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Business, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development!

A brief guide to support environmentally responsible development

Development is necessary for the continued growth of the South African economy. However, development needs to be ecologically sustainable, responsible and should not come at the long-term cost of our environment, nor the degradation of ecosystem services we all rely on in exchange for the short-term financial gain of a select few.

To ensure this, dedicated environmental rights are enshrined in Section 24 of [The Constitution](#). Included in this section is the right to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that promote ecologically sustainable development and the promotion of justifiable economic and social development.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool that should provide decision makers with sufficient information to make responsible decisions that ensure ecologically sustainable development while at the same time promoting justifiable socio-economic development. Essentially, the EIA is a legislative process that aims to determine the best practicable course of action. Developments or projects which require an EIA are listed in Government Notices R983, R984 and R985 and can be found [here](#) on pages 75, 106 and 120 respectively.

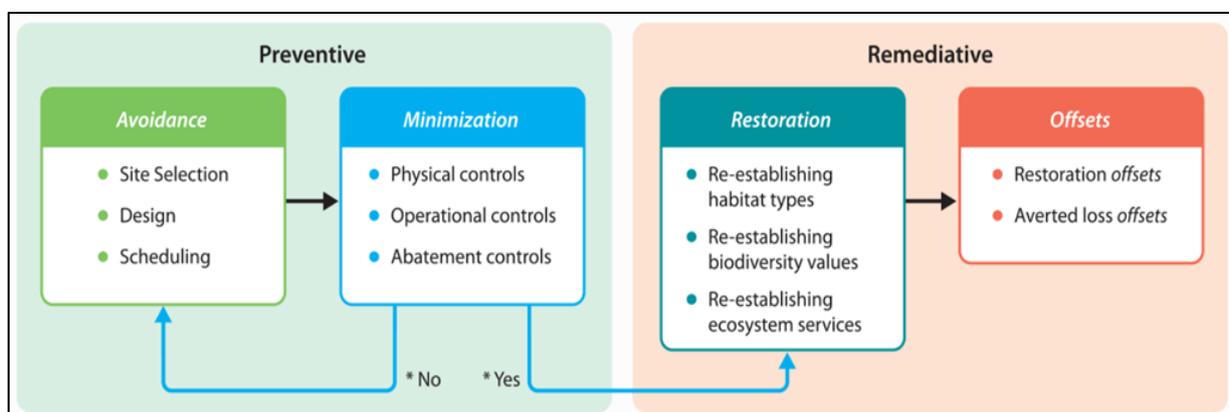
The EIA process is carried out by independent Environmental Assessment Practitioners (EAPs) registered with the Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa (EAPASA) and contracted by the project proponent. Nevertheless, as corporations involved in development, it is important to understand the process, as failure to comply can result in substantial fines and even imprisonment, but more importantly, the people of South Africa rely on corporations to make responsible development decisions in order to sustain a healthy environment for future generations. Furthermore, a correctly implemented EIA facilitates informed decision making which avoids or reduces social and environmental degradation and ideally has “no net loss” result. This can also avoid more costly and time-consuming mitigation measures at a later stage, while the transparent nature of the process, which allows for public participation, can result in improved public acceptance of a proposed development. It is strongly recommended that relevant potential Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) are consulted in the very early stages of development inception to avoid costly and time-consuming negotiations and even litigation further down the line. This pro-active approach can save millions of Rands and much frustration on both the side of the developers and the I&APs.

