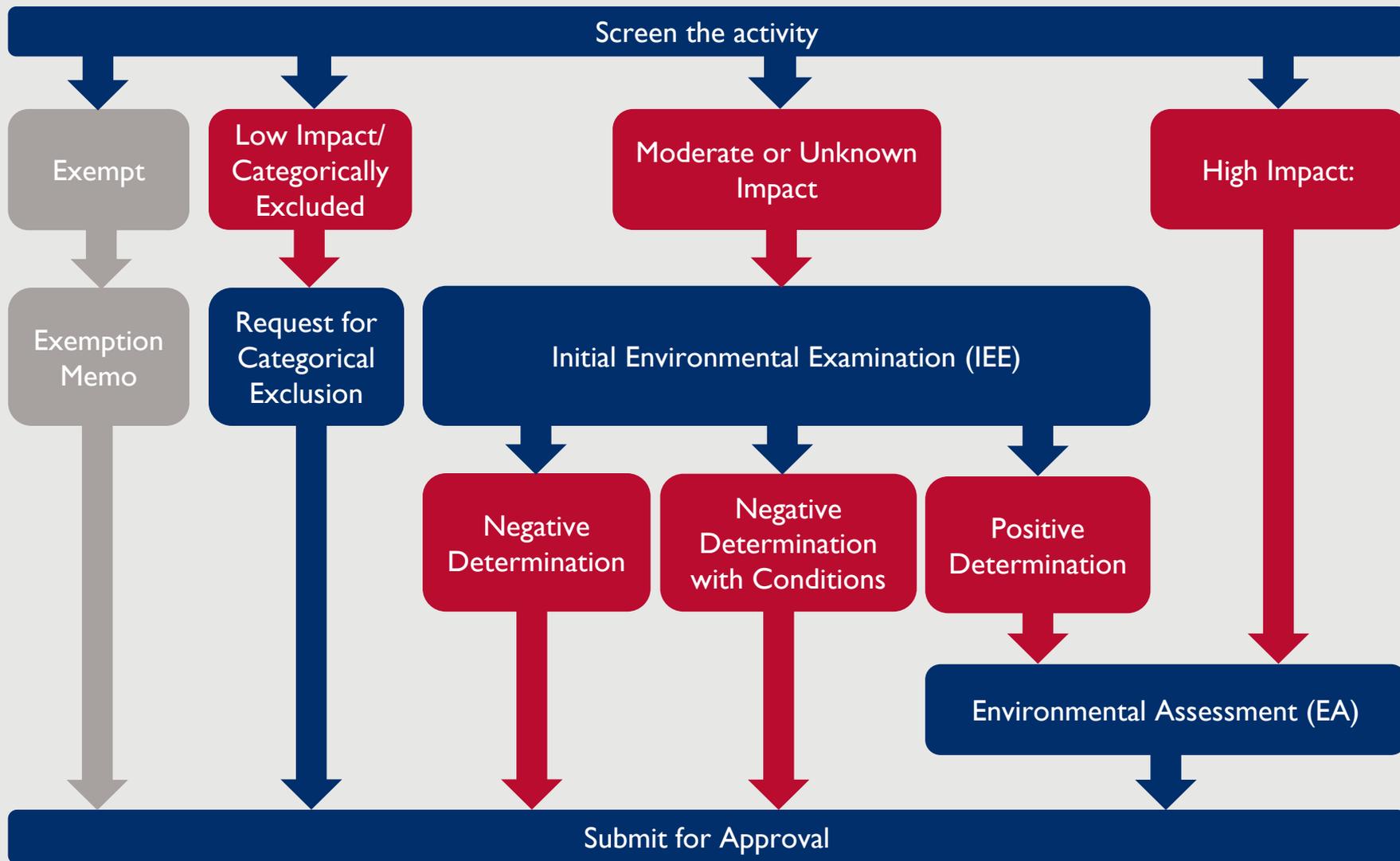
FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand what makes an EA an EA
2. Define the three fundamental concepts of environmental impact assessment



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



THE THREE KEY CONCEPTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Baseline

