

# Workshop on Workshop on Cumulative Impact Assessment

## Need for better assessment tool: Time to deliberate

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### Background and concept

The environment regime in India requires prior environmental clearance to start a developmental project (as scheduled) which demands project proponent to carry environmental impact assessment (EIA) study of the proposed project. Started under National Environment Policy Act in 1969 in U.S., EIA is now a formal practice in more than 100 countries in the world. In India, it is carried as per the provisions of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The first EIA notification was issued in 1994 which went under multiple amendments and finally a new notification was issued in 2006.

However, EIA has been in practice for more than two decades now, it failed to meet the objective of “clean and sustainable development”. Instead, the developmental projects are often seen increasing pollution disproportionately which affects health, livelihood and ecology.

The current environmental appraisal process focuses mainly on the baseline environment quality of the area and the incremental impacts from emission and effluent discharges by the proposed project. It doesn't capture the cumulative impacts from other existing and upcoming projects and activities in the area and assimilative and carrying capacity of the area. Ultimately it fails to assess the balance between quantum of developmental activity and threshold limits which lead to disproportionate pollution level and stress on natural resources in the area.

During past, several attempts have been made in this direction such as assessing carrying capacity of the area and developing zoning atlas etc. Some attempts have also been made to carry out cumulative impact assessment of projects. However, none of them could get internalized in environmental regulations.

The decades of experience in EIA, clearly presents that impact assessment studies of individual projects are insufficient. Apart from the baseline scenario and project level pollution impact, we must assess the carrying and assimilative capacity of the area and cumulative impacts of all present and upcoming projects etc. All this can be done under Cumulative Impact Analysis (CIA). It is an integrated approach to assess the assimilative capacity of the area, present scenario and incremental and reasonably foreseeable impacts of various activities on the environment.

However, some basic requirements need to be assured to implement CIA. These are adequate legislative framework, skills and capacity building of stakeholders and strong integrated data management for process emissions & discharges, resource use efficiency and information on local ecological factors and social structure etc. The countries like USA, Canada, EU and Japan have managed to assure these, but India still hasn't. In this direction, India has started the concept of Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI) which assesses pollution level of an area and prioritize action plan for mitigation. This is a good move but insufficient. It doesn't capture the

carrying capacity of an area (water shed or air shed), doesn't involve many highly polluting urban areas, doesn't have control on screening or limiting new projects, and at the same time fails to meet its ultimate objective of reducing pollution level of the identified area.

### **Objective and expected outcome of the workshop**

CSE strongly believes that India needs to adopt CIA framework for sustainable development of the country. It is high time to rethink and assess about our existing framework of environmental clearances and need of improvements. In this direction, we are organizing this two- days workshop for researchers, industry professionals, academia, regulators and other experts to share their experience, present their research/work and brainstorm on the existing and required CIA framework in India and world.

The workshop is expected to develop a consensus on the need of CIA, its process, ideal framework for India and much needed actions to push for policy level implementation.

### **Participants**

The workshop is restricted to the limited number of participants. It involves- researcher, consultants, industry professionals and other experts having vast experience in the field of impact assessment particularly- CIA, Carrying capacity, Zoning atlas and CEPI exercises.

The participation is on invitation basis. **Invited participants are requested to share a brief note (1- 2 pages) on their work and experience on CIA, Carrying capacity, Zoning atlas and CEPI exercises and related topics as mentioned programme schedule** which they would like to discuss and share in the workshop. Participants interested in presentation, are requested to communicate so and share the copy of presentation in advance.

### **Itinerary**

Date of workshop: 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2016

Venue:

29<sup>th</sup> June 2016- **Jacaranda II**, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi road, New Delhi 110003

30<sup>th</sup> June 2016- **Silver Oak II**, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi road, New Delhi 110003