

Session 4.

EIA in Action: Understanding Your Project's Environmental Dimensions

Virtual field visit and small-group exercise

Objectives

Through a “virtual” field visit and follow-on small-group collaboration, participants will practice EIA skills, including baseline characterization, identifying impacts of concerns, and the formulation of mitigation strategies.

The Project Scenario—Context

- You are part of a successful agriculture sector project:
 - *Horticulture (vegetables)—income generation/economic growth*
 - *Water conservation—natural resource management*
- Project is mid-way through implementation and the donor is looking for opportunities to “scale-up”
- Local governorate (liked by donor) is requesting project support to bolster a popular “urban farming” initiative
- Your small planning team is tasked to review and assess environmental dimensions

The Project Scenario—Objectives

- Expand a successful project
- Put unused urban space to productive purpose
- Provide economic opportunity to local community groups
- Model high-value horticulture using water-conserving techniques
- Local access to safe, high-quality vegetables

The Project Scenario—Proposed Activities

- Up to 10 greenhouses for horticultural production will be constructed on a reclaimed former bus depot at edge of city center (2 ha site)
- Project site would also include small office block with classroom and multi-purpose/community room; small kitchen and bathrooms
- Separate storage facilities required for pesticides, fertilizer and other agricultural equipment and supplies
- Vehicle access will require a new entrance to limit traffic congestion; direct route is via a residential quarter

The Project Scenario—Implementation

- Up to three cooperatives will administer greenhouses, oversee production and maintain site—at least one has social mission to assist physically handicapped
- Project will manage a retail outlet at site with pedestrian access only off of main thoroughfare
- Farming operations will cover full cost of utilities:
 - *Possible borehole required; no existing municipal water/sewerage service to site*
 - *Genset may be needed to operate drip irrigation system, cold storage*

The Project Scenario—Unresolved

- Site currently used informally for grazing; athletics (football) by displaced persons
- Possible artefacts (broken clay) have been found at project site in the past; proximate to well known (but unexcavated) ancient sugar mill site

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The objective of this **virtual field visit** is to develop **fundamental skills in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** and to understand their application in the preparation of **USAID environmental compliance documentation**.

- Which of the proposed interventions presents the most significant risk of adverse impacts (identify 2 – 3)? How were these identified?
- Can the potential adverse impacts (environmental or social) be avoided by redesigning or re-thinking the proposed interventions? If yes, how?
- Please explain any alternative approaches (i.e., differences in implementation) that may lessen adverse environmental or social impacts, *but that will also meet project objectives*.
- How can the likely adverse impacts of remaining interventions be mitigated—that is to say lessened or offset—to an acceptable level?

