

Social Impact Assessment

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Introduction

Any project implemented with clear objectives and estimated results will have an impact on the subjects or issues concerned. Social impact is the consequence of the actions on the subjects. It alters the ways in which they are used to living, work or the social intercourse. The term social impact takes into consideration, different dimensions including the cultural dimensions. Taking into account the cultural dimension is important, because it brings about change in the culture (behavior, norms, values and beliefs) that guide their way of living in the society.

Social impact of projects gives the possibility to assess or estimate the multidimensional consequence that are likely to become effective as the fruit of the project implemented. Since actions undertaken or projects are envisaged to significantly affect the quality of life and the human environment, the impact analysis becomes a fundamental means to measure these changes.

Impact analysis must be undertaken with method and clear guidelines, failing which they may not produce relevant results.

This document is a means to conceptualize almost thirty years of experience in the field of international micro development and capitalize the experience in the form of a document which will also serve as a guideline for carrying out impact analysis. The main purpose of this document is to share knowledge through training of the future development and humanitarian workers and also enhance the capacity of those who are already involved in development activities.

What is Impact analysis

An impact analysis is a methodological approach to measure the social and other effects that a project has produced or the effects of action on the group or individuals or a community. It is also means to understand what changes have been brought in and how these changes affect the lives of the people or their attitudes. In other words it is a means of measuring the changes achieved in an "human environment" and how these changes are socialized and integrated. It is also give the possibility to measure the adverse effects of a project or an action on the same human environment. The human environment must be understood as the holistic dimension, that is the physical, social, cultural, economical and spiritual dimensions of the community of the individuals.

The impact, often understood as direct, helps understand and capture the visible direct changes. But a comprehensive perception of impact will take beyond the direct impact, that is the indirect impact, which are the unprogrammed effects: political, socio-economical, community etc. the unprogrammed fields are interrelated with the direct effect of the project, thus giving a clear idea of the relevance and pertinence of the action.

Sometimes the projects or activities could have a negative effect, for example, in a post conflict situation, if due attention is not given while implementing projects, it will sometimes lead to conflict between communities or increase or revive past tensions, which may lead to animosities and division among the communities. The situation in south Sudan is an interesting case. During the war with the Khartoum government, the different south Sudanese groups had a common enemy and this gave them an united momentum. But with the end of the war and the advent of independence, the groups have not been followed-up, the ethnical differences have not been taken into account and this happens in a context of all families being armed. This has led to tribal tensions

between the different communities resulting in interethnic problems in the south which has become a major obstacle to nation building..

The challenge of carrying out a Social Impact Analysis

The need for a basic model in terms of scope and focuses

Carrying out an impact analysis requires elaboration of methods and procedures with a clear process. Since they are a means to measure the human environment, they must also be wide enough in terms of scope and focused enough to access the right data. This is an important aspect of social impact because we are here referring to the social significance of the changes undertaken or under investigation. The following gives a clear idea of what should be done and what should be undertaken:

A. Define a Framework

1. In order to capture the potential impact of a project, the first and foremost step is to understand the past behavior of individuals and the communities which are concerned by the project. This definition of the initial status will help determine in advance what is likely to happen in the community and in the future programs elsewhere, what will be the estimated results in another community if the same project or similar action was undertaken with the similar method.
2. In the same manner it will also be important to define the undesirable social effect that the action has produced and propose mitigation actions for rectifying them.
3. Identify all the areas or dimensions for social impacts keeping in mind the chain change process, that is, one change has a way of creating other changes. For ex. Putting a Community Based micro finance program gives the possibilities for women to come together, improve their economic condition, have access to medical care etc. One should keep in mind that social structures will be altered when change occurs.
4. Social impact is a dynamic complex process of changes over a period of time. There is a need to take a series of snapshots spread over the time as the project unfolds and changes occur. These changes can be measured and must be measured.

This ideally means having baseline data about the environment {geographical, social, economical, political etc.}. This, then becomes the reference for measuring changes taking place between two measurement points at the given interval. The data collection will give information on dynamic events and enable the monitoring of the impact.

