

MSIA Reading Series 15

“PREVIEWING MSIA’S BOOK ON SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PRACTICES & APPLICATIONS IN MALAYSIA”

Panel Speaker:

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H.O. FASc**

Moderator:

**TPr Dr. Gobi Krishna a/l
Sinniah**

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Edited By

**Mohd Shahwahid H.O.,
Muhammad Rabani
M.R. (2023)**

PREVIEW by CHIEF EDITOR

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SEMBANG SIA
01/2023

14th JUNE 2023

WEDNESDAY

2.30 PM – 4.00PM

Speaker



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Malaysian Association of
Social Impact Assessment



Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessment
Registration No: 0425-05-7

1. Introduction

MSIA Reading Series 15 provides a preview of MSIA's latest book entitled "Social Impact Assessment: Practices & Applications In Malaysia". With this preview it is intended that SIA consultants, practitioners and enthusiasts are provided with a comprehensive guide and case studies of best practiced SIA reporting. The conversations during the '*Semabang SIA*' session covers:

- i. The purposes of MSIA in publishing the book;
- ii. The relevant scopes on best practices and case study selections, and how SIA consultants, practitioners and enthusiasts learn from the scope of topics discussed in the book;
- iii. Challenges in assembling writers on the wide-ranging topics and in coordinating and editing the write ups by various authors;
- iv. Plans for the next publication activity and how MSIA members contribute and share their experiences together.

2. Purposes of the Book Publication

The moderator TPr Dr Gobi Krishna congratulated MSIA on the publication of this book on the practices and applications of SIA in the country. As chief editor, Dr. Mohd Shahwahid attributed the publication of the book to the sincere and hard work of the co-editors comprising of Puan Sri Jahara Yahya, Dr. Kuppusamy Singaravelloo and Puan Herlina Ab Aziz. Together we are indebted to MSIA for allowing us to embark on this book project that has allowed us and the enthusiastic chapter contributors to share valuable experiences and insights on social impacts of proposed development projects in the country. Publishing a book that attempts to be comprehensive on a topic that is current and relevant to a rapidly developing nation certainly involves experiences that would be worthy of sharing with colleagues engaged as consultants, researchers, practitioners and individuals having interests in social impacts assessments (SIAs).

¹ Dr. Mohd Shahwahid H.O. is currently an EXCO of MSIA heading the Publication Sub-committee.

²Dr. Muhammad Rabani M.R. is research officer at MSR Inspire Sdn. Bhd.

Personally, the interests to produce this book is linked to our recollections on how we got involved with SIA consultation works in the first place. For us former academicians, it all started with our experience at university researching in social impact studies and with retirement to continue our career in this field that is very useful for the development of the country. It begun with our experience in conducting socio-economic analysis of significant project impacts in the environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes under the authorisation of the Department of the Environment. When the government, through Department of Rural and Urban Planning (PLANMalaysia) makes SIA a mandatory requirement for conditional approval of certain classified development projects, this makes it easier for us to move to SIA consultation. And we have not turn backwards after that. I always advise my academic friends to plan and prepare oneself prior to retirement so that they could remain productive after retirement.

As mentioned earlier, publishing this book add more meaning given that we too are SIA consultants. This endeavour enable us the opportunity to share the vast experiences gathered in SIA report preparation throughout the years covering a wide ranging type of proposed development projects. Further, it should be noted, SIA reports prepared have to go through a vetting and endorsement process whereby each SIA report, depending whether it is of Category SIA 1 and 2 or 3 according to the PLANMalaysia (2018) 2nd SIA Preparation Manual, have to be presented to the SIA Evaluation Committees either at PLANMalaysia Headquarters, Putrajaya or at the PLANMalaysia@State as the secretariats. The evaluation of each of the SIA reports would have to be evaluated by members of the SIA Evaluation Committee comprising of various relevant technical agencies supported by three appointed experts each from the Malaysian Institute of Planners (MIP), Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessments (MSIA) and from a serving academician in a local university. From several participations in these SIA Evaluation Committees, it was observed that many of the SIA reports presented as recommended in the evaluation reports to the SIA Evaluation Secretariat. Hence, MSIA is obligated to help our fellow members and other interested individuals raise their SIA reporting efficacies to the level satisfactory to the SIA Evaluation Committee secretariat.

In this regard, this book published by MSIA has been able to compile many SIA reporting best practices among its members and from invited writers. It is our feeling that this book would serve as a good reference for quality SIA report preparation in Malaysia among consultants,

researchers and interested public individuals. supaya ahli-ahli MSIA ada reference untuk menyediakan a good SIA report. Hence, as EXCO of MSIA, particularly holding the portfolio of publication, we are obligated to produce this book.

