

MSIA Reading Series 23

“PREVIEWING MSIA’S (2025) BOOK ON SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES: PRACTICES & APPLICATIONS IN MALAYSIA”

Panel Speakers:

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Moderator:

TPr Dr. Azfizan Aziz

15 July 2025

Edited by **Mohd Shahwahid H.O.¹, Kuppusamy Singaravelloo² and Azfizan Aziz³ (2025)**

MSIA PODCAST **LIVE**

Preview of MSIA’s (2025) Publication

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES: PRACTICES & APPLICATIONS IN MALAYSIA

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02:30 PM - 4:00 PM
Tuesday, 15 July 2025

1 CPD POINT
Social Impact Assessment (SIA)
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1 Introduction

MSIA Reading Series 23 provides a preview to MSIA's latest book titled '*Social Impact Assessment Methodologies: Practices & Applications in Malaysia*' edited by Kuppusamy Singaravelloo, Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman, Jahara Yahaya and Gobi Krishna Sinniah (2025) that bears ISBN 978-629-98279-1-7. This book was launched by YBhg Datuk TPr Dr Alias bin Rameli, Director General, PLANMalaysia during the Annual General Meeting on 31 May 2025. The 255-page book is broadly divided into three parts. The first part introduces the theoretical underpinnings over seven chapters on methodology, while the second part is dedicated to case studies that runs over eight chapters that illustrate how methodologies are applied in their respective studies. The last part concludes the outcome of the book.

2 Motivations of the Publication of the Book

The moderator first introduced that MSIA published a book entitled '*Social Impact Assessment: Practices & Applications in Malaysia*' in 2023 that was sold out and now a sequel book entitled '*Social Impact Assessment Methodologies: Practices & Applications in Malaysia*' was produced.

Moderator: Why was this latest MSIA book released and what was the impetus for the publication of the book?

Dr Kuppusamy: This current book is the third book published by MSIA, with the first one published in 2009 during the leadership of Asmah Ahmad Dr Dahlia, and the second was published in 2023. The idea to produce this current volume actually arose from the one published in 2023, which captured the A to Z of conducting SIA studies and reporting in Malaysia. In addition, many training workshops conducted by MSIA trainers including by the editors identified there were still weaknesses in the part of methodology in SIA reports, but at the same time, it was noticed the methodological aspects have improved quite a bit over time. An analogy of the Highland Towers incident many years ago can help explaining this. SIA studies may be rejected purely based on serious weaknesses in methodological approach undertaken by consultants. Methodology would be the foundation to the study similar to undercurrent movements that weakened the base of the Highland Towers leading to the collapse. As the 2023 book only touched a certain extent only on methodology issues, it was felt a more in-depth dissection of methodological aspects would help address these issues. A separate volume solely on methodology would illustrate the way forward to take note of and explore deeper into methodological issues in SIA.

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: The idea of coming out with this book on methodologies of social impact assessment (SIA) first surfaced on realising then that there is a dearth of literature and references on how SIA, specifically of development projects, should be carried out. Hence, this edited book is a testament to MSIA's unwavering commitment to provide an invaluable source of reference for a wide audience of practitioners, academicians and researchers involved in SIA in Malaysia. It provides insight and contemporary

understanding of the fundamentals and methodologies in carrying out SIA. Methodology aspects required more guidance, the steps and the processes involved in screening, scoping, primary and secondary zone of impacts, impacted parties, sampling, data collection methods, analytical methods, determination of median scores, severity and probability values which showed vast areas that should be given due attention. Thus, this justified the publication of a dedicated volume on methodology.

The content the book has been carefully conceived to address the full range of the principles, concepts, frameworks and challenges in SIA methodologies. The last four procedures in the SIA process, i.e. redefining project options, mitigation, monitoring and auditing, have been deliberately left out from the scope of this book.

The book also comprises a collection of case studies by leading SIA practitioners selectively assigned by the editors. These case studies highlight the applications and practices of SIA process across a wide range of development projects, including coastal reclamation, highway, oil and gas, waste management, housing, workers quarters and columbarium. It should be noted that the contributions of case studies by the authors have been edited for clarity and conformity with the guidelines set by the editors. Once these were established, the next task was to identify experts for the respective disciplines.

