

Session 8.

Effective IEEs

Small-group exercise

Summary

The Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) is used to assess the potential adverse impact(s) of virtually all USAID activities of moderate or unknown environmental risk. Even when dealing with patently high-risk activities such as penetration road building, resettlement, etc. the IEE is frequently used to better understand the scale of potential impacts and to frame an overall approach to the Environmental Assessment (EA) (as opposed to skipping the IEE in favor of the full EA). The IEE is therefore central to USAID's implementation of Reg. 216 and can 'make or break' the successful integration of environmentally sound design and management.

Like any assessment that relies on technical expertise, professional judgment and cohesive writing, not all IEEs are created equal: some are better than others. An important skill of USAID staff and partners charged with environmental compliance/ESDM-related duties is understanding where and how an IEE may be lacking in (1) its analysis and characterization of the proposed activity/activities and potential adverse impacts, and (2) articulation of a recommended determination and any associated conditions. A good IEE does not need to be long or overly rigorous, but it should be clear and accurate, presenting a realistic picture of the issues at play with reasonable conclusions on overall risk and any mitigating actions.

This session will provide an opportunity for participants to review and discuss illustrative IEE excerpts related to yesterday's field visits. While not drawn from *actual* IEEs, the excerpts will highlight typical attributes—positive and negative—for consideration in a small-group format. This critique will help participants understand how best to approach the process of reviewing and approving or applying an IEE in a real project context. Such critical review skills are strengthened by participants' first-hand field experience or knowledge of proposed activities (hence the preceding site visit).

The first portion of this session will be used to explain the exercise and methodology—this will take only a few minutes. The majority of our time will be used to review and discuss the IEE content in small-group format, with each group offering a brief report-out of its key observations/findings.

Objective

Develop critical IEE review skills; learn to identify common mistakes or weaknesses with regard to the analysis and characterization of proposed activities and potential adverse impacts, and the articulation of recommended determinations and associated conditions.