B. Social impact assessment must be inbuilt into the different stages of a project development

- Initial planning stage
- Implementation phase
- Program operation and maintenance
- Program phasing out stage.

i. The initial planning stage

In the planning stage, it is necessary to capture the initial status, attitude and how the beneficiaries react before the project is initiated, at the time of its implementation. Social impact starts on the very first day. It is here the project must have sufficient data on the construction of the social reality { the human environment, -social, economical, political and cultural }. The changes that occur after this contact with the project over the period of time must be systematically registered.

ii. Implementation Phase

Implementation and construction phase is the moment when a decision is made to proceed. The period of launching is moment of stress, a dynamic moment of changes and social interaction. Sometimes the project recipient may have problems linked to the inability to respond to the expectations of the project proponent, there could be tension and these factors are essential for the project to take shape and move forward. These changes must be captured and documented

iii. Program operation and Maintenance

This is to be considered as the period of full operation. Here the outside input is less and the community or recipient involvement is more. The recipients are able to adapt to new changes, new social and economical conditions, which are the result of the project. Results are produced and there is ownership. At this juncture there are huge impacts, micro effects leading to changes and of course there is full participation of the beneficiaries. This is the crucial moment for capturing the change process which is beginning to take shape. At this stage, there are potentials for innovation and this must be captured.

iv. Program Phasing out

This is period when the program and the activities will cease progressively. Here the beneficiaries will begin to adapt themselves to new changes leading to autonomy and independent existence. These are moments of important changes as results will become more and more visible and must be captured at regular intervals.

It will be equally important to seize the adverse effects, the negative impact and above all the capability of the recipients to become independent. This must be studied thoroughly in order to see how this was facilitated and became possible. One must not lose sight of the indirect and induced changes that the project is bringing about and document them.

When measuring the positive and negative effects, one must not lose sight of the different micro changes that have happened or taking place and put them in a linear continuum process to measure the changes. This stage is as important as the initial stage.

C. Social Impact Variables

Variable are important to identify measurable changes in individual communities and relationship within the communities. They also help identify changes in the development projects as to how they have had impact on the beneficiaries.

These variables can be broadly classified under five categories :

1. Related to population characteristics
2. Community and institutional structures
3. Political and social resources
4. Individual, family and community changes
5. Community resources.

Variables related to population characteristics

These variables relate to the present population behavior and the expected changes : caste, ethnic or racial diversities, population movement, issues or problems addressed. These variable must give indications about the social order and relation within the communities.

Community and institutional structures

In the field of community and institutional structures reference is made to the size of local structures, level of organization of local governance, linkages between political systems etc. Pattern of employment, voluntary association, interest groups and how they interact. Often there is a tendency to put aside the importance of the traditional leadership building or its existence. This is an important area of interest for studying the impact of the project on the traditional leadership leading to development of the communities.

Political and social resources

Here the major challenge is to be able to capture the political and social resources related to the distribution of power, how the beneficiaries are getting to be interested and how they affect the public, leadership capabilities and capacities within the communities. This relates to political and social capabilities of the communities.

Individual, family and community changes

Here reference is made to factors that influence change on the day to day life of individuals, families and communities at large, including the building of family networks. The changes measures can vary from attitudes towards policies, perceptions of the realities around them; the perception of risks, health and safety.

Community resources

Community resources refers to the availability of collective services and the ability of the communities to use them. This also means the acquisition of resources by the families and the individuals.

These five categories of variable must then be further defined into specific areas of investigation in order to get as precisely as possible the changes at the different levels of development of the project.

- **Population characteristics** { Caste distribution, ethnic, religious distribution, specific nature of the population, their origin, CSP etc.}
- **Community and institutional structures** {voluntary associations, interest groups, levels of changes lived by the group, employment possibilities, employment equity, job opportunities, unemployment rate , income of the families etc.}
- **Political and social** [Distribution of power and authority, stakeholder and their influence, stakeholder and affected leadership capabilities, initiative taking and decision making].
- **Individual and family** {Perception of risk, health and safety, capacity to have access to political and social institutions, trust in these institutions, residential stability, attitude towards policy and projects; social and family networks, concerns about social wellbeing}
- **Community Resources** {Change of attitude towards community infrastructure, capacity to access the community infrastructure and use them, understanding of common interest and individual rights.

