COMPREHENSIVE CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

OECD/DAC (1994) Towards Coherence in Environmental Assessment
(Organized according to the stages in a generalized project cycle)

ASPECTS OF ASSESSMENT	MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	EXPLANATORY NOTES

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION STAGE

ASPECTS OF ASSESSMENT	MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	EXPLANATORY NOTES
Communications	Ensure that potential partners are asked to cooperate in the proposed activity as early as possible in the planning process, particularly before environmental screening occurs.	• This refers to the implementing organization in the recipient country as well as to other donors. • Experience shows early cooperation to be critical to be a successful assessment and project support.
	Establish the time period over which the partners prefer to be involved in the assessment process, particularly in regard to post-completion monitoring and evaluation functions.	• Completion of assessment report often marks the end of collaboration in the assessment process. • There could be prior agreement to collaborate in a mid-term review and/or in project evaluation.
	Maintain and circulate a current list of contact persons in the participating donor agencies and the implementing organization within the recipient country.	• Failure to maintain appropriate contacts can lead to loss of "corporate memory". • Contact persons can change for assessments which extend over a considerable period of time.
	Establish mechanisms whereby officials in the donor agencies and the implementing organization within the recipient country can discuss and jointly plan assessment matters in a timely and effective manner.	• Following the OECD/DAC Good Practices, the recipient country should be encouraged and supported to take the lead, with the involvement of the affected public, in designing, implementing and evaluating the environmental assessment.
Policy Check	Assess the proposed project against the legal requirements, policy objectives and operational priorities of the donor agencies and the recipient country.	• These may be difficult to determine for the recipient country. • It should be determined whether the project has been rejected by any other donors.
	In consultation with recipient country officials, consider the proposed project within the context of national or regional environmental action plans, conservation strategies and state-of-the-environment reports.	• This can include strategic, programmatic or sectoral assessments previously completed by other aid institutions. • OECD/DAC has published Good Practices for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies.
	Assess the proposed project against the provisions of international agreements to which any of the parties are signatories.	• There are now over 870 bilateral and multilateral international legal instruments that have environmental provisions.

| Screening | Ensure that projects are screened for potential environmental impacts in a manner which meets the procedural requirements of the donors and the recipient country. | • Screening is a common occurrence and is required under the OECD/DAC Good Practices.
• Not all DAC Members use screening categories; refer to country summary sheets in Volume III. |
| | Establish procedures for resolving differences in the results of environmental screening, should such occur, in a manner acceptable to all of the parties involved. | • Variation in criteria and procedures can lead to different screening decisions for the same project.
• Differences in screening decisions can lead to disagreement on the level of assessment required. |

FEASIBILITY STUDY STAGE

Level of Assessment	Ensure that, if screening determines that further assessment is required, the parties agree on the need for a "limited" or "full" assessment.	• The basic steps are the same for limited or full assessment - only the perceived severity of the impacts and the level of analysis is different.
Alternatives	Ensure early consideration of alternatives to the proposed project at the strategic level, i.e., those (i) involving national policy decisions, (ii) having broad-scale socio-economic implications or (iii) impacting on the achievement of long-term sustainable development (includes consideration of the "no go option").	• All parties may not agree on the need to consider alternatives at the strategic level. • Examples include alternative energy sources, transportation modes and agricultural practices. • The need to consider technical alternatives (sites, designs and operating systems) is normally part of the terms of reference for an assessment.
Scoping	Secure agreement from the donors and representatives of the recipient country government on the need for, and objectives of, a scoping process.	• OECD/DAC Good Practices refers to scoping as a process to identify (i) significant environmental issues, (ii) the nature of required analysis and (iii) possible mitigation measures.
	Ensure agreement among all parties on the process of public participation to be followed in the scoping process, including (i) defining "the public", (ii) assigning roles and responsibilities for the process, (iii) informing and contacting affected and interested groups, (iv) recording and analyzing the inputs and (v) distributing results.	• OECD/DAC Good Practices call for the "gathering of data, concerns and expertise" from officials, experts, concerns and expertise" from officials, experts, affected groups and NGOs. • Public participation in developing countries is a sensitive and complex undertaking for which the recipient country must assume responsibility, with support from the donors.
Terms of Reference	Ensure the development of a single terms of reference acceptable to all parties that defines the administrative, procedural, technical and decision-making requirements for the assessment.	• The quality of an environmental assessment will reflect the quality of the terms of reference. • Refer to the Framework Terms of Reference which accompanies this Checklist.
	Determine the roles and responsibilities of the parties in regard to the management and conduct of the environmental assessment.	• OECD/DAC Good Practices encourage recipient countries to take responsibility for their own environmental assessments, with donor support.
	Ensure agreement on procedures for identifying, collecting and storing the required information and data in the recipient country, and for sharing that information and data among the parties.	• Collecting information and data can be one of the most costly aspects of environmental assessment. • Significant savings in cost and time can be achieved through greater sharing of information.
	Take whatever measures are appropriate to maximize the institutional and technical capacity of the recipient country for managing the environmental assessment.	• Capacity building and institutional development in recipient countries is a priority topic for DAC Member countries and improving environmental assessment capability is an important component.
	Ensure procedures for reviewing progress in the environmental assessment, and for reviewing, publishing and distributing the final assessment report in donor and recipient countries.	• Quality control assurance is an important aspect of conducting an environmental assessment. • External review and distribution of assessment reports can be a sensitive issue in some countries.

