

Guidelines environmental impact analysis

The effects of climate change and environmental degradation due to human activity are making evident the need to shift to a more sustainable economic model of development. Trade unions, as social movements and social dialogue partners have an important role to play in this transition, in order to ensure that it is made in time and in a just way. This is to a large extent a policy issue but environmental issues are also relevant in basic trade union development projects. Poor working men and women are among the worst affected by environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. The most polluting industries are located in developing countries in order to avoid environmental legislation. Workplace conditions are estimated to cause 8-16% of all deaths due to cancer. More than 100 000 different chemicals are used in workplaces while barely 1 out of 100 has been tested for health risks¹. Environmental degradation endangers the livelihoods of the millions of economically active people around the world who depend directly on environmental resources for work. Environmental degradation is also a driving force behind migration. Millions of migrant workers are caught in precarious work and suffer the most unhealthy and environmentally hazardous working and living conditions with no access to public services or social security. Rising sea levels, water shortage and natural disasters caused by climate change will increase migratory flows.

The degree in which the environment is relevant in a sector or a project differs. Analysing the environmental context does not mean that every project should be an environmental project. But taking the environment into consideration when planning and implementing a project will enable you to maximize the relevance and effectiveness of the project and of your organisation, while minimizing the negative environmental impact. Activities such as education, organizing, recruiting, campaigning and rights protection will have an impact on the environment, big or small, positive or negative. When analysing the proposed project you may also find that bringing in the environment can strengthen your proposed strategies and create added value to your desired results.

To perform an environmental analysis, answer the following questions. Further guidance can be found on the next pages.

1. Briefly describe the main environmental problems and their impact in the sector and/or geographical location of the project/program.
2. Has the environmental context described under question one been taken into account when deciding on the strategies and activities of the project/program? If yes, how?
3. If no, why not?

Regardless of whether the environmental situation directly has influenced the design of the project/program or not it is important to consider what impact the project/program will have on the environment and what impact the environment will have on the project/program.

1. How will the project/program impact on the environment? Describe positive and negative impact(s).
2. How will the environment impact on the project/program? Describe positive and negative impact(s).

¹ <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=15709>

3. How will the project/program work to reduce the negative impact(s) and strengthen the positive impact(s)?

If several projects are included in a broader program at regional or global level you may submit an aggregated analysis at program level. However, an environmental analysis will by its very nature vary between countries, regions and sectors. It is the context in which the projects will be implemented that needs to be the point of departure for the environmental analysis. Therefore the local/national/regional environmental context must feed into the aggregated environmental analysis. The aggregated analysis should show that this is the case by accounting for relevant differences at sub-program level.

Tools for Environmental impact analysis

A helpful tool to use when conducting an environmental analysis is the Environmental Lens (see p. 4). The environmental analysis should preferably be done early in project planning so that strategies and activities can be adjusted to new ideas that come up. However, it is possible to apply the Lens on an existing project/program. The best way to use the Lens is in a workshop together with the target group but the analysis can also be performed by project/program staff only.

The Lens consists of four questions arranged in a plus-sign. The analysis departs from the “middle”, the environmental context (question 1). When describing the environmental context focus on identifying one or a few main environmental problems that affect the sector/target group/geographical area of the project. Keep it simple and relevant!

When you have done the environmental context analysis you can answer the four questions, arranged in a horizontal and a vertical axis. The horizontal axis focuses on the activities of the project/program while the vertical axis focuses on the strategies of the project/program.

If you do the environmental analysis during early planning (recommended) you will have an opportunity to adjust both the strategies and the activities of the project/program to take into account the environmental context. This might influence the decision on what should be included in the project/program and how the project/program should be implemented (questions 2-3).

When doing so the following questions may help get you started:

- Do the environmental problems identified in the sector/geographical area affect the target group in such a way that it is relevant to include strategies and activities to target these problems in your project?
- Will targeting the problems increase the relevance and effectiveness of other strategies/activities and help you reach your objectives?
- Can environmental issues be used to strengthen the impact of other strategies/activities, e.g. add value to a campaign, be an entry point for new members, open up for alliances with other organisations?
- Does your organisation have a role to play in reducing the negative impact of environmental problems and/or strengthening different stakeholders' capacity to cope with these problems?

- Does your organisation have a role to play in addressing the causes of the identified environmental problems?

Regardless of whether the environmental context directly has influenced the design of the project or not it is always possible and necessary to ask oneself how the project/program will impact the environment and how the environment will impact the project/program (questions 4-5).

When doing so the following questions may help get you started:

- When certain groups of people (e.g. women, young people), are made stronger due to the project or program, what will their impact on the environment be?
- What message on advocacy/awareness-raising/attitude changes related to environmental issues is included in the project/program? How is this message expressed to the actors involved in the project/program? If there is no message on the environment, should there be?
- What is the environmental impact of the project activities (e.g. travel, water consumption, electricity, office material, food)?
- Is the area where project activities will take place prone to drought, floods or other natural phenomena that may interrupt implementation or reduce attendance by the target group?
- Is the target group affected by environmental degradation/pollution/sanitary or health problems that may affect their motivation and participation?
- Will objectives of the project contribute to secondary effects that can impact positively or negatively on the environment, e.g. changed legislation, OHS-measures, benefits?
- Will environmental issues positively or negatively affect the possibility to reach stated objectives, e.g. can they strengthen the case for regulation or might they threaten the sustainability of results in the long term?

When you have identified the positive and negative impacts of the project on the environment and vice versa you can make adjustments in order to strengthen the positive impact and reduce the negative impact. Describe the measures taken under question 6.

Further information and a step-by-step manual on how to conduct an Environmental Lens workshop is available at www.environmentallens.org.

