

Social implication assessment framework for basic services to an urban poor program in India

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Abstract

The pace of urbanization in India is comparatively slower than the rest of the world, yet, it is the second largest nation with an urban population. The millennium development goals (MDGs) envisaged eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and ensuring environmental sustainability in its first and seventh agenda respectively; concerned with sustainable urban development with pro poor connotation. One of the focuses of development particularly in developing nations like India is on poverty alleviation, inclusive planning, building ownerships and minimizing the adverse social impacts on the vulnerable and the urban poor. After realizing the fact that cities are engines of economic growth, the Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP) Programme under National Urban Renewal Mission (NURM) in 2005 was launched by the government of India, which was meant to secure the tenure, provide affordable housing, and social security along with the provision of water, sanitation, health, and education. It is the first time that beneficiaries are involved as active stakeholders of the programme. The assessment of social implication of such programs will help in making the projects responsive to the social development concern. The aim of assessing social implications is to understand the consequences of the development interventions as every project has social ramifications. It provides an opportunity, may be passively, to participate and respond in shaping their future. The parameter used for evaluation includes the utilization of allocated funds, a change in poverty level, employment generation and the number or proportion of beneficiaries. The present research attempts to go beyond the economic benefit of the program and analyzes the social impact of these programs on the communities where the poor live and to suggest a



methodological framework for assessment of social implications of a program of provision of basic services to the urban poor in India.

Keywords: social impact assessment, basic services, urban poor, slums.

1 Introduction

It is essential for any planner to direct the development without sacrificing nature and without compromising the social and cultural values of the people. To ensure minimal disturbance to the ecosystem, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has emerged as an effective tool. Social Impact Assessment (SIA) which earlier was a subset of EIA has been helping in making the projects responsive to the social development concern. One of the focuses of development particularly in developing nations is on poverty alleviation, inclusive planning, building ownership and minimizing the adverse social impacts on the vulnerable and the disadvantaged sections of society. The aim of SIA is to understand the consequences of the development interventions as every project has social ramifications. It provides an opportunity, may be passively to participate and respond in shaping their future.

SIA can be defined as the process of assessing or estimating, in advance, the social consequences that are likely to follow from specific policy actions or project development, particularly in the context of appropriate national, state, or provincial environmental policy legislation [1]. Internationally, SIA is seen as an overarching framework that embodies the evaluation of all impacts on humans and on all the ways in which people and their communities interact with their socio-cultural, economic and bio-physical environment.

The concepts of SIA known as “International Principles of Social impact Assessment” and principles and guidelines for Social Impact Assessment in the USA both were developed in the US by Rabel Burdge and Frank Vanclay respectively [2]. Both of the above concepts argue that the field of SIA is changing to go beyond the prevention of negative impacts, to include issues of building social capital, capacity building, good governance, community engagement and social inclusion. In a developing nation like India where SIA is not new but was included in the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy 2007. The SIA is conducted prior to a new project or expansion of an existing project. But in India this provision is limited to only those cases which involve displacement of 400 or more families en masse in plain areas, or 200 or more families en masse in tribal or hilly areas. Undoubtedly, these are good beginnings but as yet the guidelines to give effect to these policy provisions do not exist. In India, the Centre for Good Governance has developed a comprehensive guide for SIA in 2006. The guide is very exhaustive and has been referred as a base document for the present work. The present work very specifically emphasizes upon the post project implementation assessment of urban India.

The present research attempts to prepare a methodological framework for assessment of social implications of basic services for urban poor (BSUP). India, since its independence has been relying upon an agrarian based economy. In the



late nineties, the era of globalization, the potential of cities being engines of economic growth was realized. In order to strengthen the urban and upcoming urban areas an urban renewal mission was launched by central government in 2005. This mission has two sub missions; first, to improve the urban infrastructure and the second, focusing on poverty alleviation by way of the provision of BSUP.

Sustainable development has been incorporated at many levels of society in recent years. But for the transition of development towards the development the goals must be assessed [3]. Various researchers had used different assessment tools, these tools has increasingly become associated with the family of impact assessment tools consisting of environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment [4]. Devuyst *et al.* [5] defines the assessment as a tool that can help decision makers and policy makers to decide which actions they should or should not take in an attempt to make society more sustainable. In an effort to define objectives for assessment studies Kates *et al.* [6] raised two basic questions connected to impact assessment.

“How can today’s operational systems for monitoring and reporting on environmental and social conditions be integrated or extended to provide more useful guidance for efforts to navigate a transition towards sustainability?

How can today’s relatively independent activities of research planning, monitoring, assessment and decision support be better integrated into systems for adaptive management and societal learning?”

