

# Institutionalization of environmental assessment in the public sector – a strategic approach

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## ABSTRACT

Under the Pakistan Environmental Protection Ordinance 1983, Environmental Assessment is a requirement for all developmental projects in the country. After the approval of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act in 1998 it is now mandatory for all developmental projects to carry out environmental assessment before approval, thus making environmental assessment the most direct and effective means of combining development and conservation. To integrate environmental procedures and results in policy and decision making, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) is the leading province to have identified/indicated environmental planning, management and assessment as an immediate priority under the auspices of Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS), a sustainable development agenda for the province. Under the SPCS, various measures have been taken for institutionalizing environmental assessment in the operations of government departments. These measures include: modification of PC-I to include environmental impact; and the use of PC-II for financing EIA (PC-1 and II are the main planning documents of the government for project appraisal and approval); building capacity in environmental management and assessment of the planning staff of the government departments through various training courses such as policy analysis using strategic environmental assessment; public participation; and the establishment of an Environment Section and Environment Wing in the Planning & Development Department, the sole provincial department where all developmental projects go for approval. Moreover, an Environmental Cell has been established in the Local Government Department.

Recognizing the need for environmental assessment and its use as a comprehensive and versatile instrument for achieving sustainable development, this paper will discuss how environmental concerns and assessments are being incorporated in policy and decision making processes of the provincial government of NWFP, and what efforts and measures have been taken so far in this area.

**See Topic 2**

**UNEP EIA Training  
Resource Manual**

*Law, policy and  
institutional  
arrangements*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan is richly endowed with natural resources including prime agricultural land, scenic landscapes, abundant forests and wildlife, a vast mineral resources base, a rich ancient culture, a network of rivers and streams, and a diverse climate. Some of these resources, such as forests protecting the watersheds, are of vital national importance. NWFP has established, and is maintaining, a high profile in the environmental arena in Pakistan. In many respects, this province is considered as the environmental conscience of the country. The province was the first to begin the implementation of Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy when it decided to prepare the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy in 1992. Other provinces are now following this lead and setting up similar strategic planning processes.

Keeping in view the continuing degradation of the environment, the government of NWFP is in the process of incorporating environmental procedures into developmental policies and plans. Presently, as in the past, the main focus of the provincial government is on institutionalization of environmental planning, management and procedures. Also there is an emphasis by the government on capacity building, as there is a need to build the capacity of professionals both from the public and private sectors in environmental planning, management and assessment.

## **NATURE AND SCOPE OF ISSUES**

The most pressing environmental problems in the NWFP can be listed as increasing population; narrow rural economic base; exodus to urban centres; congestion and pollution; brunt of Afghan refugees; water-borne diseases; deforestation; lack of awareness, education and research; and inadequate institutional infrastructure.

With the enactment of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act in 1998, it is now mandatory to conduct environmental assessment for all developmental projects. However, like other developing countries, Pakistan did not have the institutional mechanisms or the professional capacity to effectively undertake environmental assessments, and this was particularly the case in government departments. In the public sector, there are very few organizations with an exclusive environmental mandate, including the Environment Section of the Planning, Development and Environment Department (PE&D) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Both organizations are relatively new and still trying to establish their position in the provincial and national bureaucracy.

## **PROCESS AND PROCEDURAL CONTEXT**

To secure economic, social and ecological well being of the people of NWFP through conservation and sustainable development of natural resources, the

government of NWFP in collaboration with The World Conservation Union (IUCN), developed the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS). The main aim of this strategy is to integrate environmental concerns in the development agenda to ensure sustainable development of natural and renewable resources for human survival.

Environmental assessment is becoming the primary means of managing the approval of new development proposals in NWFP. Under the 1998 legislation, along with new private sector projects and industrial projects to obtain approval, public sector projects now unambiguously require environmental assessment. Under the government policy decision, there are certain institutions which will be responsible for the processing and review of environmental reports, such as EIA & IEE. In addition, the Pakistan EPA intends to delegate its responsibility for the review of environmental reports to the Provinces. Guidelines have been developed for this. In addition, the government of NWFP with the assistance of donor organizations, has started projects that should lead to the strengthening of these two essential organizations as well as other line departments.