Defining variable stage-wise

Project	Planning +Policy Development	Construction and implementation	Operation and Maintenance	Ending and phase out
Community based MFI	The five social impact variable are the terms of reference			
	They need to be adapted to the nature of the program and to the stages	They need to be adapted to the program and to the stages	They need to be adapted to the program and to the stages	They need to be adapted to the program and to the stages
ODP	The five social impact variable are the terms of reference			
	They need to be adapted to the nature of the program and to the stages	They need to be adapted to the program and to the stages	They need to be adapted to the program and to the stages	They need to be adapted to the program and to the stages
Women's Development				

The social Impact process

Once the project variable matrix is elaborated the impact analysis will explore and identify the potential impacts on each of the variable identified in the matrix. Attention must be given to ensure that all critical areas are taken into due consideration.

The assessment is undertaken on the basis of six steps, which are logically sequential as follows :

1. Baseline conditions and the actions involved
2. Collect the data after having established the SIA matrix
3. Identify the range of probable Social impact
4. Case study of the groups concerned for collecting impacts and effects
5. Changes identified in terms of impact; Synthesis of the impacts
6. Mitigation plan for negative impacts and the monitoring plan

i. Baseline conditions and the actions involved

The baseline conditions consists of the existing situation, past trends, geographical area (environment) and its influence on the project. The human environment is taken into consideration from the perspective of historical background, political and social capabilities, culture and attitudes, characteristic of the population etc. This will give a clear picture of the human environment and must be taken into consideration before during and after in the project cycle.

In the same way it is also necessary to collect the views of the beneficiaries (subjects of the action) regarding their situation before, how the project affected them and the groups etc.

It will also be relevant to have the variables clearly identified or elaborated during these interviews. During the interviews, importance must be given to capture the number of people that will benefit and who will be influenced by these activities, the time taken for the impact, values of benefit both individual and collective, the reversibility of the impact and the consequences ; identification of the controversies or their absence over the changes.

These variable will help initiate the process and their elaboration must be given relevant time and due consideration.

Thus these variable will be based on the past and present situation. And this will be defined by going through project documents, interviews with the project proponent and the beneficiaries.

These data will also help elaborate the SIA matrix.

ii. Collect the data after having established the SIA matrix

The different variable and data will result in the SIA matrix and this forms the initial basis for the Impact Analysis. The data are collected through different forms of social investigation and interview and are fed into the SIA matrix. They will be later analyzed and serve as the first result, wherein it will be possible to identify the impacts and effects of the program on the individual and the community; it will contain all the needed information to measure the impact.

iii. Identification of the range of probable Social Impact

The analysis of the document, taken still further will give a certain number of indications about the probability for the event occurring, the benefits obtained, the relevance of the results for future

decision making, conflicts and controversy of interest within the community and among the individuals etc.

It will also give information on the sustainability of the impact and in case there are problems how they can be mitigated.

The identified social impact can be formulated in terms of predicted conditions ; the predicted impacts can be interpreted as the difference between the future with and without the proposed action and can be written in the following manner :

$$\text{Impact (I)} = \text{Future (with Action)} - \text{Future (without Action)}$$

Investigation of the SI on the beneficiaries can be obtained from a certain number of sources also :

1. The project proponent do have data collected through secondary sources and from the beneficiaries themselves.
2. Existence of previous experiences obtained through documents or from other reports
3. From the beneficiaries themselves, obtained through group work and interviews.

A certain number of methods can also be employed to collect first hand data :

- Testimony from the people
- Trend project methods
- scenarios

All these information, when analyzed and put together will give the necessary indication on the Social impact of the project on the beneficiaries in order to devise the projects and also to analyze the impacts at the end

iv. Case study of the groups

This is a vital element in the impact assessment and at the same time an important task to be undertaken. After having collected all the data, both secondary and direct, it is necessary to estimate how the affected people or the beneficiaries will respond in terms of attitude and actions.