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Some key considerations as a responsible corporate:

- Think long-term. As a company driving economic development in South Africa try to approach new developments with a strong focus on the long-term legacy that the development will leave behind, especially from an environmental perspective.
- Think about the long-term impact of the proposed development on the local community, their natural resources (especially water) and cultural heritage. The onus is on you as a responsible developer to ensure that short term gains do not override long-term impacts.
- The EIA process is intended to be a consultative process to ensure that prospective developments have no net loss to biodiversity or ecosystem services while supporting the development agenda. Please work with the conservation sector (particularly provincial authorities and relevant NGO's) to support transparency in the process.
- Carefully consider the cumulative impacts of your proposed development, taking into account other transformative or impactful developments in the region.
- The Environmental Screening Tool provides an easily accessible, cost effective and rapid assessment of what potential biodiversity are likely to be impacted by your proposed development, please use it. This quick, essentially free tool can save you a lot of money and effort!
- Implement the Mitigation Hierarchy approach, especially the following key principles:



In summary, development has both direct predictable impacts and unforeseen impacts with unintended consequences. The purpose of the EIA process is to identify and anticipate the potential impacts and advise on suitable mitigation measures or development options to promote responsible and sustainable development for the benefit of all South Africans. In order for all South Africans to truly benefit from the development agenda and economic growth we need to ensure that the ecological integrity, cultural heritage and biodiversity assets of the country are not eroded in the process. When considering any new development it is strongly recommended that all of the relevant potential I&APs are consulted up-front to assess potential conflicts of interest in the development area. This transparent communication will assist the process considerably.

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Useful Resources:

1. [National Environmental Screening Tool](#)
 - An open-source, online tool where one can select a site and generate a report highlighting any potential environmental conflicts that the proposed development may pose.
2. [EIA Review Checklist](#)
 - This comprehensive EIA review checklist can be used by prospective developers to identify and address potential conflicts.
3. [The Mitigation Hierarchy](#)
 - A resource which provides further details on the mitigation hierarchy: Avoid, Minimize, Rehabilitate, Offset.
4. [A Guide to the EIA Process in South Africa](#)
 - A user-friendly EIA toolkit that provides an outline of key EIA processes and lends assistance and guidance to all who need it.
5. [EIA Best Practice Guidelines](#)
 - A portal to various documents outlining the International Association for Impact Assessors (IASA) best practice guidelines.
6. [Public Participation Guidelines](#)
 - IASA best practice principles on public participation.
7. [Useful Industry Briefing Notes](#)
 - A portal to a number of industry briefing note documents on a variety of topics published by the Biodiversity Consultancy.

Useful Contacts:

National and Provincial Authorities

National:

Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries
Email: callcentre@environment.gov.za
Tel: 086 111 2468

South African National Biodiversity Institute
Email: mtheart@sanbi.org.za
Tel: 013 843 5000

Provincial:

Gauteng: Dep. of Agriculture and Rural Development

Email: eiaenquiries@gauteng.gov.za
Tel: 011 240 2500

Western Cape: Dep. of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning

Email: enquiries.eadp@westerncape.gov.za
Tel: 021 483 4091

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Kwa-Zulu Natal: Dep. of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

Email: info@kznedtea.gov.za

Tel: 033 264 2500

Mpumalanga: Dep. of Economic Development and Tourism

Email: smaluleka@mpg.gov.za

Tel: 013 766 4581

Eastern Cape: Dep. of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism

Email: mickey.mama@dedea.gov.za

Tel: 040 609 4712

Free State: Dep. of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

Email: mkhosana@dteea.fs.gov.za

Tel: 051 400 4800

Northern Cape: Dep. of Environmental Affairs and Nature Conservation

Email: pmogotsi@ncpg.gov.za

Tel: 053 807 7300

Limpopo: Dep. of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism

Email: NA

Tel: 015 290 7000

North West: Dep. of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism

Email: oskosana@nwpg.gov.za

Tel: 018 389 5156

Non-Profit Organizations:

Endangered Wildlife Trust: ewt@ewt.org.za

Bird Life South Africa: info@birdlife.org.za

WWF South Africa: info@wwf.org.za

Centre for Environmental Rights: info@cer.org.za

Centre for Applied Legal Studies: duduzile.mlambo@wits.ac.za

South African Human Rights Commission: info@sahrc.org.za

WESSA: info@wessa.co.za

Wildlands Conservation Trust: info@wildtrust.co.za

Wilderness Foundation Africa: info@wfa.africa

International Association for Impact Assessment South Africa: operations@iaiasa.co.za



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