

## Reviews

*"The document represents the latest in thinking and experiences on environmental impact assessment in the region. The document is revolutionary different from earlier documents as it positions biodiversity in the midst of economic development as an issue which cannot be ignored or dealt with separately and translates the messages of the MDGs and CBD, including its ecosystem approach very well. It closely follows the thinking behind the recently adopted CBD guidelines on biodiversity in environmental assessment; yet, compared to the CBD guidelines it provides much more concrete and practical guidance. The separate guide for reviewers is a relevant additional section stressing the importance of quality review of any EIA"*

**Roel Sloodweg**, EIA professional and academician, The Netherlands

*"I have enjoyed reading the document and admire its potentially high relevance and utility in the South Asian EIA field, which indeed is starved of authentic best practice guidance. It has come not a day too soon as all countries of the region have launched into a brisk 'development phase' that sets its sight on rapid march towards stronger industrial economies and sees the latter also as a means of poverty alleviation and human welfare. The contents of the GUIDE are fairly exhaustive and cogently presented in a logically sequential and effective structure. As to its relevance, it fills a long felt void for the guidance of both the EIA practitioners and reviewers in the South Asian region".*

**Hemendra S. Panwar**, Professional forester and member, National Tiger Conservation Authority, India

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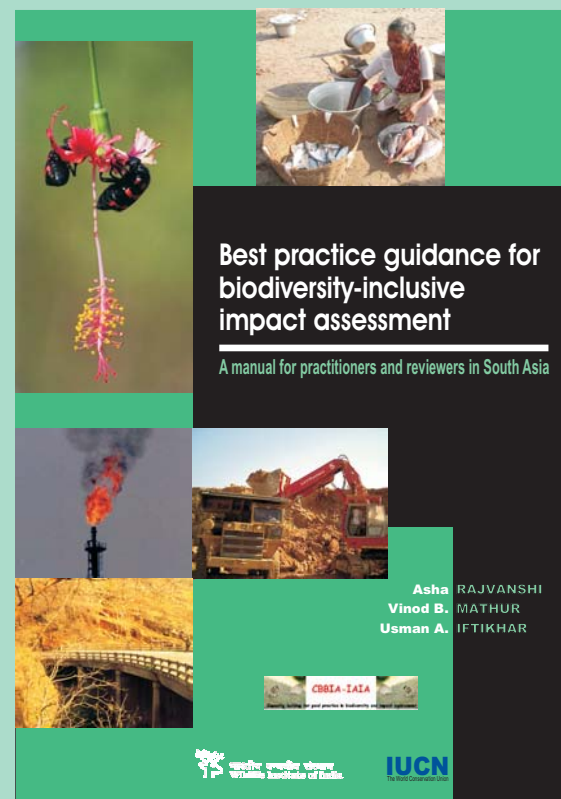
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# IAIA

Capacity Building in Biodiversity and Impact Assessment  
An IAIA/Dutch Government Project

Biodiversity conservation has come a long way from the stand-alone protection of species. Indeed, the cutting-edge perspective sees the

simultaneous pursuit of biodiversity conservation, economic prosperity, human well-being and equity to be not only possible but also necessary. As a result, there is growing interest in factoring biodiversity into mainstream development planning processes and decision-making. Although Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is widely recognized as a 'mainstreaming tool' with the potential to enhance integration of biodiversity imperatives in development planning, it has had limited impact on stemming the biodiversity loss, primarily due to lack of awareness. There is ample evidence to suggest the link between biodiversity and economic health and well-being. For instance, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment revealed that biodiversity is of tremendous ecological value in generating ecosystem services and ensuring human well-being. Even so, biodiversity and particularly the ecosystem services it provides are usually short-changed in development decision making processes and are still assumed to be mostly free and inexhaustible.

In light of this, a three-year project titled Capacity Building in Biodiversity and Impact Assessment (CBBIA) was launched in Southern Africa, Central America and Asia. Funded by the Dutch government, CBBIA is managed by the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). The CBBIA-IAIA (Asia) Project is being implemented jointly by IUCN Asia and the Wildlife Institute of India in five South Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

## The guide

The inspiration for developing the regional guidance manual comes from the global voluntary guidelines on biodiversity-inclusive impact assessment that have been recently endorsed by the Convention on Biological Diversity. This guide is one of the outcomes of the initiative under CBBIA-IAIA (Asia) to overcome capacity constraints in promoting biodiversity-inclusive impact assessment as a mainstreaming tool for harmonising the goals of economic growth, human well-being and biodiversity conservation in South Asia.

## The characteristics of the guidance

The guidance has the following characteristics which distinguish it from the earlier tools.

### *Philosophy*

The guidance is hinged on the understanding that integrating ecological and economic assessments into the traditional EIA framework can contribute significantly to re-tooling impact assessment for planning sustainable projects. The guide underscores that effective involvement of ecologists and economists in all stages of the EIA process would generate a more integrated output that can better meet societal expectations, significantly improve the acceptability of the development proposals and ensure positive planning for biodiversity.

### *Practicalities*

The guide is not intended as a blueprint. Instead, it emphasizes on adopting an integrated framework for EIA and then navigates the readers through the various stages to guide the use of ecological and economic evaluation approaches and tools. The guide is geared to helping users develop a clear understanding of what they need to achieve and has an in-built flexibility for to 'fit for purpose', using the start to end menu for identifying entry points for mainstreaming biodiversity in impact assessment. This makes the guide different from other guidance documents that generally provide 'one-size-fits-all' approaches.

### *Scope*

The scope of the guide is enlarged to demonstrate its applications in three key sectors - oil and gas, road transportation and mining as South Asian countries are currently making huge national and foreign investment in these sectors for rapid economic development. Besides sharing a wide range of good practices through illustrative text boxes, case examples and notes, the guide also directs users to other useful guidance sources. Many different annexes provide additional country-specific information relevant to the main text.

### *Unique features*

The guide represents the latest in thinking and experiences on environmental impact assessment and departs from traditional impact language by pulling biodiversity out of the conservation-oriented discussion and positioning it as a significant issue for decision-making on human development. Additionally, the guide provides a pathway for multi-disciplinary EIA teams to collaborate thus facilitating the integration of biodiversity and economics into impact assessments in a completely novel manner. By presenting a separate section for reviewers, the guide gives adequate weightage to the review process, enhancing its value for reviewers and decision makers.

## Structure and content

The guide's straightforward content, logical sequence of information and cogent style should secure its place on the desk of most practitioners and reviewers for frequent referencing. A quick glance at the information in the guide is presented below.

What to find?	Where to find?
What is the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem functions for human well-being of human society and how is the achievement of Millennium Development Goals linked to biodiversity? What is the current status of biodiversity and what are the major causes of its decline in Asia? What is the scale of development in key sectors and how does it impact biodiversity? What can be done to reverse the negative development trends? What is the role of EIA?	Section – 1 and 2
Is there an acceptable framework for conducting EIAs? What is the rationale for integrating economic evaluation with the ecological evaluation approach for retooling EIA for mainstreaming biodiversity?	Section – 3 and 4
How can a practitioner integrate ecology and economics in each step of biodiversity-inclusive impact assessment and for assessment of developments in the oil and gas, road and mining sectors?	Section – 4
Why EIA reports should be reviewed and what is the best way to do it?	Section – 5
Where is more information available?	Appendix

### *Target users*

Although the guide has been developed with specific reference to South Asia, its core elements are also applicable to other regions. The guide seeks to benefit professionals and consultants conducting EIAs, government officials, EIA agencies, regulatory bodies and decision makers. The guide can also serve as a valuable learning resource for academia.