This step is a means to estimate what the beneficiaries expected to do and how they achieved and what changes it has brought about in their lives individually and collectively. This is also the moment to capture the role of the leadership and how it contributed to these changes.

It is at this juncture it is possible to capture the indirect and cumulative impacts and see how they contribute to change the lives of the beneficiaries or of the program. Cumulative impact must be understood as an impact that adds to the other impact both past and present thus enhancing the probability of better results or better changes.

The success of this step will depend on the extent to which the people are involved and the method used to integrate them.

v. Identification of changes

The case study and the step 3 will provide ample information for identifying the changes which are the effects of the action on the groups. It is also necessary to clarify these changes in different groups in order to understand the integral dimension of the changes.

The changes identified can be positive or also negative. While the positive aspect allows possibility for going further and sustaining them, the negative ones must be tackled through a mitigation plan, in order to minimize their influence on the program or the community.

vi. Mitigation Plan

A social impact assessment is relevant only if it considers the mitigation of adverse impact. The impacts both positive and negative are both indissociable and are the two sides of the same coin. While the consideration of the impact gives a thorough understanding of the positive effects of the project, the negative impact gives an understanding of why the results are not up to optimum standards and also what makes the program suffer.

The understanding of the negative impact or the adverse effects must enable the project to mitigate these effects through readjustment of the program or even modify it.

A mitigation plan is a readjusted project design which taking into consideration the negative or adverse effects contributes to avoid or minimize the impact of these effects on the project. It must compensate by giving substitute solution or alternative facilities, resources or possibilities.

The mitigation strategy is to be devised by identifying the measures needed to overcome the negative effects. These measures must be thoroughly reflected and the right measure adopted while at the same time the sequence of the application clearly identified. The measures undertaken can be preceded by a risk analysis, which help define the order of sequence.

These measures are applicable for the project as well as the community members and this will be a function of where the necessity lies. When the measures involves the community, attention must be given to sensitize them and make them become active participants in the mitigation efforts.

Mitigation plans initiated in time contribute to reduce conflicts within the communities, avoiding failures and above all ensuring the success of the project.

Monitoring Plan

A project tracking method must be devised in order to monitor the progress, the impacts of the project and above all when the projects are subject to high vulnerability and uncertainties. Monitoring also gives the possibility for tracking the progress of the project with the stage by stage impact tracking.

This must be inbuilt into the program from the beginning itself, in order to track the progress systematically.

Principles of Impact Analysis

- I. When the impact analysis is planned, there is a need to clearly state the type of impacts that need to be considered. They can be resumed as categories under the following head related to the human environment. (social, cultural, economical and organizational).

- II. The second principle is to clearly define the way the impact will be considered , that is the situation after the implementation of the program, the situation before the launching of the program.
- III. The third is to involve the various stakeholders from the beginning itself, in order to have a more proactive participatory process
- IV. All the information and data must be systematically collected, documented and analyzed.
- V. A constant reflection has to take place to define the methodology adapted to the need of the context, the project and also the issues at stake.
- VI. The staff must be trained in the impact analysis in order to have them onboard for relevant contribution.

Conclusion

Impact analysis is an important means to understand the consequences of a decision or a project and measure them, in order, not only to appraise the effects, but also to take the opportunity to rectify or mitigate the negative impacts.

It is a methodology with a proactive perspective and must be systematically incorporated into the project design from the beginning itself.

It also gives the possibility to measure how the program has been effective and how it has contributed to succeed the empowerment process initiated in favor of the beneficiaries or the project itself or the organization.

The systematization of the impact assessment will give the opportunity to put into value the different aspects of the project which would have contributed to positive effects of the program and at the same time take the necessary steps to avoid risk situations. This in turn requires relevant tracking mechanism which must be inbuilt into the program design. In major programs it is always important to have a special role defined and assigned in order to take the process forward.

The Social Impact Analysis of development and organizational development programs is a means to enhance the quality standards and also a means to ensure accountability t the beneficiaries in terms of how the program was designed and the results that it is bringing about to the beneficiaries.

Social Impact is also a means to ensure knowledge management in the sense that the impact captured in terms of experience can be transformed into knowledge for future use in other similar circumstances.

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