Further, it is essential to note that MSIA intended that book be meaningful to its members and wanted it to be inclusive. Although the editorial team felt that we could handle the writings independently, but in the interests of MSIA members we opened up and invited others to contribute as chapter authors as well. This resulted in the more than 500 pages book covering an extensive issues in SIA preparation with a wide-ranging case studies of proposed developmental projects.

3. Scope of the SIA Book

The moderator TPr Dr Gobi Krishna has informed that MSIA has in the past been disseminating published works on SIA. It is acknowledged that MSIA has its first edition book on SIA as early as 2009. This new 2023 book version has upgraded SIA dissemination to a more practical and usable level based on actual applications and case studies. Dr Gobi was intrigued at the manner the book was carved out. The scopes of the book and how the editorial team was able to split the various scopes into nineteen (19) chapters. Obviously, it must have been well-thought out. It must have taken a long time in particular at the process of splitting the chapters and to later merge them back into relevant sections to make a complete book.

As mentioned previously, apart from being consultants, many of the editorial team were formerly professors and held administrative positions at the universities. Academicians have a knack for writing and are often stimulated at the opportunity to write, publish and disseminate ideas and experiences for sharing with the public. The opportune time arrived when at the 2022 MSIA Annual General Meeting, the Director General who officiated the event relayed previous publications on SIA including that of the first SIA book by MSIA in 2009 and his anticipation for a new updated version. The MSIA Publication Sub-committee rose to the challenge and mulled upon the idea. The MSIA social impact assessment book project was initiated and the thinking process of what pertinent content to be included, partitioned and directed towards a common goal. Hence, one year later the book is published with five parts containing nineteen chapters.

The first part must introduce the subject matter as a prelude to the parts and chapters, that follow in the book which encompasses a wide range of topics related to Social Impact

Assessment. It has to provide a good understanding of the fundamentals, guidelines and protocols, best practices, issues and challenges in undertaking social impact assessment, especially in relation to development projects. Hence, it was felt that we start with an overview of SIA practices first at the international scene to be followed with that in Malaysia.

SIA has gained significance beginning in the mid-1980s, with stringent measures being imposed by international funding organisations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO), to require SIA for most large-scale projects, requiring strict social and economic monitoring and social assessment protocols to assess the socio-economic effects of grants/loans awarded.

SIA in Malaysia is still recent and in its evolutionary stage, and essentially is attempting to adopt international principles and frameworks. An overview is essential to give comprehensive outlook of the state of SIA applications in the country. It is necessary to ensure that assessments of social impacts follow up to date guidelines accepted globally and by PLANMalaysia as the agency that would evaluate and endorse the SIA reports.

With the realisation that as up to the time of publication, consultants have been adhering to the Second Edition PLANMalaysia (2018) manual guide to SIA report preparation. Yet we were aware that at around the corner PLANMalaysia was about to launch the 2023 SIA report preparation manual (*Panduan Perlaksanaan Penilaian Impak Sosial untuk Projek Pembangunan PPSIA*). Yet the deliberations in the chapters of the book by various authors have been guided by the 2018 manual. Hence, with permission and obtaining necessary information from PLANMalaysia a second chapter in the book provided a preview then of the PPSIA 2023 SIA report preparation manual whereby a comparison between the 2018 and 2023 manual versions were described, compared and updated. In so doing while the book provided issues, applications and case studies guided by 2018 manual, readers would be in the know where changes, modifications and updating would be required in the future when they are to be guided by the PPSIA (2023) version.

These two chapters are:

Chapter 1: Overview of SIA Practices in Malaysia by Jahara Yahaya, Kuppusamy Singaravelloo & Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman

Chapter 2: A Preview of the 2023 Guidelines of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for Development Projects by Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman & Jahara Yahaya

The second part of the book is to tackle MSIA's concerns of ensuring quality reports being prepared by SIA consultants by adhering closely to the steps stipulated in PLANMalaysia's SIA Guidelines Manual. Hence, the chapters in Part II of this book comprised of solicited articles by qualified and competent SIA consultants and assessors to share their knowledge and experiences as to what constitute Best Practices in preparing SIA reports for submission to PLANMalaysia.

Four chapters were presented namely:

Chapter 3: The importance and need of land use plans of the site surrounding the proposed project site by Abdul Rahman Mohammed, Gobi Krishna Sinniah, Nai Chun Wei & Azmariana Azman.