The existing environmental situation or condition in the absence of the activity

Activity

A desired accomplishment or output

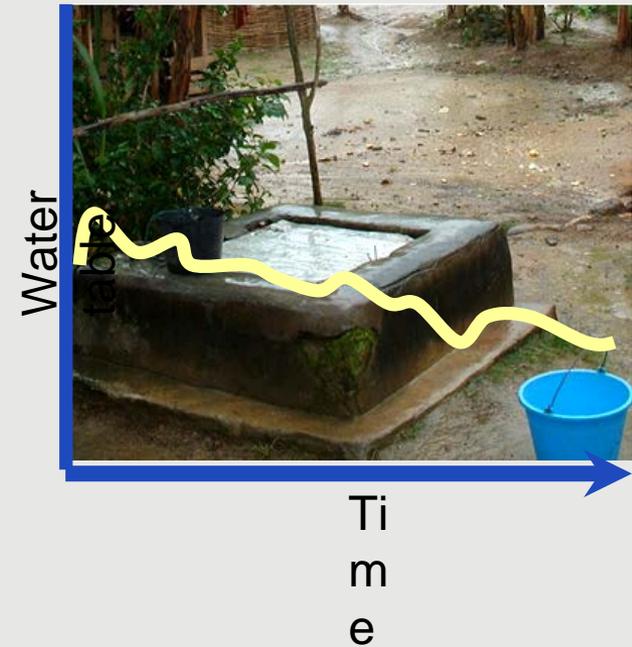
Impact

The change from the baseline situation caused by the activity

The impact assessment process examines the impacts of activities on baseline situations

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT CONCEPTS

- Defining “activity”
- Defining “impact”
- Characterizing the baseline situation



ACTIVITY

The impact assessment process examines the impacts of activities.

Under Regulation 216 an activity is:

A desired accomplishment or output. For example, a road, seedling production, or river diversion to irrigate land.

A project or program usually consists of many activities. Accomplishing an activity requires a set of sub-activities or tasks.

ACTIVITY: Market access road rehabilitation	SUB-ACTIVITIES OR TASKS: Survey, grading, culvert construction, compaction, etc..
---	---

ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS

WE TRY TO USE “ACTIVITY”
as ADS 201 does—i.e. what the
rest of the world calls a project

ACTIONS—the specific
interventions implemented
under an activity

a single action may have many
components—e.g. the action of
rural road rehabilitation entails
survey, grading, materials
sourcing. . .

22 CFR 216 threshold
determinations are assigned at
the action level.



WHAT ARE IMPACTS?

The **impact** of an activity is the **change from the baseline situation** caused by the activity.

The baseline situation is the existing environmental situation or condition in the absence of the activity.

The baseline situation is a key concept in environmental impact assessment.



To measure an impact, you must know what the baseline situation is.

BASELINE: THREE IMPORTANT POINTS

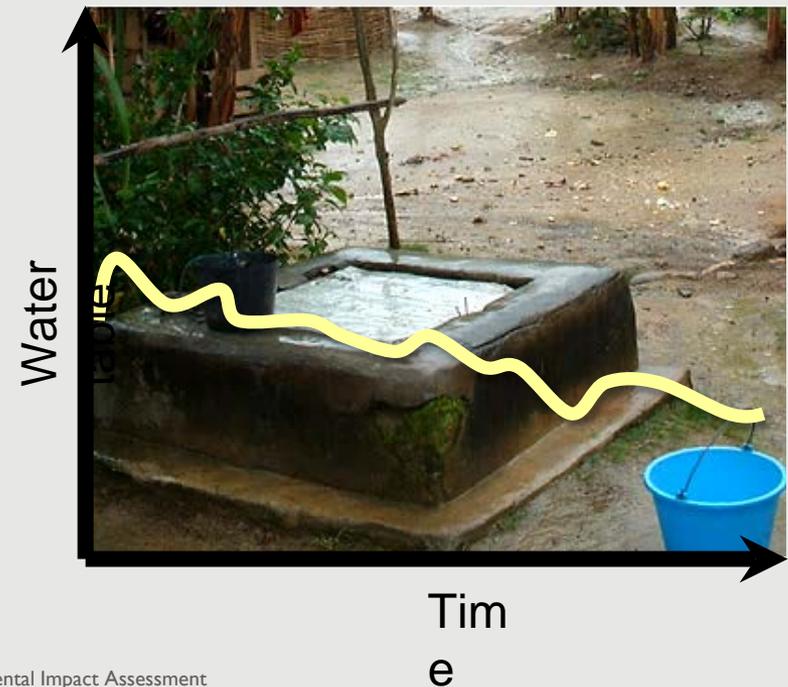
1. To measure impact, you *must* know the baseline situation

2. The baseline characterization *cannot* be exhaustive.

The environmental components most important when determining the baseline characterization are those components most likely to be affected by your activity and upon which your activity depends on for its success.

3. The baseline is *not* just a snapshot in time.

- This chart of groundwater levels shows both variability and a trend over time
- BOTH are part of the groundwater baseline situation



WHERE DO I OBTAIN INFORMATION ON THE BASELINE SITUATION?

1. YOUR ORGANIZATION:

- TALK to staff who know the project, and know the sites.
- OBTAIN project documents and information

2. DIRECT OBSERVATION:

- Go to the site(s)! Look up publicly available satellite imagery before you go.

3. UTILIZE OTHER LOCAL TALENT & KNOWLEDGE:

- communities, government, counterparts

AREN'T WE FORGETTING SOMETHING?

What about reports by donor organizations and international agencies? What about government statistics? GIS databases?

All these sources can be useful (and sometimes necessary)

But good local information is the most important input