Public behavior for public participation in EIA process, Turkey

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Abstract: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been implemented in Turkey since 1993. EIA Regulation has been revised for adoption and harmonization to European Union (EU) Directives several times. Considering the procedural steps of EU EIA directive, revised EIA Regulation adopts most of the required steps. Public participation has been implemented since 1993 in Turkey. Public participation was obligatorily implemented for Annex II projects by 2002. Turkey is the 18th largest economy in the world and is one of the largest countries in Europe with a variety of cultural differences between the regions of Turkey. Due to this reason, the behavior of the public shows different interests even for similar types of projects. During the public participation meetings, public interest may differ according to their income, education level and special interests. This Paper will elaborate the behavior of people considering energy and mining projects that were conducted between 1995 and 2015.

I. Introduction


II. EIA Regulation revisions in Turkey.

EIA Regulation drafted by the Ministry of Environment enacted on 7th February, 1993 was based on US and EU procedures and amended three times within first decade on 23rd June, 1997 and amended on 6th June 2002 and on 16 December 2003.

Other amendments realized in order to have more effective EIA implementations on 17th July, 2008 and on 3rd October, 2013 and 25th November 2014 and amended five times for changes on the articles of the regulation on different dates.

During last 23 years, internet usage and other innovative implementations have become part of governmental implementation. E-EIA is a new implementation of EIA Process that becomes a part of e-government system in 2012 in which all stakeholders provide their opinion electronically without the need for paper based EIA Reports. This implementation saved time, energy and natural resources, and EIA procedures have been reduced for the days of delivering and printing the reports.

Another important change involves the public participation process, which begins before the scoping stage since 2002 revision. At the end of EIA process, final EIA Report opened to the general public for ten working days [5]. On the other hand, the decision and the reason for the decision for the project are not directly declared to public [5]. As a result, environmental information gathered by the developer is made available to the public within a reasonable time during EIA process, before development consent is granted. Authorization of EIA consultant firms decided by the Ministry and EIA consultant firms are responsible either preparation of EIA Reports or monitoring the EIA Projects during the construction period. Monitoring reports are submitted to Ministry during the construction phase of the project.
III. Public Participation

Public participation process includes some activities in EIA Regulation. EIA Regulation revisions reflect these activities. During first ten years of EIA Regulation between 1993 and 2002, EIA Public Participation Meeting was organized close to project site for Annex I and Annex II projects of EIA Regulation. This was approximately 100 Annex I projects/year (683 EIA Decision between 1994 and 2001) and 3000 Annex II projects/year [6]. After 2002, EIA Public Participation Meeting for Annex II projects has been excluded from EIA Process. EIA Reports opened to public by means of internet, made available to Public at the Ministry and also at the Provincial directorates. After completing the EIA process and final EIA Report, opens to the view of Public by the same procedures. Flowchart of Public involvement and EIA process are provided in following flowcharts (Figure 1).

![Flowchart of Public involvement and EIA process](image)

Figure 1: Flowchart of Public involvement and EIA process
IV. Spectrum of Public participation.

The Spectrum [7] is organized around the principle that the level of public participation is directly tied to the level of potential public influence on the decision or action being considered (Table 1). This potential influence can vary anywhere from none at all to total. The spectrum is designed to understand the key levels that should be considered within these extremes for designing a public participation program.

Table 1: Spectrum of Public participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public participation goal</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
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<td></td>
<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
<td>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.</td>
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The level of EIA Public participation in Turkey is at consultation level. EIA Public Participation meeting provides an opportunity to the public to express their own ideas about the project and the secretary of the meeting prepares minutes of meeting for EIA Committee. Involve level of public participation for EIA Process requires direct communication with the stakeholders and requires organizing regular meetings and workshops. Environmental NGO’s established in local level or national may increase level of participation and impact discussions. Unfortunately, level of EIA process bounded with regular one day meeting. Everyone may provide his/her opinion by means of e-mail and submitting a petition is a right of being a citizen in Turkey.
IV. Behavior of Public during Public Participation

The writer of this paper has participated more than 50 Public Participation Meetings between 1995 and 2008. Most of the meeting was related with energy sector and mostly Hydro Electricity Projects (HEP) and Thermal Power stations. Considering the most attractive and conflicted projects, three projects have been chosen for this paper.

A- Dilek-Guroluk HEP
   Project owner: BME Holding
   Project Place: Rize Province, Camlihemsin District
   EIA Report submission: May 1997
   Court decision: 19/05/1998, Archeological site decision.
   Public participation Meeting: March 1998
   EIA Positive Decision: 26 June 1998
   Forest Permit: 18/09/1998
   February 1999: Court stops the project.
   2001: Court decides, EIA decision cancelled. Project stopped.

During EIA process, public behavior was easy to understand. They were completely against the project and public objection was well organized. Many people participated in the meeting in Ankara since they spent some time (summer time especially) in that region. The sole supporter to the project was the project owner and their staff. Duration of the meeting was more than four hours. Participated people were more than 400. Income of the people was middle level. Education level was less for local people and higher for living outside the project site. There was no personal demand during the meeting.