Chapter 4: Proper selection of the zone of influence (ZOI) to ensure both direct and indirect impacted stakeholders are adequately engaged for a comprehensive impact assessment by Herlina Ab Aziz, Gobi Krishna Sinniah & Kuppusamy Singaravelloo

Chapter 5: Social Impacts of Coastal Zone Projects by Casey Ng Keat Chuan, Gobi Krishna Sinniah, Jahara Yahaya & Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman. This chapter acts as an illustration to attaining comprehensive impact assessments, a generic case example of the social impacts of coastal zone projects on the fishing communities.

Chapter 6: Improving Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) from the perspectives of SIA Review Panel Members by Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman, Kuppusamy Singaravelloo & Jahara Yahaya.

The above chapters in this Part II are intended to provide some guidance for SIA consultants:

- (a) To ensure that development project proposed are in line with land use plans and government policies;
- (b) To conduct effective assessment by ensuring direct and indirect impacted stakeholders are engaged and comprehensive data collection and analysis are undertaken in their SIA report;
- (c) To provide pragmatic and implementable mitigation measures; and
- (d) To recommend manageable monitoring assessments by the project proponent and relevant agencies.

Part Three is dedicated to presenting case studies that attempts to showcase how each analysis predicts a set of social impacts especially to the stakeholders and communities. While some of the case studies mirror real case studies, almost all present real experiences of the consultants involved in identifying and assessing the social impacts on the communities. Six chapters have been carefully selected to present a variety of cases studies involving infrastructure projects, which range from highway development, land reclamation, a cross-country railway project, off-river water storage project, to a mixed development and finally one that exemplifies the use of SIA in the forestry sector of Sabah and Sarawak.

The case studies presented in this Part will be able to help particularly future SIA consultants, obtain some knowledge, and guidance in preparing SIA reports for varied types of projects. The chapters are nevertheless not as detailed as they should be as they were meant to present just a brief account of the issues and lessons to be learned, and not to give the full details of the respective SIA Reports.

These chapters on case studies are:

Chapter 7 Highway Development: Going the Extra Miles for Social Safeguards by Casey Ng Keat Chuan

Chapter 8 Coastal Reclamation Projects by Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman

Chapter 9 SIA on Rail Infrastructure by Gobi Krishna Sinniah, Kuppusamy Singaravelloo & Herlina Ab. Aziz

Chapter 10 SIA on Off-River Storage (ORS) by Kuppusamy Singaravelloo & Gobi Krishna Sinniah

Chapter 11 SIA for Mixed Use Development Projects by Azfizan Aziz & Izatul Yussof

Chapter 12 Social Dimensions of Forest Related Developments and the Visibilities of Forest Dependent Native Communities in Sabah and Sarawak by Gaim James Lunkapis & Haslina Hashim

SIA has the objectives of assessing projects, programmes and policies that promote societal well-being. In that respect SIA has common objectives to related assessments that could be used to analyse social impacts. This is acknowledged and Part Four provides six chapters these other assessment methodologies, such as:

Chapter 13 Logical framework analysis (LFA) of social impacts of projects as sometimes required by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU). This chapter is written by Mohd Hafiz Ghazali, Syahir Irfan Mohamad Shaharudin & Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman

Chapter 14 Socio-Economic Analysis within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of projects in Sabah written by Gaim James Lunkapis

Chapter 15 Economic Valuation and Cost Benefit Analysis by Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman, Awang Noor Abdul Ghani & Kamaruzaman Haji Ujang. This chapter discusses economic valuation of significant impacts within selected Scheduled II EIA reports of projects of the DOE; and social and economic cost benefit analysis (CBA) either incorporated in a bigger report such as the integrated river basin management (IRBM) of the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID); or stand alone CBA report of selected development projects as required by the State Economic Planning Unit (SEPU).

Chapter 16 Sustainable Development Goals Compliance as a Means to Greening the Economy for Wellbeing and Prosperity by Abdul Rahim Abdul Samad & Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman

Chapter 17 Social Impact Assessment of Oil Palm Plantation Sector in the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) Certification Scheme by Sabarinah Marzuky, Noorainie Awang Anak, Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman & Azmariana Azman. This chapter elaborates on the role of Certification Schemes for palm oil particularly Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) & MSPO for the oil palm small-holding and estate plantations, and palm oil mills where Standards with social impact repercussions have been set for compliance in order to be certified.

