

## Environmental Impact Assessment – UPSC Notes

EIA full form is Environmental Impact Assessment. In simple terms, the meaning of EIA is that it is a process through which an environmental impact of a proposed or development is evaluated. While undertaking Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the inter-related socio-economic, cultural, and human-health impacts are considered. This topic is important from the [IAS Exam](#) perspective. Read on to know the following:

[What is Environmental Impact Assessment?](#)

[History of EIA](#)

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### What is Environmental Impact Assessments?

It is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse. EIA is basically a tool used to assess the positive and negative environmental, economic and social impacts of a project. This is used to predict the environmental impacts of a project in the pre-planning stage itself so that decisions can be taken to reduce the adverse impacts.

### Evolution & History of EIA

EIA is termed as one of the best policy innovations in the 1900s. The main aim of EIA is to conserve the environment and bring out the best combination of economic and environmental costs and benefits.

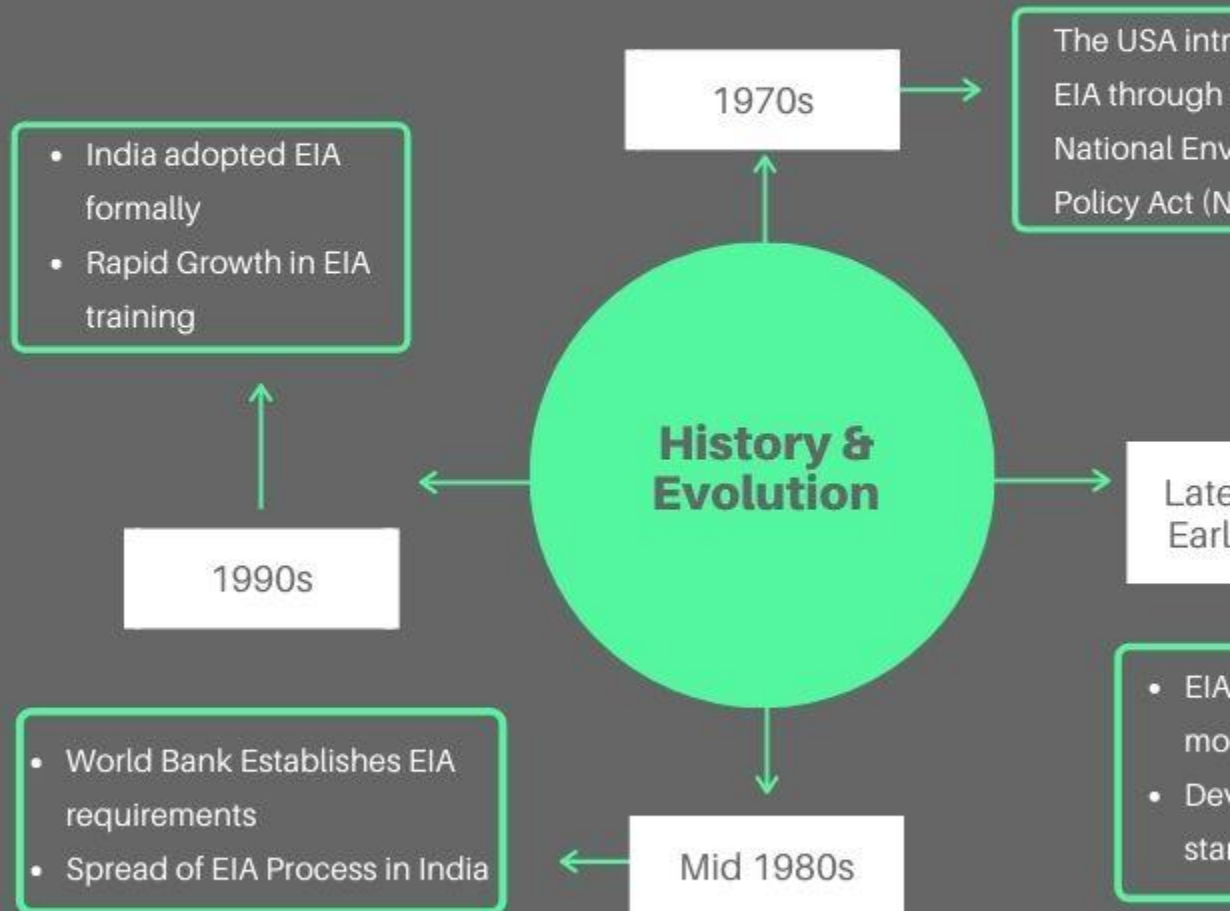
Read the below-mentioned points to understand the Environmental Impact Assessment evolution and history:

