PART II

EIA IN INTERNATIONAL AND SHARED AREAS
Chapter 7

Environmental Impact Assessment in the Bay of Bengal Sub Region in South Asia

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1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental problems faced by the countries of the Bay of Bengal Sub region in South Asia (hereinafter the region) are significant but they are far from being managed in a sustainable manner. If marine and coastal environments of the region are to be managed in a sustainable manner, management tools and principles such as environmental impact assessment (EIA), precautionary and polluter pays principles and cleaner production should be applied adequately.

As one of the commonly used management tools the EIA procedure can potentially mitigate environmental impacts and promote better environmental conditions. Because of the usefulness of this management tool it has been accepted by the international community and incorporated in various international environmental instruments. However, the application of EIA is insufficient in the region. Some programs including Action Plans have been adopted under the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Regional Seas Program in the region; yet, a regulatory framework with specific programs for carrying out an effective EIA system have not yet been established. Due to lack of environmental management and control mechanism, marine ecosystems, habitats and species are declining and pollution level is increasing in the region.

The chapter provides an overview of EIA procedure and the ways in which it can contribute to sustainable environmental development. In this context, the scope of EIA and the role of EIA in protecting the marine environment are studied. The chapter then discusses marine environmental conditions in the region. Regional and national activities on EIA and various obstacles to the application of EIA are studied next. As an improved regional