Chapter 18 Social Impact Monitoring in Sustainable Forest Management by Khairuddin Perdan & Zulnaidah Manan. This chapter demonstrates the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS) for forestry activities where Principles and Indicators with social impact repercussions have been set for compliance in order to be certified.

Part Five with Chapter 19 concludes this book by discussing the prospects, potential and future directions of SIA in Malaysia. Several measures such as the new guidelines (PPSIA), the Competency Programme, the Consultant Registration Scheme and the Code of Ethics for SIA practioners, have been planned/ undertaken to strengthen SIA implementation and elevate it to a higher level. It is hoped that such measures, coupled with relevant policies and programmes and appropriate legislation, will ensure the future viability and relevance of SIA in the country.

Chapter 19 Future Directions of SIA Implementation and Way Forward is written by Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman, Jahara Yahaya & Kuppusamy Singaravelloo.

4. Challenges in assembling writers on the wide-ranging topics and in coordinating and editing the write ups by various authors

The above apparent challenges mentioned by Dr Gobi, were actually not. MSIA has always maintained the need for inclusivity. With that interest in mind, we made it a point to invite other consultants and individuals to contribute a chapter on a topic that they are competent with. Having planned the five parts of the book, particularly on Parts 2 (best practices), Part 3 (case studies) and Part 4 (Other related social impact assessment methodologies), we adopted three approaches to identifying and soliciting writers.

First, at the suggestion of Pn Herlina to as much as possible include relevant topics in the MSIA Reading Series that were already in web-pages of MSIA, a total of four chapters covering topics on SIA Best Practices were selected.

Second, together with Dr Kuppusamy a total of six wide-ranging development project areas were identified and consultants that are known to conducting SIA reports in that proposed development projects were selected.

Third, as mentioned SIA reporting is not completely new in the country and MSIA wanted to emphasise that. There are assessment methodologies having similar objectives of promoting societal well-being. Hence Part 4 have identified six applications of such alternative approaches and writers were identified who willingly contributed.

Given the wide coverage of SIA, Pn Sri Jahara felt that the editorial team managed to handle challenging task to organise all the wide ranging topics to make the book coherent. The book contains contributions with various case studies that are real (yet because of copy right issues they could not be specifically displayed), different projects, different circumstances and various experiences in various sectors. The challenge is how do we make it coherent, that is where experience matters.

In the editorial team, three of us were formerly academicians who have dedicated much of our time in editing books and proceedings, as well as gone through the process of our own writings being edited by other esteemed editors. Much have been learned. Hence, we have the patience of editing the various chapters submitted including a few being our own. Interestingly we too

are to receive comments and corrections from other fellow editors from the team. We made the corrections and silently laughed it out.

But to not make light of the hard and dedicated work of the editorial team, it should also be pointed out that there are elements of sincere deeds and contributions to nation building being displayed by the editorial team. Out of fairness, the editors went the extra mileage to make corrections on both factual and grammatical errors on behalf of the writers in the interests of getting the book published on time. Many of the writers were very thankful at the efforts made by the editorial team to facilitate the editing and revising processes. Only when the corrections involved factual errors were the writers consulted for the necessary corrections.

There are also other challenges raised by writers that came from a broad range of background. SIA reporting involves both planning and social science disciplines. Many consultants have been used to technical reporting and may not have contributed writings meant to be published in a book. A book on SIA would have to be delivered in an approach that are not too technical eg. over-emphasising planning, mapping, sampling procedures and statistical significance. The book is meant for wide audiences, hence the need for balance so as not to deter the interests of the readers. This balance was attempted by the editorial team.

An important challenge faced by the editorial team was in the timeline. As mentioned earlier, the book project was mooted after the 2022 MSIA's AGM, and it took us almost 9 months to edit, and write. Planning the book content and soliciting writers took 2 months, editing and revising took another 5 months. Obtaining forewords and finalising table of contents another half a month. That left a month and a half to deal with the publisher, book formatting, further editing of the book dummy and finally printing. Getting it published within nine months was indeed a feat.

Finally, the challenge is to produce a book of quality, where there are consistencies from one chapter to the other. The book actually have more than 19 chapters and it have been reduced. More important, usually academic books we only have 5 or 6 chapters. We had actually put 3 different books altogether into one. Hence, it is the feeling of Dr Kuppusamy that this book is actually a marriage between academic and technical writing. We conform to make it a small technical writing. Biggest challenge the editorial team faced given the time frame, is the big word quality so that it would not tarnish the name of MSIA.

5. Future Plans for the next publication activity and how MSIA members can contribute and share their experiences together.