These two questions stressed the need for social assessment to provide decision makers with an evaluation of global to local, integrated short and long term perspectives in order to assist them to determine which action should or should not be taken in an attempt to make society sustainable [6]. In the present work the challenge is to assess the impact of the programme which was started in 2005 and completed its first phase in 2012, the period cannot be termed substantial in order to gain social implications. The programme was targeted on the urban poor with an objective of poverty alleviation however no component of programme provides direct opportunity of economic up gradation.

2 Aims, materials and contents

Based on the international principles of SIA, the principles and guidelines for SIA in the USA and later comprehensive guidelines being prepared by the Centre for Good Governance India, the aim of this paper is to contribute a social implication assessment framework, a tool that can be used for assessment of the BSUP programme which has been recently completed its first phase in 64 cities of India having a population of one million or more. The basic questions which need to be answered before synthesis of framework are:

What constitute the social impact with reference to urban poor? And what can be the social indicators for measuring the impact and what are the best suitable methods for post implementation impact assessment of project?



2.1 Principles of SIA

The US and international principles of SIA practice emphasized upon social equity, modification of planning interventions to reduce their negative social impacts and enhance their positive impacts. The government of India's programme of BSUP which targets the urban poor as beneficiaries, the most disadvantaged social group and the assessment will help in identifying the factors responsible for negative and positive impacts. A SIA is usually conducted as part of the project to understand the social context for the program or project, including the status of and relationships between social groups and institutions; consider the appropriateness and feasibility of the programme or project, given the social context; assess the potential social impacts – positive and negative – of the programme or project; and identify possible actions (including law or policy changes, or specific project activities) to maximize the positive social impacts of the programme or project, and minimize or mitigate any negative impacts. SIA can be an effective tool to assess the basic services of a city for enhancing its efficiency.

2.2 Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP)

In general terms, basic services refer to the services that meet the basic needs of the targeted population. With reference to the urban poor it is defined accordingly by various nations with specific reference to their prevailing conditions as to suit their own objectives of urban development in a sustainable way.

The justification about “Basic Services for All” as given by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HSP) with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) includes waste, energy, sanitation, transport, education, recreation, nutrition/communication, health, agriculture, information, and shelter, including housing, land tenure and justice. While in 1967, the International Labor Organization (ILO) defined the “essential services” such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport, and health, educational and cultural facilities. On the other hand, the Asian Development Bank (1999) includes water, sanitation, income, employment, wages, nutrition, health care, and basic education as basic services. The services included in “basic services” (BS) or the “unsatisfied basic needs” (UBN) are different for developing nations. They have to limit in accordance with economic health and social circumstances.

In India, the latest understanding of BSUP, as identified in the sub mission of NURM, refers to a seven point charter namely, water supply, sanitation, security of tenure, affordable housing, education, health and social security.

2.3 Factors of social impact

The main type of social impact which are often overlapping each other are as follows



Life style impact: people's behaviour, relation to family and friends.

The likely impacts on life style can be improved living standards, safety security and privacy

Cultural impact: shared customs, obligations, values, language, religious belief, and ethnicity.

The likely impacts may be community cohesion, cultural festivity, communal harmony and social upliftment.

Community impacts: infrastructure, services, voluntary organizations, activity networks and cohesion.

The likely impacts may be capacity building, sense of belongingness, social identity, leadership and democracy.

Quality of life impacts: sense of place, aesthetics and heritage, perception of belonging, security and liveability, and aspirations for the future.

The likely impacts may be its integration with city fabric, welcoming spaces and improved environment

Health impacts: on mental, physical and social well being, although these aspects are also the subject of health impact assessment.

The likely impact may be neat clean and hygienic environment, social awareness and physical fitness.

3 Method for conduction of SIA

The process of SIA is evolved here after the comparative analysis of processes as suggested by guidelines of the US, International guidelines and also the processes adopted by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are funding large scale projects in India. The first step is to involve the public to establish a social baseline. In the present case, the year 2005 is taken as a base as it was the year in which the BSUP program was started and the assessment year is 2013, when the first phase of the project is over. For establishing a baseline, the demographic profile of the pockets where the intervention has taken place is prepared. The social infrastructure, physical infrastructure and housing condition of the base period are available to compare with the existing situation after the intervention is taken place.

The second step of SIA is to identification of alternatives, beneficiaries and the institutions and organizations involved. In the present case, the alternatives available were in situ development, rehabilitation and relocation of slum pockets. Beneficiaries are the urban poor and slum dwellers and the project was implemented with support from central government, state government and urban local bodies. The assessment will also help improve the delivery mechanism of services. Once the identification is done, the socio-economic profile of various sub groups of the community is prepared for the participatory framework to



assess the needs of the target group. The next step is to evaluate the program for direct and cumulative impacts. The next and final step would be critically suggesting changes in the policy or the programme for further implementation.

