



Environmental Impact Assessment

- EIA full form is **Environmental Impact Assessment**. In simple terms, the meaning of EIA is that it is a process through which an environmental impact of a proposed development is evaluated. While undertaking Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the inter-related socio-economic, cultural, and human-health impacts are considered.

Environmental Impact Assessments

- It is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural, and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse. EIA is a tool used to assess the positive and negative environmental, economic, and social impacts of a project. This is used to predict the environmental impacts of a project in the pre-planning stage itself so that decisions can be taken to reduce the adverse impacts.

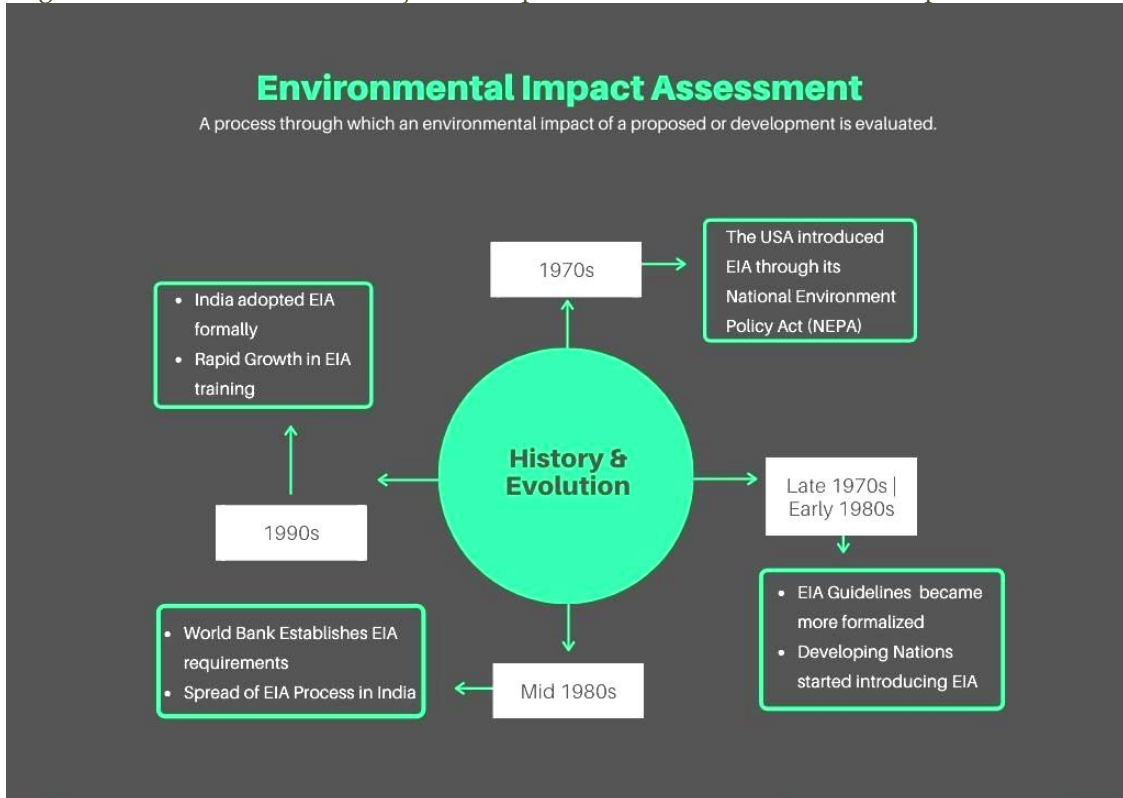
Evolution & History of EIA

- EIA is termed as one of the best policy innovations in the 1900s. The main aim of EIA is to conserve the environment and bring out the best combination of economic and environmental costs and benefits. Read the below-mentioned points to understand the Environmental Impact Assessment evolution and history:
 1. The birth of EIA is dated back to the 1970s. In 1969, The USA had brought its first **National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) 1969**.
 2. The EIA was initially practised by developed nations but slowly it was also introduced in developing nations including India.
 3. Columbia and the Philippines are the earliest examples of developing nations who introduced EIA in their policies. Columbia brought it in 1974 while the Philippines in 1978.
 4. Worldwide, EIA is now practised in more than 100 countries. By the mid-1990s, some 110 countries applied EIA as a major environmental policy.
 5. In 1989, EIA was adopted as the major development project by **the World Bank**.

Objectives of Environmental Impact Assessment

1. **Identifying**, predicting, and evaluating economic, environmental, and social impacts of development activities.
2. **Providing information** on the environmental consequences for decision making.
3. **Promoting** environmentally sound and suitable development by identifying appropriate alternatives and mitigation measures.