It has come to our knowledge that this book is not only a reference among local consultants, planners and interested individuals, but has been referred overseas especially by officials from various international organisations. This book is certainly a concerted effort of collecting local Malaysian SIA applications, practices and case studies all compiled into one source for easy reference.

MSIA realised that this book project is not an end but the beginning of more publications to come to be organized by the Publication Sub-committee. We will continue the very informative discourses among our members and invited knowledgeable public individuals, that we hold especially the ‘Sembang Pagi Sabtu (SPS) MSIA’ and ‘Hard Talk MSIA’. We may rebrand and diversify the topics to encourage continuous improvements in the SIA reporting in Malaysia. The target is to reach out and participate in international collaborations with reputable organisations.

Internally we need to reinforce the implementation of mitigation measures embedded in the Social Impact Management Plans (SIMPs) recommended in the SIA reports approved by the SIA Secretariats at PLANMalaysia@Headquarters and PLANMalaysia@State. Project proponents have to be encouraged to implement and self-monitor the various mitigation measures in accordance to the key performance indicators (KPIs) stipulated in the SIMPs.

Pn Suzlyna of PLANMalaysia Headquarters informs that the PPSIA is planning monitoring activities along the lines of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) implementations. The EIA is looked upon as the big brother. In the PPSIA, there are already in place plans for monitoring reporting adopting self-monitoring and reporting by the project proponent to the SIMP monitoring committee. There is a mechanism already in place.

As for future publication activities, MSIA is already making plans for our next book publication and members will again be approached to share and contribute their writings. It should be noted that MSIA EXCO is very supportive in our publication drive. The book that we had published in a way is the end product – the development project SIA best practice reporting and case studies. Presenting report findings while very informative may only provide a mirage of the effort and work that would be needed to reach to that polished state of the report. Seasoned

SIA consultants know that conducting proper SIA is one difficult process needing a systematic approach. Starting from screening, scoping, data methodology, whether or not they need to change the nature of the project, and to quantitatively the level of the impacts using appropriate scoring methodology.

Hence, one potential book project being planned is to produce a book on the SIA preparation processes itself from screening all the way to the preparation of the SIMP. It is a sort of a SIA methodology book to answer the enquiry of why not write about the process itself. For example scoping, what processes are involved?, how do you approach the potentially affected community?, and how to make the affected stakeholders interested to participate? It is something of a skill, the nitty gritty of how to actually go through the research process and eventually making an effective SIA presentation to the evaluation secretariat. The latter point is most telling. As a consultant, one may think that a good job has been completed when the report is submitted to PLANMalaysia. However, upon presentation, one by one of the report elements are being quarried. Certainly sharing the elements being looked at and evaluated by the SIA panel evaluators would be an essential chapter in the future book endeavour being planned. Another component is on the best practice approached to engage with the affected communities via in depth interviews, focus group discussions and individual surveys by questionnaires. In a nut shell, we see opportunities for seasoned consultants and MSIA members to contribute in sharing their varied experiences in the coming book project. The book may not be as long as this book. Suffice it be just seven to ten chapters. MSIA Publication Subcommittee is open to new ideas on what would be worthy to publish. Whats essential quoting Pn Herlina, MSIA President:

“MSIA is trying to promote greater contributions of members into SIA knowledge sharing to the public at large. There is a dearth of SIA references locally, and we have to look from abroad, even though the social impacts from development project are felt locally. With more local publications on SIA made available, will hasten the mainstreaming of the consciousness of social impact management in the education system and work environment. When this goal is achieved, we then can thank Allah that we have accomplished what we set to do.”

Conclusion

This Reading Series sequel has provided a preview of MSIA's book on "Social Impact Assessment: Practices & Applications In Malaysia" with the intention of providing a comprehensive guide and case studies of best practiced SIA reporting. The book has covered various aspects on SIA particularly on state of affairs in SIA implementation both abroad and locally, the relevant scopes on best practices supported by various case studies to learn from. Various challenges in assembling writers on the wide-ranging topics and in coordinating and editing the write ups have been deliberated. A peep at MSIA future publication plans have also been shared.

Reference

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Acknowledgment

The contributions and deliberations of the panelist and participants during the MSIA Sembang SIA Session Series 01/2023 session are very much appreciated.

Disclaimer

In the spirit of inclusivity and transparency, MSIA is open and frequently invites experts of various fields and stakeholders to share their perspectives on how the SIA processes can be more effective. Their views are analysed and reported. Any views and assumptions expressed however are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect that of MSIA.