

**Public Participation in Environmental Decisionmaking:  
USEPA/UNDP Demonstration Environmental Impact Assessment Project  
in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast of Ukraine**

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Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is an important tool in designing cost effective projects that prevent unnecessary damage to the environment. The Demonstration EIA Project (DEIAP) described in this paper is a cooperative effort of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and UNDP, supported by numerous agencies and organizations within Ukraine. Funding for this project was provided by USAID.

USEPA's strategic partner for the project is the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine (MENR) which is responsible for reviewing environmental assessment statements under Ukrainian law (*ecologichna expertyza*).

The goal of the project is to demonstrate that internationally recognized EIA procedures will work in Ukraine and that this type of EIA will benefit business development, the community, and the environment.

There has been concern that additional technical analysis and a mandatory public involvement might lead to undesirable delays in project design and implementation. Support from Ukrnafta Oil Production Company demonstrated that at least some Ukrainian businesses understand the importance of EIA and look for public support of their activities. The project - an expansion of oil and gas production at Pasichna oil field in the Nadvirna rayon of Ivano-Frankivsk oblast -- was selected because it was supported strongly by local authorities at both oblast and rayon levels, as well as by village councils.

All stakeholders were invited to work on a Steering Committee for the project to provide recommendations to project implementers and to share the lessons learned during the project execution with their respective agencies. The Ukrainian Parliament Committee on Environmental Policy is also represented at the Steering Committee.

It was decided from the beginning that the DEIAP, as well as the resulting EIA document, would comply with Ukrainian regulations, but that additional U.S. EIA procedures would be used provided that they did not contradict Ukrainian legislation. Ivano-Frankivsk State Technical University of Oil and Gas (IFSTUOG) was contracted by Ukrnafta to carry out the EIA for the Pasichna oil field. IFSTUOG is licensed to work on EIAs according to Ukrainian regulations.

Technical assistance on various aspects of EIA such as collecting and analyzing background environmental information, alternatives analysis, and public participation, which are commonly used in USA but are new to Ukraine, were provided by US EPA experts Charles Brasher, Denise Gavlinsky, Wes Wilson, Mike Wireman. The UNDP office in Kyiv together with a Ukrainian NGO Pylyp Orlyk Institute of Democracy provided operational support for the DEIAP in Ukraine.

The first important step in conducting a western-style EIA in Ukraine was an intensive five-day training course "*Principles of EIA*" conducted by the EPA team. This training brought together 20 representatives from different sectors, including oil company staff, governmental

and local officials, scientists, media, and NGOs. Later some participants of the training have worked on the EIA for the Pasichna oil field. A team of Ukrainian facilitators was awarded certificates to deliver the *Principles of EIA* training course and delivered the training to the Ukrnafta personnel.

Public participation throughout the EIA process is a key component of western style EIAs. Following successful American examples, a public advisory council for the DEIAP was established in Nadvirna. Membership includes environmentalists, educators, journalists, and NGO activists. The council is chaired by the Head of the Nadvirna Rayon Society for Nature Protection.

The Pasichna oil and gas field is located on the territory of three communities with a total population of about 20,000. On October 22, 1998, a scoping meeting was held in the Pniv village community hall. More than 150 people attended the meeting and actively participated in a dialogue with representatives of the investor (Ukrnafta) and the EIA team. American experts also were present and answered numerous questions on EIA practice in the USA. At the meeting, participants formulated 20 issues which needed detailed investigation during the EIA process, such as recultivation of mud pits, disposal of drilling fluids and formation water, quality of drinking water and others. Many expressed concerns regarding the economic benefits of the project and the possible underestimation of environmental damage.

To maintain a dialogue and to receive feedback from the local communities, four information repositories were organized in the region: one in a school, two in village councils, and one in the Nadvirna Nature Protection Society office. These repositories were well visited by residents who left their written comments and inquiries. The EIA team provided immediate answers when possible and investigated more complicated problems.

In spring and summer of 1999, IFSTUOG conducted a series of field and laboratory investigation of environmental situation in the region of Pasichna oil field. The results of these investigations, together with existing environmental data and information and inquiries obtained from the public, provided for a comprehensive description of the area. Some laboratory results were cross-tested in several laboratories in Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Kyiv.

In September, 1999 the IFSTUOG EIA team presented the Draft EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) at the public meeting in Pniv village. At the meeting possible alternatives of the Pasichna oil field development were discussed. Many comments on the draft EIS were received at the meeting and later in the information repositories. The EIA team also received comments from the Steering Committee members.

The Final EIS has been completed and presented at the public hearing at Pasichna village school on 9 December, 1999. More than 50 people were in attendance and participated in the discussion. The EIA project results were highly appreciated by the rayon and villages authorities and the public.

Local media regularly published and broadcasted information on the progress of the DEIAP. Some comments collected at information repositories demonstrate that in addition to providing better design and environmental safety for the investment, environmental impact assessment raises public awareness and helps to build mutual understanding and cooperation between all sectors of society:

*--"It would be great if this project is safe from technogenic and environmental points of view".*

*--"I would like to thank scientists of IFSTUOG for their work. It is great that environmental specialists keep on informing local people"*

*--"We must stop crippling our land and experimenting with it".*

A working group of experts was established by DEIAP to prepare recommendations on improvement of EIA legislation, regulations and practices in Ukraine. In accordance with the principles of Aarhus Convention on Public Participation in Environmental Decisionmaking, these recommendations were presented and discussed at the roundtable meeting in March, 2000. Representatives of DEIAP, Parliamentary Commission on Environmental Policy, MENR, donor organizations like USAID, World Bank and UNDP, State Investment Expertisa, research and design institutes, consulting companies and NGOs took part in the discussion. Recommendations were submitted to the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources.