4 Framework for social impact assessment

The social impact refers to the changes in the structure and functioning of a patterned social ordering that occurs in conjunction with environmental, technological, or social innovation or alteration. Impacts are dynamic process, not static conditions and must therefore be continually measured through time. They may be judged to be either desirable or undesirable in nature [7]. The SIA can be conducted for both impact research and impact forecast. The present case is of impact research which examines current or completed projects to identify and measure the impacts they actually are or have produced. It is, in effect, the study of ongoing social change processes; social indicators to measure social impacts, but it is equally important to quantify indicators [8].

There is a need to develop a set of social indicators that can be incorporated into a standardized framework to assess social implications. The indicators should be quantitative in nature or they can be at an ordinal scale representing the real phenomenon; preferably they should be accessible from the government records as far as possible. The framework present here is grounded in the perspective of government policy of poverty alleviation which needs to be checked with the beneficiaries' perception. Although wellness and well being or quality of life is defined in different terms depending on the context, social upliftment here is defined in terms of enhancement in basic services, social security and values and interest of people living in the areas. This will also have an indirect effect on the city as a whole. The direct visible impact is an improved built environment and will have indirect effects on social structure and well being of the community. The indirect impacts are on lifestyle, culture, community, quality of life and health. These indirect impacts constitute social well being, the social well being thus achieved is than checked with the perceived well being by beneficiaries, community leaders and the officials involved in the implementation of the programme in terms of collective responses (Fig. 1).

Since the purpose of the framework is to study the social impact, the factors contributing to social well being are considered whereas several other factors of quality of life including psychological perception of satisfaction or well being is excluded. On the basis of the services provided under the programme, each component of the factors has been identified. These factors are of due concern to policy makers in evaluating their programme. The factors can be grouped in five different domains and eight sub domains as mentioned below. The domain is further elaborated into measurable indicators having units so as to standardize the data for analysis (Fig. 2).



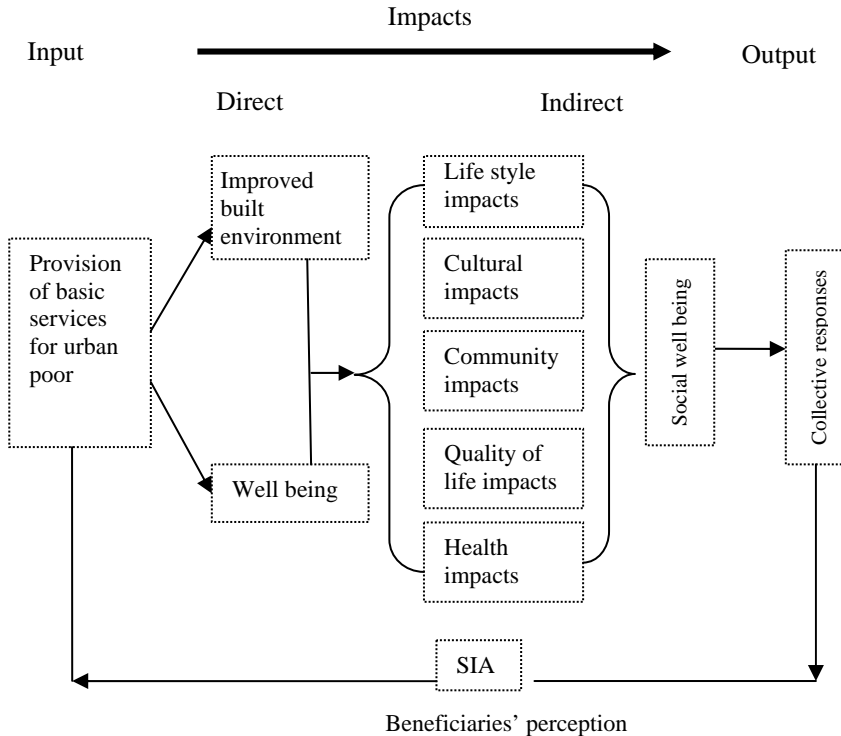


Figure 1: The impact of the BSUP program.

The framework prescribed in fig 2 is to be used once the BSUP program is implemented; it is possible that a number of basic services already existed in the community before the program started. The possible indicators to assess each of the impact are listed in table 1. The indicators are a common set which can be multiply used for the identified impacts.

The framework used social indicators to measure social impact; however, the evaluative process is further sub categorised into small manageable segments, whereas the prevailing procedure has been to collect all relevant data in a value neutral manner and then attempt to make a single overall value judgement that considers all this information at once. The framework places much of this evaluative process in the initial stage of specifying empirical indicators for use of the framework in an identical situation. For each indicator, it should be ascertained that the possible trends will contribute to the quality of life or the well being perceived by beneficiaries. The judgement derived from the framework must be quite subjective in nature, but since impact pertains to only a fairly small and delineated facet of life, although most of the time overlapping, each one can be discussed and defined with considering more rationally than can a single overall subjective judgement. A final evaluative decision must still be

made by policy makers, but the base of knowledge on which their decisions rest will be substantially based on the present social implication assessment framework.