Dr Azfizan: How is this book related to the publication of the first MSIA book?

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: The idea of this latest book came about from the realisation that the first book of *Social Impact Assessment: Practices and Applications in Malaysia* (Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman, Jahara Yahaya, Kuppusamy Singaravelloo & Herlina Ab Aziz, 2023) has covered the concepts and practice of SIA in Malaysia. Hence, there was a need to elaborate into the methods adopted for the steps in the SIA report preparation process up to Step 4 which is the calculation of the Impact Significance scores. Because a review of the literature suggests the need for further deliberations on the analytical steps, especially during the scoping exercise involving the identifications of social impacts, zones of influence (ZOI) and stakeholders, sample size determination, questionnaire framing and surveying, data analysis, determination of median severity and probability levels of the social impacts and eventually the computation of weighted impact significance scores. These elements were specifically highlighted in this latest book for the guidance of SIA report providers.

Dr Kuppusamy: Many applicants to be Ordinary Members of MSIA have also shown that a significant proportion do not have the strength of methodology nor have their curricula at university included any subject on methodology. This explained part of the weakness in the methodological framework of their SIA reports.

3 Editing and Publication Processes

Dr Azfizan: What is the role of editors?

Dr Kuppusamy:

- (i) The Editors prepared a thorough plan of getting the right authors for the respective fields/areas, strict timeline (to meet the 7-8 months deadline to publish), the role of each editor, and the like. At times, the editors met to deliberate further related matters. The editors are themselves also chapter writers. It was tough to prepare the chapters for Part I of the book and most of the editors were only involved in chapters in Part I, and resorted to place importance of other writers in Part II (Case studies).
- (ii) When the main author for each chapter has been identified, the Chief Editor sent an official invitation followed by the format details to be followed by the authors. The main author is required to submit an acceptance letter of offer back to the Chief Editor.
- (ii) Each submission from chapter writers goes through two reviewers (and at times three when Chief Editor is also included) who are among the four editors. Each of the reviewers were given a stipulated set of time to complete the reviewing task. The Chief Editor then collates the comments, combines them where possible and sends them to the Chapter writer concerned, and given strict schedules to respond, but not forced to accept each and every comment given. The authors were given opportunity to improve the chapter further but must follow the structure given by editors.
- (iii) Once the revised chapter is obtained, it goes back to the two reviewers to examine the changes and the structure of the chapter again. This process goes perhaps one or two times to ensure that the quality of the content is satisfactory.
- (iv) The manuscripts go through strict formatting process to ensure consistency.

When all the manuscripts and the preamble sections were ready, it was then the role of the Chief of Publication Committee to obtain quotations from renowned publishers or printers. The editors proposed the number of copies to be printed, and with that the Chief of Publication Committee presented proposals to the Executive Committee on the choice of printer. Once approval was obtained, it was then all about dealing with the printer.

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: The editors wanted to ensure that experienced members of MSIA are given the chance to contribute to the book. They also agreed that each writer has different background and style in their writing.

Dr Azfizan: Since the book has many chapter contributors and four editors, what could be the collaboration process between the editors and the chapter contributors in this book?

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: The authors were very enthusiastic and excited of publishing their experiences on the methodological practices in the first four steps of the SIA report, and the book has provided them with platform to do so. Case studies contributors who have prepared various development projects covering various sectors were also eager to share

their methodological experiences with other practitioners. The case studies were to show the uniqueness of the impacts being faced by stakeholders because of the variate development projects. The case studies clearly show the differences in the issues, ZOIs, impacted groups, and the weights on the impact among stakeholders (if applied), ZOIs and methods of soliciting information and data for the calculation of impact significance scores.

As for the existence of a strong collaboration amongst the editors and authors, it was as anticipated. The majority of the revised chapters have abided to the reviews with positive responses. However, there were limited cases that needed further rounds of reviewing and editing before finalising the chapters.

Dr Azfizan: How were consistency of writing styles managed, and whether there was a great task to edit for uniformity?