1. The birth of EIA is dated back to 1970s. In 1969, The USA had brought its first National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) 1969.
2. The EIA was initially practised by developed nations but slowly it was also introduced in developing nations including India.
3. Columbia and the Philippines are the earliest examples of developing nations who introduced EIA in their policies. Columbia brought it in 1974 while Philippines in 1978.
4. Worldwide, EIA is now practiced in more than 100 countries. By the mid-1990s, some 110 countries applied EIA as a major environmental policy.
5. In 1989, EIA was adopted as the major development project by the World Bank.

Check the image below to have an idea of major developments around Environmental Impact Assessment in history:

# Environmental Impact Assessment

A process through which an environmental impact of a proposed or development



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## Objectives of Environmental Impact Assessment

1. Identifying, predicting, and evaluating economic, environmental, and social impacts of development activities.
2. Providing information on the environmental consequences for decision making.
3. Promoting environmentally sound and suitable development by identifying appropriate alternatives and mitigation measures.

## Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process

The table below will mention the EIA Process in brief:

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process	
Process	Details in Brief
Screening	Which projects need a full or partial assessment study is decided in this stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which impacts are necessary to be assessed is decided in this stage. While doing so, legal requirements, international conventions, expert knowledge and public engagement are also considered.</li> </ul>
Scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative solutions that avoid or at least reduce the adverse impacts of the project are also studied in this stage</li> <li>• Investigation of alternate designs or sites that avoid or mitigate impact takes place</li> </ul>
Assessment & Evaluation of Impacts and Development of Alternatives	Environmental impacts of the proposed project are analysed and light is thrown upon the alternatives present to such projects
EIA Report also called Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	An environmental management plan (EMP) and also a non-technical summary of the project's impact is prepared for the general public in this stage
Decision Making	The fate of the project is decided. Whether the project is to be given approval or not and if it is to be given, under what conditions
Monitoring, compliance, enforcement and environmental auditing	Monitoring whether the predicted impacts and the mitigation efforts happen as per the EMP

## Importance of Environmental Impact Assessment

1. EIA is a good tool for prudent environment management.
2. It is government-policy that any industrial project in India has to secure EIA clearance from the Environment Ministry before approval for the project itself.

## Current EIA Reports - India

EIA Notification 2020 draft has been made public. Once the EIA Notification 2020 will be published in the Official Gazette, it will replace EIA notification 2006. EIA has been in the news following EIA notification 2020 was drafted as one of the amendments will be the removal of public consultation from several activities (Put under Category B2).

Here are a few important terms/agencies with respect to EIA notification 2020 which aspirants should further read about:

1. Accredited Environment Impact Assessment Consultant Organization (ACO)
2. Central Pollution Control Board
3. Certificate of Green Building
4. Corporate Environment Responsibility
5. Eco-Sensitive Area/ Eco-Sensitive Zone

### Environmental Impact Assessment In India

- EIA started in India in 1976-77 when the Planning Commission directed the Department of Science & Technology to assess the river valley projects from the point of view of the environment. This was extended for all those projects that required approval from the Public Investment Board.
- Then, in 1986, the government enacted the Environment (Protection) Act which made EIA statutory. The other main laws in this regard are the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act (1972), the Water Act (1974), the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act (1981), and the Biological Diversity Act (2002).
- In 1982, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change set up the **Environmental Information System (ENVIS)** with the purpose of collecting, collating, storing, retrieving and disseminating information related to the environment sector. This serves as a web-based distributed network of subject-specific databases. The chief purpose of the ENVIS is to integrate all countrywide efforts to collect, store, disseminate and use environment-information for better managing environmental assessment activities.

### How to read EIA for IAS

Environment Impact Assessment is an important topic and concept under the environment section of the UPSC syllabus. This particular section is assuming greater significance in the UPSC exam because of the pertinent nature of the topics. These are also featured in the daily news with increased frequency. It is covered under General Studies III and can be classified under the environment and economy also.

Aspirants can get the Environment preparation related articles in the table below:

[GS 3 Structure, Strategy and Syllabus](#)      [Topic-Wise GS 3 Questions for UPSC Mains](#)  
[Environment Questions for UPSC Mains GS 3](#) [Environment Notes for UPSC](#)

For more articles on important concepts for the IAS exam and updates on UPSC's current affairs, please visit BYJU'S Free IAS Prep regularly.

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