Addressing inequality through Social Impact Assessment

a case study of Bangladesh

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Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

- Assess and manage social aspects of development
- Contribute to reduction in inequality
- Limit disproportional impacts
- Identify measures to protect vulnerable groups
- Support equal distribution of benefits and costs
Relative inequality in society

- ‘differences in people’s:
  - access to economic opportunities
  - socio-political participation
  - ability to live a fulfilling life’

- Hampers economic development and poverty alleviation
Inequality of opportunities
- Access to resources (land, water, capital)
- Access to services: education, health, markets
- Job availability
- Age and ability

Drivers
- Discrimination
- Governance
- Social policies

Inequality of outcomes
- Income and wealth
- Education attainment and literacy
- Health and nutrition
- Security and safety
- Political influence
- Human wellbeing
How effective is SIA in addressing inequality in Bangladesh?

- Literature
- Legislation
- 8 recent SIA reports
- Interviews of 7 key informants

Thematic Analysis
Poverty head count reducing: 43%
HDI: 0.45

1. Socio-economic
   Strong drivers of inequality
   National policies not implemented locally

2. Governance
   Poor public participation

3. Donor influence

Endogenous factors

4. Adequate institutional system
   - Legislation
   - Guidelines
   - Institutions
   SIA with EIA has good legal basis
   Dep. of Environment is weak

5. Quality SIA
   - Expertise
   - Public participation
   - Baseline data
   - Impact Assessment
   - Measures
   - Monitoring
   Stakeholder analysis poor
   Inequality not systematically assessed

6. Implementation measures
   - Cooperation team
   - Monitoring & Evaluation
   Poor monitoring

7. Social outcomes and sustainability
   Whoever has more, benefits more

Long term outcomes

Royal HaskoningDHV
Recommendations

Do not wait for changes in *exogenous* factors
Start with improvements in *endogenous* factors

Address inequality rigorously in SIA process
Recommendations

- Analyze stakeholders: unequal relations
- Give vulnerable groups a voice
- Differentiate in impacts per group
- Include measures for vulnerable groups
- Formulate measures specifically
- Incorporate measures in planning docs
- Prescribe long term monitoring
Long term effectiveness

- Good quality SIA processes will raise awareness
  - In society
  - In implementing organisations and
  - In the government

- SIA cannot reduce inequality by itself, but can support reducing the drivers of inequality
Good quality SIA at project level can support reducing inequality in society

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