The following are the main institutions involved in environmental planning, management, and assessment of projects in the province of NWFP:

- The Planning Environment and Development Department (PE&DD) Environment Wing and Environment Section;
- The NWFP Environmental Protection Agency; and
- Government Line Departments.

### **INSTITUTIONALISATION MECHANISMS, MEASURES AND APPROACHES**

Since the Province of NWFP is also faced with several environment-related problems various legislative, institutional, fiscal, policy and supportive measures have been initiated by the government to integrate environmental procedures into its developmental plans in order to improve the environmental situation of the Province. The mandate of the environment portfolio was given to the Planning and Development Department which changed its name to the Planning, Environment and Development Department so as to integrate environmental concerns into the government developmental policies and plans.

The following are the various measures being undertaken in order to institutionalize the environment into developmental work of the public sector by the government of NWFP.

#### **Institutional measures**

To initiate and expedite environmental planning, management and assessment processes in the public sector, various institutional measures have been taken. These include:

#### *Establishment of NWFP Environmental Protection Agency*

To enforce environmental laws, National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS), to create mass awareness and to conduct environmental research, the provincial government of NWFP created a provincial Environmental Protection Agency in 1989 through an administrative order, under the control of PE&D Department. This is the prime regulatory agency in province, mandated to institutionalize EA process.

#### *Creation of the Environment Wing*

In order to streamline, strengthen and clarify the roles of the provincial EPA and the Environment section, an Environment Wing was created in 1996 within the PE&D Department. The Environment Wing headed by an Additional Secretary is to look after the environmental affairs in the Province. The Wing has responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring all environment-related activities in the NWFP – including the supervision of the EPA. This measure ensures much better coordination among environment sector projects and expedites the various initiatives of the GoNWFP to improve the environmental scenario.

#### *Establishment of an Environmental Protection Cell in the Local Government (LG) Department*

To adopt the Pakistan Environment Protection Act (PEPA) 1998, an Environmental Protection Cell has recently been established in the LG Department. The main purpose of this Cell is to integrate environmental concerns in the developmental plans of the department and to build the capacity of the departmental staff in environmental planning and management. In addition, this Cell provides coordination for environment related projects to expedite the various initiatives of the GoNWFP in improving the environment. This is the first local government department in the country to have a unit dealing with environmental issues.

#### *Provincial Environment Protection Council*

A Provincial Environment Protection Council has been constituted with representation at the Ministerial level. The Council is headed by the Chief Minister. Public participation is also ensured through representation from the NGO Sector, Industrial sector and Agriculture sector.

#### *Establishment of SPCS Round Tables*

Considering the usefulness of broad-based public consultations, Round Tables have been established in various government departments. The primary objective of these Round Tables is to incorporate public input into the planning process of the government. So far, Round Tables in the following sectors have been established and made functional: Urban Environment; Industries; Education; NGOs; Communication; and Agriculture. These Round Tables provide a forum for civil society input into public sector development planning process.

*Establishment of an Environmental Planning and Management Department,  
University of Peshawar*

To introduce and improve university curricula in environmental science, of which environmental assessment forms an integral part, an Environmental Planning & Management Department has been established in the University of Peshawar.

*Legislative measures*

Proper legislation is needed to provide the legal framework within which various fiscal and policy measures can be effectively undertaken to ensure large-scale adoption of supportive measures aimed at improvement of environment. Initiatives in this critical area are described below.

*NWFP Environment Protection Act*

A draft Environment Protection Act for the NWFP has been prepared. The Act is based on the outcomes of active public participation in a workshop on Environmental Legislation as well as through the key recommendations of the SPCS.

*Policy measures*

Provincial policy, coordination and the screening of development projects for environmental impact are the responsibilities of the PE&D Department through its Environment Section and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Environment Section's main tasks are: to address urgent concerns through the formulation of appropriate pilot projects in support of the SPCS; to subject the development planning process to environmental impact screening; and to develop provincial environmental legislation.

A number of policy-level steps have been undertaken to facilitate the process of incorporating environmental measures into the sectoral priorities of relevant line departments, these are:

*Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS)*

In response to the need to implement the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) which was adopted by the Government of Pakistan in 1992, the Government of NWFP, in Collaboration with IUCN, developed a strategic environmental planning document known as Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS).