APPRAISAL STAGE

Project Decision	Ensure that the donors and the recipient country agree on procedures to be followed after the completion of the environmental assessment for arriving at a final decision concerning the acceptance or rejection of the environmental effects of the proposed project.	• OECD Council Recommendation of 1989 provides guidance for high-level decision-makers. • Parties may agree to a collaborative assessment, but they make independent project decisions. • Some donors set time limits from the completion of the assessment to final project decisions.
	Ensure that the donors and the recipient country have come to an agreement on the environmental standards to be applied to the project.	• Donors may reserve the right to have their own standards apply if those of the recipient country are considered unacceptable or not enforceable.
Recommendations	Ensure that recommendations on environmental management plans, mitigation plans, compensation schemes and monitoring programmes are incorporated into project approval documents.	• OECD/DAC has Guidelines for Aid Agencies on Involuntary Displacement and Resettlement. • Financial compensation and replacement of lost land can be politically sensitive issues.
Responsibilities	Ensure clear allocation of responsibilities for the implementation of all recommended actions contained in the environmental assessment report.	• Following OECD/DAC Good Practices, recipient countries should be encouraged and supported to take as much responsibility as possible.

FINAL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Mitigation	Establish procedures to ensure that recommendations on mitigation, monitoring, relocation and compensation are carried out during project design and construction (compliance audit).	• Site monitoring is normally the responsibility of the implementing organisation with the recipient country, with occasional checks by donor resident professionals or consultants.
Reporting	Ensure that reports on the implementation of assessment recommendations are generated on a regular basis and distributed among the parties.	• Careful monitoring of progress at this stage will help to avoid difficult problems in the operational phase of the project.

OPERATIONAL STAGE

Monitoring	Ensure that regular environmental monitoring is conducted in accordance with the recommended monitoring programme, and that procedures are agreed upon in the event that limits are exceeded.	• Objectives are to ensure compliance with standards and to determine success of mitigation. • Monitoring is usually the responsibility of the recipient county with occasional checks by donor.
	Ensure that monitoring records are maintained and verified, and distributed to the participating donors and interested members of the public within the recipient country.	• It may be difficult in some countries to have monitoring equipment maintained and calibrated. • Distribution of monitoring results may be a sensitive issue in some situations.
Mid-term Review	Determine the parties to be involved in a mid-term environmental review, the terms of reference for the review and to whom the results will be distributed.	• Most donor agencies undertake a mid-term review after the project has been in operation for a sufficient period of time for major environmental and social problems to become evident.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION STAGE

Monitoring	Ensure that the recommended environmental monitoring programme has been implemented, determine if it needs to be modified in light of experience, and whether the results are serving a useful purpose.	• Monitoring is costly and time consuming and may become a pro forma exercise. • Experience may show that some variables no longer need to be monitored or that there is no feedback from monitoring to project operations.
Evaluation	Determine which of the parties are interested in participating in an environmental evaluation of the project, when that might occur, and how they might cooperate given that such evaluations are normally undertaken by specialised evaluation units or external independent bodies.	• Comprehensive evaluations are normally undertaken a number of years after project completion. • An evaluation of the environmental aspects of a project is normally part of a much broader based project evaluation.
	Ensure agreement on the scope of the evaluation, i.e., whether or not it will be confined to the original terms of reference.	• Terms of reference provide a good basis upon which to conduct an evaluation, however, they may not have been prepared for some projects.
	Ensure agreement on the publication and distribution of the evaluation reports within the donor and recipient countries.	• There may be disagreement concerning the extent to which evaluation reports should be made available to the general public.
	Based on the evaluation results, prepare a preliminary list of key environmental problems and socio-economic concerns that would likely have to be addressed at the time of eventual project shutdown or decommissioning.	• There is limited but growing experience with environmental cleanup following plant closures. • A specific terms of reference would need to be prepared for environmental cleanup and remediation at time of decommissioning or shutdown.

REFERENCES:

1.   OECD (1992). *Development Assistance Committee: Guidelines on Environment and Aid No. 1, Good Practices for Environmental Impact Assessment of Development Projects*, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD, Paris, 17 pp.

2.   OECD (1992). Guidelines on Environment and Aid No. 2, *Good Practices for Country Environmental Surveys and Strategies*, Development Assistance Committee, Paris, 17 pp.

3.   Weiss, Edith Brown (ed.) (1992). *Environmental Change and International Law,* United Nations University Press, Tokyo, Japan, 493 pp.

4.   OECD (1994). *Towards Coherence in Environmental Assessment, Volume III Summary of Country Policies and Procedures*, Results of the Project on Coherence of Environmental Assessment for International Bilateral Aid, Submitted by Canada to the DAC Working Party on Development Assistance and Environment, April, 1994.

5.   OECD (1986). *OECD Council Recommendation concerning an Environmental Checklist for Possible Use by High-Level Decision-Makers in Bilateral and Multilateral Development Assistance Institutions*, OECD, Paris.

6.   OECD (1992). *Guidelines on Environment and Aid No. 3, Guidelines for Aid Agencies on Involuntary Displacement and Resettlement in Development Projects*, Development Assistance Committee, Paris, 15 pp.