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: Each contributing author has a different style of writing and should be respected, as long as it follows the requested format and content flow. Sometimes further editing was necessary for uniformity. Fortunately, we did not receive any objections to the improvement suggestions. Chapter contributors are professionals themselves, and they also understood the need for uniformity to publish a quality book.

4 Content & Theme of the Book

Dr Azfizan: What is the main theme of this book and why was this theme important and highlighted now?

Dr Kuppusamy: The main theme was “methodology and its procedures”. The focus was not only on theories but also more importantly on applications. The book emphasises on the skills in using methodology for SIA.

Dr Azfizan: How different is the content of this book from the MSIA’s 2023 publication?

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: This book has gone beyond conceptual exposure but has zeroed-in into the methodological implementations of the steps in the SIA report preparation process up to Step 4, which is the calculation of the impact significance scores. Specifically, there were details given in each Step. For example, in the scoping process chapter, the editors recommended preliminary site visits, referrals and specific initial engagements with stakeholders to identify issues and impacts. Authors were asked to prepare a checklist of items to inquire during the preliminary engagements, and to record the issues raised and other initial feedbacks for use in determining and categorising these potential issues into the relevant social impact variables and social change processes. These lists of impacts were to be check-listed according to the occurrences within the ZOIs and among stakeholder groups. The intended outcome was to obtain a Social Impact Matrix and an Interest – Authority Quadrant Matrix.

Another illustration in the chapter on the determination of impact severity and probability for the computation of impact significance score, the importance of weighted average values of these impact parameters highlighted include (i) among impact recipients or stakeholders; (ii) between primary vs. secondary ZOI; and (iii) between sources of information: questionnaire vs. focus group discussion (FGD) vs. in-depth interview vs. consultant's views.

Dr Azfizan: What were challenges faced?

Dr Kuppusamy: The chapter writers were encouraged to provide a literature of the discipline studied, that provided citations and the list of references. One of the biggest challenges include chapter writer's conformity to writing style and format. This aspect took so much of the editors' time which each of the four editors took turns to check, this time again solely on format, title of tables and figures, and ensuring that the figures and tables are referred to in the paragraphs preceding them. Furthermore, there were emphasis made to check that references are cited in the chapters concerned, and some authors provided a bibliography, not references, as required. As such, the Chief Editor had to search for full details of the valid references but often enough returned back to chapter writers to find and complete them.

While the limit of chapter size is 12 to 13 pages on 1.5-spaced setting, some chapters submitted came close to 30 pages. Instead of asking the chapter writers to reduce the number of pages, the editors took the trouble to suggest areas that can be reduced towards that intent. Though only two or three chapters involved this problem, regular checking and communicating brought the chapters concerned to the size set.

Since the Chief Editor only communicated with the main author of the respective chapters, there were instances where names of authors were incorrectly spelt out. To this the Chief Editor had to check from various sources, but one error in name of one of the authors were identified after the book was launched. Another challenge was that one or two originally chapters have had to be dropped as the authors concerned pulled out due to their heavy commitment on their works or did not succeed to get the permission to cite the project from the project proponent. The final challenge was to sit together with the type setter/printer at least three rounds of reviewing the mock-up of the book.

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: The Publication Committee received different ideas and being the chairperson, one has to consider the views of others, including the dimensions of the book. The other challenge was to have a wide range of disciplines.

5 Closing Remarks and Questions Raised

Dr Azfizan: In conclusion, who are the target audiences for this book?

Dr Kuppusamy: The previous has already promoted the ability of MSIA in guiding consultants. So, it was not surprising that immediately after the book launch in 2025, there were already requests by some agencies including PLANMalaysia for copies of the current book. In addition, training workshops participants were given complimentary copies of the 2023 book. MSIA also targeted at university students taking SIA as their subjects while the university libraries were also provided a copy each. Thus, the target of this current book is social researchers, SIA and EIA consultants, university students and government officers involved in social development and planning.

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: Books on SIA in Malaysia are quite rare. This book is targeted at consultants and researchers who need to be skilled in ensuring that the methodology of each step in the preparation of an SIA report is accurate and gives priority to the affected parties.