B- Çan Thermal Power Plant. 2 x 160 MW
   Project owner: Ministry of Energy
   Project Place: Canakkale Province, Can District
   EIA Report submission: September 1998
   Public participation Meeting: February 1999
   EIA Positive Decision: 13.08.1999
   Capacity: 330 MW.

Public participation meeting was held in a cinema. There were 300 people participating at the meeting. They were well organized, including Doctors, teachers, lawyers, university students, NGO’s, tourism associations, environmental associations, local people, residents living close to projects, villagers and farmers expressed their opinion about the project. Discussions were in a very positive way, they were trying to understand what kind of environmental impacts may arise, what will happen to their farm products. Project area is 25 km away from Ida Mountain where Helen and Paris have met. Historically very attractive area, Troy is 70 km. Gallipoli peninsula is 60 km. There are valuable agriculture lands for apple production close to project area and farmers were asking what may happen to their business. The project owner, representative of Ministry of Energy experts responded the questions are in detail, explain the fluidized bed furnace system which was the ever applied technology in Turkey, establishment of flue gas desulfurization unit, continuous air quality measurements, auditing the system computer based etc. Meeting was ended with a view that as soon as the promises being hold by the governmental organizations, there will be min adverse impacts. People never demanded for any job or personal interest during the meeting.

Project area has lignite coal and reserves so high that Can-2 Thermal Power Plant was established. EIA report was approved on 16th January, 2015.

C- Afşin-Elbistan B-Thermal Power Plant
   Project owner: Ministry of Energy
   Project Place: Kahramanmaras Province, Afşin District
   EIA Report submission: August 1998
   Public participation Meeting: December 1998
   EIA Positive Decision: 19.10.1999
   Capacity: 1440 MW, (4x360 MW)

Afşin coal basin includes 45 % of lignite reserves of Turkey. Afşin A-Thermal Power Plant was established without flue gas desulfurization unit and causes environmental problems, ash and particular matter problems for
living environment. Public participation meeting was held at the premises of Afşin A-Thermal Power Plant. Participants were some of the staff of current plant and local people representatives, villagers. Participants were not organized; no environmental associations participated to meeting. People in that region are generally poor, economical expectations from the project was high. EIA Consultant responsible for agricultural production analysis expressed that annual production for food production is likely to decline in coming years due to Thermal Power Plant. Probability to have cancer in this region will be higher within this region, etc. One of the participants expressed his opinion as “I am 25, no job during last 3 years, no family. So, I am ready to die from cancer after 25 years later, I am ready to work in this plant.”

Construction was completed in 2004. Due to time losses in coal production, only two units were able begin to generate the electricity with long distance coal transportation. This problem was solved in 2009.

Table 2: General specification of Public who attended to Public Participation Meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rize/ÇamliHemsin HEP</th>
<th>Canakkale Thermal PP.</th>
<th>Afşin Thermal PP.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support to project</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/well organized, NGO’s</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants (Local/National)</td>
<td>National + Local</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of meeting</td>
<td>+4 hours</td>
<td>+2 hours</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Local less, national high</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal demands</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Agriculture/Forest</td>
<td>Job, economical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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V. Recent Developments on EIA Public Participation Meetings

In 1998, there was no internet at the Ministry. E-mail usage was restricted. During last ten years, social media and internet provided extra opportunities for people to discuss the environmental matters at all levels of the community. Achieving information is easy, participating forums and discussions are fruitful for them.

Ministry has been using E-EIA system since 2012 [ref 8]. Easy access to all EIA Reports is available without any payment. Level of participation to EIA process is easy. Behavior of public expected to be change in time in positive manner. During last few years, level of EIA public participation meetings turned to protesting platforms. Many EIA public participation meetings have not been conducted due to this reason. For instance, in energy sector 20% of EIA Public participation meetings could not be realized due to such protests. As the communication level and access to information increase, people or organized protesting groups decrease or prevents level of participation.

VI. Conclusions

Public participation meetings enable citizens to discuss the project details and its adverse impacts with EIA consultants and project owners. People express their opinions and interest related with the projects. Public behavior changes according to level of income, education level and personal interest during these meetings.
As incomes increase, environmental awareness increases, however with lower income levels, people are even ready to have environmental impacts. As education levels increase, people are sensitive to environmental matters, even if it occurs in thousands of km from them. Personal expectations may determine people’s behavior on both sides.

In order to increase the Spectrum of Public participation level from consult level to involve level, NGO’s should participate more in the EIA system. Cooperation levels should be increased; methodology for this purpose should be progressed. Collaborative studies should be jointly developed with Chamber of Professionals and Chamber of Unions by means of EIA Training and Information Center. As a member of G-20 [9] and OECD [10], Turkey has such dynamics in both the private and governmental sectors.

References:
1. MATRA social transformation programme (n.d.). Retrieved February 20, 2016, from https://www.government.nl/topics/matra