

Green productivity



Environmental assessment

<http://www.gdrc.org>

Global Development Research Centre, Japan

Conducting an effective environmental assessment: Key points to remember

- Keep environmental assessment in perspective. Use it as a tool to enhance the decision-making process, “not the decision making process itself” (FEARO 1992:4).
- Keep the assessment simple and concentrate on pertinent factors and data. It should be “rigorous but not necessarily laborious” (FEARO 1992:4). The type of assessment needed by community projects should be relatively quick and uncomplicated.
- Focus time and effort on the most relevant matters. The assessment of a sanitation project to be built near a river does not require an inventory of flora and fauna. The priority would be to understand the project impact on the river as well as on social and economic life.
- Don't invest too much or too little time on an assessment. The process should be neither protracted nor hasty. It is better to take the time needed to do a proper job than to pay later for carelessness. Stay flexible in order to meet any new challenges that may arise.
- Tailor each assessment to the particular needs of the project. Each project has a unique set of environmental, economic and social characteristics. The values and priorities of the target population and the extent of their participation and support are also project-specific.
- Be inventive. There is no standard format available for interpreting the information gathered during an environmental assessment.
- Be prepared for inexact and suggestive data that call for speculation and extrapolation. “Typically data will be imperfect, and assumptions open to challenge. Quantification may be difficult (and in some circumstances, impossible). Nevertheless, lack of perfect information and insight should not stand in the way of conducting environmental assessment with the best available knowledge and data. Indeed, exposing the limits and inadequacies of knowledge, data and interpretation, can help stimulate improvements in the understanding of environmental issues and accelerate the provision of reliable information to support informed decision making” (FEARO 1992:26).
- Avoid secrecy. Open communication among all stakeholders throughout the assessment process not only produces better results, but also increases the project's credibility and builds trust and acceptance on the part of the wider community.
- Seek external help and advice in situations, which require more expertise than is available in the project management and environmental assessment teams.

Tips for preparing an environmental assessment report

- Be as concise as possible.
- Avoid jargon, especially in executive summary. Express technical information in plain language that clarifies its relevance to the project.
- Report on all relevant matters; no critical information should be held back. This is especially true where opinions differ as to the extent of potential environmental impact or the merits of the project.
- Analyse significant details in greater depth.
- Provide a rationale for excluding topics from further consideration. For example, if a decision was made not to consult the local community, explain why.
- Ensure that the report contains an inclusive evaluation of how project activities affect both the depletion of local resources and the production of waste material.
- Account for all community and project-related activities.
- Provide a community profile that describes and analyses the key social, cultural, economic, political and physical characteristics of the community.
- Describe any impact on neighbouring communities.
- Don't forget to mention opportunities for environmental enhancement. A report does not have to be limited to negative aspects. Many community projects will have environmentally beneficial aspects as well.
- Describe the impact of the project on the local population. Outline the role of the target community in the assessment process.
- Provide an assessment of basic alternatives, if necessary. This should include the cost of abandoning the project as well as the cost of various alternatives.
- Explain any gaps or uncertainties in the information gathered.
- Outline a plan of action for all mitigation measures. Specify the institutional arrangements and responsibility for implementing these measures. Use precise words like “will” and “must” for mitigation measures.
- Include relevant material whether in written, visual or oral form.
- Try to propose conclusions that can be defended by the environmental assessment team. The techniques and ideas presented should help achieve this aim.
- Distinguish between opinions held by the community and those held by the environmental assessment team.
- Mention the consequences and impacts of the project for different social groups.
- Lastly, make sure that communities are furnished with copies of the final environmental assessment report. □



Waste audit

What it is and why it is needed

<http://www.vermigold.com>

Vermigold Ecotech Pvt. Ltd., India

Did you know that:

When wet garbage decomposes without air it becomes slimy, smelly and gives off methane and nitrous oxide, two very potent greenhouse gases?

Disposing of wet garbage in plastic and sending them to the dumping ground contributes directly to global warming?

The amount of garbage collected for landfill is a huge, global problem, with landfill areas rapidly filling?

Around 50 per cent of waste materials at landfills are composed of organic solid waste/wet garbage?

All over the world, businesses and institutions are changing the way they deal with solid waste. In India, now that the central, state and local municipal regulations are imposing more stringent limits for solid waste disposal, it has become apparent that the traditional end-of-pipe disposal methods only move pollutants from one media to another. The once simple approach of unregulated waste dumping is a major expense and liability. Further, these practices may not provide adequate levels of control for pollutants now permitted. In view of the current emphasis on environmental protection, industry managers who face increasing waste disposal costs yet wish to remain good corporate neighbours are forced to investigate alternate technologies for the elimination of waste.

What is a waste audit and why do one?

Waste audit is a formal, structured process employed to quantify the amount and types of waste being generated by an organization. Information from audits will help identify current waste practices and how they can be improved. Being waste-wise can mean:

- A more efficient and effective organization;

- Reduced waste management costs;
- Better use of limited natural resources; and
- Reduced carbon footprint.

The waste audit approach to waste-resource assessment is an important first step towards a comprehensive waste reduction programme for your organization. It will help you and your organization assess your current generation of solid waste and to plan the changes necessary to comply with the government regulations. A waste assessment can be an extremely valuable experience to a forward-thinking organization. By following this visual estimate approach your organization will be in an excellent position to implement a sound Waste Reduction Action Plan and help turn waste into resources.

What are the objectives of the audit?

The audit's objectives will largely determine the waste types and physical locations to be audited. Some examples of audit objectives could be:

- To determine composition and quantities of waste being generated;
- To measure effectiveness of existing waste management systems;
- To identify opportunities for improving waste management systems and strategies; and
- To collect baseline data for measuring the effectiveness of waste minimization strategies.

Vermigold Ecotech even has experience in predicting in advance the quantity and composition of wastes that will be generated for an upcoming project so that an optimal waste management strategy can be planned for in advance that is in compliance with the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. □

Energy Efficiency Guide for Industry in Asia

This Guide has been developed for Asian companies who want to improve energy efficiency through Cleaner Production and for stakeholders who want to help them. The Guide includes a methodology, case studies for more than 40 Asian companies in 5 industry sectors, technical information for 25 energy equipment, training materials, a contact and information database, and much more...

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