However, it is also understood that there are those who are new and have not yet familiarise themselves in understanding the process of preparing SIA reports, and some are more comfortable reading books in Bahasa Malaysia, so a translation book will be worked on at the end of this year to be published early next year.

Dr Azfizan: What do you hope the readers will feel or need to learn after reading this book?

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: On behalf of the editors and writers of the chapters in this book, it is hoped that the readers will accept the recommendations of the methodological methods and try to follow them in practice. To the readers, especially the SIA practitioners, it is hoped that this book helps to enhance greater comprehension of methodological concerns which in turn would inspire and guide them in their future SIA undertakings. The editors were also happy to receive feedback on the work of the writers in this book.

It is recognised that this book is a combined team effort of several contributors whose dedication and perseverance to complete their respective chapters, all of whom are gratefully acknowledged. The editors are also grateful to the President and Exco members of MSIA and all those who, in one way or the other, have lent support and encouragement to the Editors' efforts in coming out with this book.

Dr Kuppusamy: All four editors have enjoyed preparing this product. The onus is on the readers to apply where possible, and apply flexibility in the application of techniques suggested in the chapters.

6 Questions and Answer Session

Question 1 (Norisham bin Md Saman): *The book advocates the sampling approach, introduces zoning and employment categories, which I found were not in the original Krejcie and Morgan formula (1970). What was the rationale for this adaptation?*

Dr Kuppusamy: First and foremost, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) model is only one of the few methods that can be used to determine sample size. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was originally applied on one particular homogenous population. In real practice, SIA studies involve heterogenous situations and characteristics. For instance, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) or any other sampling formula must be prepared for housing units, commercial units, industrial units all separately.

Dr Azfizan: Any future plans on publication?

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: It is likely that MSIA may produce a hands-on book on SIA so as to become more attractive and welcoming more interested parties to the book.

Dr Azfizan: Any plan to reprint the 2023 book since it has been completely sold out?

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: There is no plan of reprinting it, since this current 2025 volume also covers a sizeable part of the former book.

Dr Kuppusamy: MSIA took the approach that any new publication must be better than the previous one in terms of its coverage and contents.

Question 2 (Norisham bin Md Saman): *Malaysian SIA relies heavily on surveys and FGDs, despite PPSIA's call for cumulative assessment and methodological integration (as on page 36 of PPSIA). However, key scholars advocate triangulation and technical analysis that include technical tools like scenario analysis, GIS, threshold analysis in identifying, predicting evaluating impacts. Do you consider the current approach a significant limitation?*

Dr Kuppusamy: EIA has taken almost 40 years, but SIA has only experienced about eight years. In the long past, there were only surveys, or only qualitative methods, now have moved into having both quantitative and qualitative approaches towards supporting triangulation of data obtained from both approaches. Triangulation method expects results to be about the same coming from both quantitative and qualitative approaches. SIA in Malaysia would require few more years for further tightening, refinements and improvements. Along the way, developers will not be happy as SIA is often seen to add cost to their development project, and SIA practitioners have experienced this displeasure from their developer clients. It is unfortunate to experience this as developers have somehow accepted the periods for EIA but not for SIA studies.

Question 3 (Almalikii): *Are there plans to extend similar SIA approaches to Borneoan states?*

Dr Mohd Shahwahid: In general, MSIA has conducted a few training workshops at Sabah and Sarawak. The adoption of SIA at both states depends very much on both states to emulate and implement the peninsula model.

Dr Kuppusamy: There has been increased interest by both states to look at the PPSIA model. In fact, they have applied SIA in forestry and plantation sectors and oil refinery sector as well. Given some time, both states may be guided towards legalising their SIA studies.

Thank you to all editors including Pn Sri Jahara Yahaya and Dr Gobi Krishna Sinniah, as well as the past Exco Members for having given full support towards publishing this book. Thank you too to Datuk TPr Dr Alias Rameli who have given his Foreword besides launched this book.

Dr Azfizan: Thank you to all the four editors and also the chapter writers for the session today.

Maximum number of online participants: 78 persons

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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.