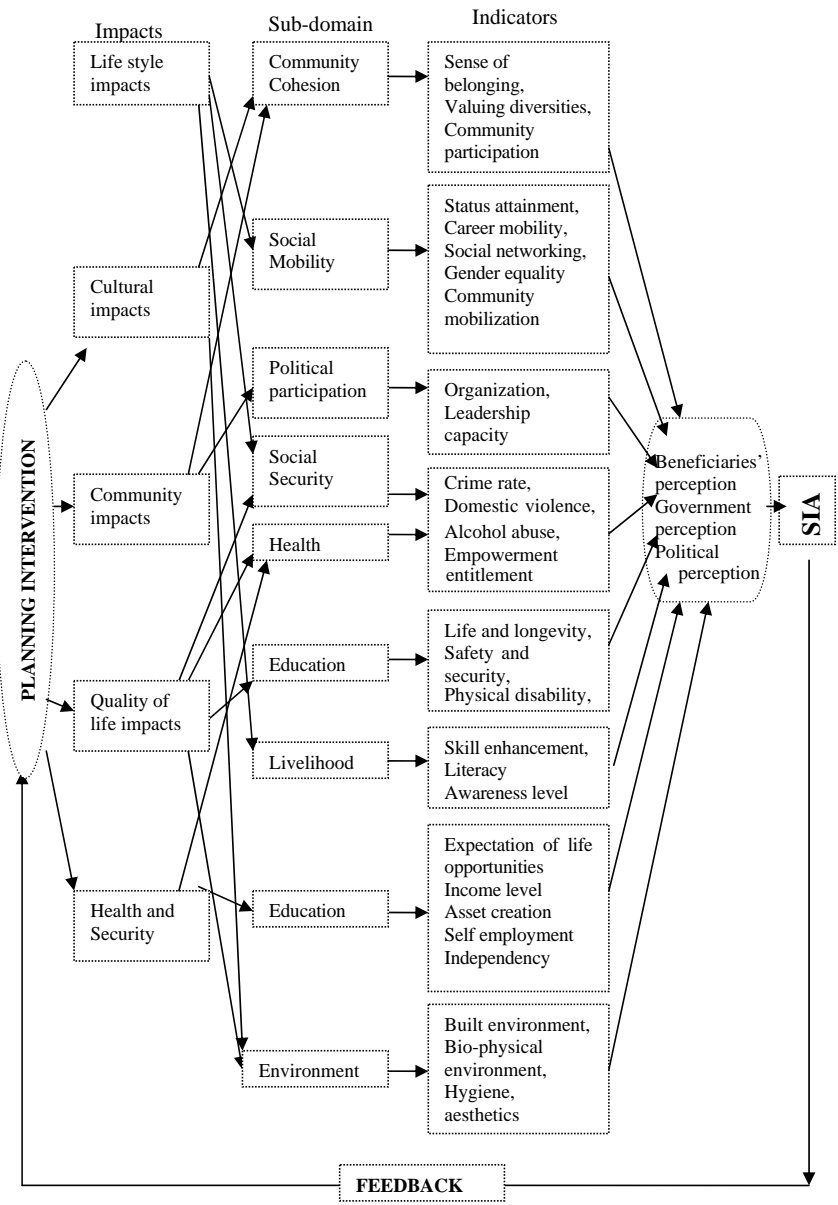


Figure 2: The social impact assessment framework.



Table 1: Indicators for impact assessment.

Demographic factors	Population characteristics: age groups, sex ratio, ethnic groups, main workers, marginal workers, population density, minority and disadvantaged section
Socio-economic determinants	Employment, livelihood opportunity, land ownership, family size, literacy, in/out migration, health, mortality rate, average life, women headed family, aged persons in family
Social organization	Community groups, access to community facility, festivals, sense of belongingness
Social political context	Implementing agencies, process for identification of beneficiaries, participatory approaches, inclusiveness
Needs and values	Beneficiaries' perceptions, their contribution, paying capacities/ willingness to pay for amenities, pro-activeness

5 Conclusion

The SIA framework developed can be integrated with today's operational systems for monitoring and reporting on environmental and social well being implications of any planning intervention made for urban poor and can be extended to provide more useful guidance for efforts to navigate a transition towards sustainability. This framework, although developed for the post implementation stage, can give new insights into the pre-implementation project formulation stage. The research orientation in developing indicators of SIA is based on exhaustive literature on social indicators and their impacts which can be integrated in the assessment of the project on social well being as well as provide responses for physical improvement as to what type of improvement brings in what quality and magnitude of impacts. The method is based on including the beneficiaries, policy makers and government perceptions as providers and users, so the framework is inclusive and participation is more on a qualitative basis which can be further measured and quantified.

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