Check the image below to have an idea of major developments around Environmental Impact Assessment in history:



Steps in the EIA Process

➤ The eight steps of the EIA process:

- Screening:** First Stage of EIA, which determines whether the proposed project, requires an EIA and if it does, then the level of assessment required.
- Scoping:** This stage identifies the key impacts that should be investigated. This stage also defines the time limit of the study.
- Impact analysis:** This stage of EIA identifies and predicts the likely environmental and social impact of the proposed project and evaluates the significance.
- Mitigation:** This step in EIA recommends the actions to reduce and avoid the potential adverse environmental consequences of development activities.
- Reporting:** This stage presents the result of EIA in a form of a report to the decision-making body and other interested parties.
- Review of EIA:** It examines the adequacy and effectiveness of the EIA report and provides the information necessary for decision -making.
- Decision-making:** It decides whether the project is rejected, approved or needs further change.
- Post monitoring:** This stage comes into play once the project is commissioned. It checks to ensure that the impacts of the project do not exceed the legal standards and implementation of the mitigation measures are in the manner as described in the EIA report.



Importance of Environmental Impact Assessment

1. EIA is a good tool for prudent environment management.
2. It is government-policy that any industrial project in India has to secure EIA clearance from the Environment Ministry before approval for the project itself.

Current EIA Reports - India

- EIA Notification 2020 draft has been made public. Once the EIA Notification 2020 will be published in the Official Gazette, it will replace EIA notification 2006. EIA has been in the news following EIA notification 2020 was drafted as one of the amendments will be the removal of public consultation from several activities (Put under Category B2).
- Here are a few important terms/agencies concerning EIA notification 2020 which aspirants should further read about:
 1. Accredited Environment Impact Assessment Consultant Organization (ACO)
 2. Central Pollution Control Board
 3. Certificate of Green Building
 4. Corporate Environment Responsibility
 5. Eco-Sensitive Area/ Eco-Sensitive Zone

Environmental Impact Assessment In India

- EIA started in India in 1976-77 when the Planning Commission directed the Department of Science & Technology to assess the river valley projects from the point of view of the environment. This was extended for all those projects that required approval from the Public Investment Board.
- Then, in 1986, the government enacted the Environment (Protection) Act which made EIA statutory.
- The other main laws in this regard are the **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act** (1972), the **Water Act** (1974), the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act** (1981), and the **Biological Diversity Act** (2002).
- In 1982, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change set up the **Environmental Information System (ENVIS) to collect, collate, storing, retrieving and disseminating information related to the environment sector.** This serves as a web-based distributed network of subject-specific databases. The chief purpose of the ENVIS is to integrate all countrywide efforts to collect, store, disseminate, and use environment-information for better managing environmental assessment activities.

Importance of EIA

- EIA links environment with development for environmentally safe and sustainable development.
- EIA provides a cost effective method to eliminate or minimize the adverse impact of developmental projects.
- EIA enables the decision makers to analyse the effect of developmental activities on the environment well before the developmental project is implemented.
- EIA encourages the adaptation of mitigation strategies in the developmental plan.
- EIA makes sure that the developmental plan is environmentally sound and within the limits of the capacity of assimilation and regeneration of the ecosystem.

Measures for Promotion of Sustainable Development



- As discussed earlier, the United Nations 17 **Sustainable Development Goals** and 169 targets are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable. Development adopted by 193 Member States at the UN General Assembly Summit in September 2015, and which came into effect on 1 January 2016. These goals are the result of international consultations that brought national governments and millions of citizens from across the globe together to negotiate and adopt the global path to sustainable development for the next 15 year.



- The SDGs and targets will stimulate action in the following critically important areas: **poverty, hunger, education, health and wellbeing, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, economic growth and decent work, infrastructure, industry and innovation, reducing inequalities, sustainable cities, consumption and production, climate action, ecosystems, peace and justice, and partnership.**
- This agenda recognises that it is not enough to focus on economic growth alone but in creating more equal societies, and a safer and more prosperous planet.

Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020

- On July 7, 2020, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 was released. As per the report, the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed an unprecedented crisis which has led to further disruption to SDG progress. Given below are the key points based on the SDG report:
 - Improvements have been noticed in areas such as improving maternal and child health, expanding access to electricity and increasing women's representation in government
 - An estimated 71 million people are expected to be pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020, the first rise in global poverty since 1998. The main cause of this is said to be loss of employment and people who were earlier secure also could find themselves at risk of poverty
 - Approximately 1.6 million vulnerable workers across the world were either left unemployed or underemployed, with incomes estimated to have fallen by 60 per cent during the crisis
 - Women and children, and people living in slums were the worst affected sections during the pandemic
 - School closures have kept 90 per cent of students worldwide (1.57 billion) out of school and caused over 370 million children to miss out on school meals they depend on
 - The cases of poverty, unemployment and risk of lives has increased the risk of child labour and trafficking
- Apart from the above-mentioned points, the report suggests that climate change is still occurring much faster than anticipated.
- The year 2019 was the second warmest on record and the end of the warmest decade of 2010 to 2019.



- Top 10 Countries are ranked by their overall score. The overall score measures a country's total progress towards achieving all 17 SDGs. The score can be interpreted as the percentage of SDG achievement.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Sweden	84.7
2	Denmark	84.6
3	Finland	83.8
4	France	81.1
5	Germany	80.8
6	Norway	80.8
7	Austria	80.7
8	Czech Republic	80.6
9	Netherlands	80.4
10	Estonia	80.1

- India ranks 117 out of 166 countries on a global index that assesses the performance of countries towards achieving the ambitious sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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