*District conservation strategies*

While the SPCS is a broad-based sustainable development agenda for the Province, due consideration is also being given to the expedition of the Local Agenda 21 process through the formulation of district conservation strategies. Work has commenced on Chitral and Abbottabad Conservation Strategies.

### Capacity building

In order to gain acceptance of the implementation of environment-related initiatives from policy-makers, bureaucrats, decision-makers, implementers, private sector developers, NGOs, and concerned citizens, a series of awareness raising seminars/workshops have been organized, together with short-term modules/courses in environmental planning and management for the planning officers of various government agencies.

### Supportive measures

Besides undertaking the above policy and regulatory steps, the GoNWFP has also taken numerous supportive measures, as detailed below, to institutionalize environmental protection into its development process:

#### *'Greening' of the Annual Development Plans*

Key recommendations of the SPCS action plans, pertaining to different sectors, have been incorporated in the respective Annual Development Plans (Ads) of various line departments and the Environment Wing. Besides SPCS projects, almost all relevant departments have endeavoured to include environment-related projects into their respective Ads.

#### *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Unit*

The capacity of the EPA to carry-out EIAs has been enhanced under the World Bank funded project, i.e. Environmental Protection and Resource Conservation Project through establishment of an EIA Unit. This will enable the GoNWFP to review all public development projects for conformity with the GOP's environmental policies.

Various factors are involved in the institutionalization process of environment and EA in the developmental plans, policies and procedures of public sector. The following are the main causes of the environmental movement in the province of NWFP:

- interest and support of the pro-environment bureaucrats;
- support from some senior politicians;
- demand and support of the donor agencies;
- availability of funds; and
- availability of local experts.

### **LESSONS LEARNED/CONCLUSION**

As environmental assessment is increasingly undertaken as a planning tool and mechanism for decision-making processes to address environmental issues, the system developing in NWFP public sector has to some extent been successful in integrating environmental considerations into various development projects.

Although a new focus of attention, environmental management and assessment is rapidly gaining recognition and popularity in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). As mentioned earlier, the Government of NWFP has started to formulate the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS), which has resulted in a comprehensive policy for managing the environment in NWFP. Organizations responsible for initiating proper environmental management have been created and are in the process of strengthening.

Donor organizations can play an important role in pushing government agencies to formulate environmental procedures as part of identifying projects, in order to contribute in the improvement of environmental management.

The development of the required institutional capacity should be understood to be an ongoing process. This implies that environmental problems cannot be solved (only) by applying a technical solution, which has been introduced from the outside. Development of capacity in the environment should, among other things, be process oriented with strengthened institutional support and be owned by the local society, in this case NWFP.

The success and effectiveness of environmental management policies will depend on the availability of effective policy instruments. Successful attempts to develop environmental capacity in order to improve environmental management will require a strong commitment, both from the government and the main donor organizations; the two most important actors in the development process in NWFP.

With the emergence of new institutions, policies and programmes for the environment, there is a need for thoughtful assignment of institutional roles. For example, which functions belong to the government, which to the NGOs, and which can be addressed by the private sector? Traditional roles need reiteration as well as review within Government.

Improvement of environmental management in a province or region will depend on the financial scope that exists for strengthening capacity in the environment, carrying out environment-oriented research, and implementing environment-oriented projects.

In general, to integrate environmental assessment/concerns into the developmental plans, policies and projects, there need to be a number of critical elements in place, such as:

- support and commitment from bureaucracy;
- political support and will;
- development of such mechanisms through which environmental concerns could be incorporated institutionally ;

- support from the international donor agencies;
- a clearly enunciated legislative mandate for Environmental issues; and
- a body of policy makers, planners, and decision makers well-versed in Environmental planning,

#### LIST OF RELEVANT PUBLISHED PAPERS AND OTHER SOURCE MATERIAL

Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy, Peshawar, Pakistan, 1996.

Environmental Profile of NWFP, a report prepared by DHV Consultants, Peshawar, 1994.

Participatory Strategic Planning for Strengthening EIA Capacity, IUCN, Nepal, 1996.

Institutional Framework, DHV Consultants, Peshawar, 1997.

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#### Key words

**sustainable  
development**

**strategic  
environmental  
assessment**

**capacity building**

**institutionalism**