

Unlocking biodiversity data from Environmental Impact Assessment

# Rethinking the Use of Environmental Baseline Data in EIAs in the GCC region

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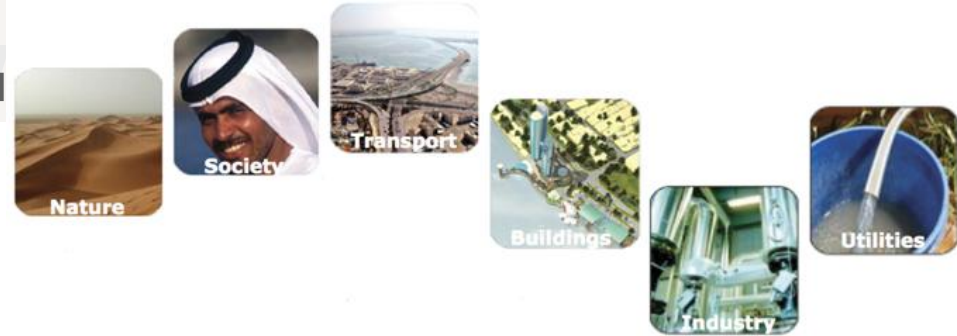
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COWI

● Subsidiaries  
● Large project offices

## COWI in the World



Nature	Society	Transport	Buildings	Industry	Utilities
Focus on nature - we advise on administration, regulation and protection of the environment	Economics, social development, public administration, GIS and mapping - we provide our services worldwide	From planning to final infrastructure - we provide consultancy for all types of transport projects	We advise on all types of building projects, focussing on consultancy and future-safe development	We act as industry's partner from idea to operation and in acquisition, divestiture and decommissioning	We improve and develop techniques within the fields of water supply, wastewater, waste and energy

### COWI's 5 International Regions

- Denmark
- Norway
- East EU
- Africa
- Gulf



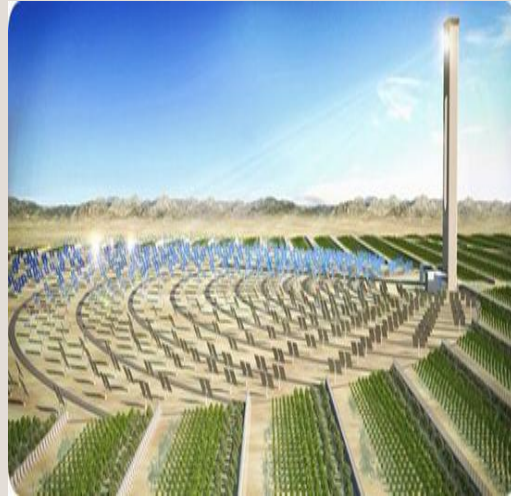
- COWI is a leading, innovative consultant firm with operations worldwide. Based on our core values we deliver consultancy services within **engineering, environmental science and economics**.
- We have established ourselves as the leading consultants in selected regions. The individual units of the Group cooperate closely in what we call the One Company Network
- We prioritise the development of specialist services that compete with the best consultant firms worldwide and which all of our Group units help to market.
- We develop professional, strong and value-generating relations with our customers, partners and employees.

Local presence and international strength creates strong advantage



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# COWI's Engagement to Enhance Environmental Data Sharing in GCC



# Rethinking the Use of Environmental Baseline Data in EIAs in the GCC region

- More than four decades has elapsed since the Stockholm conference on the Human Environment took place and the establishment of the United Nations Environmental Programme was a fact. Since then a series of multilateral environmental agreements have been adopted by governments in the Gulf region. Nevertheless, the environmental quality continues to deteriorate and regional GCC countries are not yet on a sustainable development path.
- There is a compelling need for a serious shift in mind-sets that translates into concrete policies and a view of the environment is not as a luxury or a constraint on economic growth, but as an opportunity and necessary requirement for sustainable development and human welfare and life quality in the GCC region.

# Sustainable Development: Future Prospects and Present Lives

- Sustainable development means different things to different people, but a widely accepted definition is: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).
- Sustainable development is taken to refer to three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars: economic growth, social equity and environmental protection.
- Achieving environmental sustainability requires a mode of development which maintains a stable environment that predictably and reliably provides resources such as clean water, food, energy and clean air, and that protects people from floods, droughts and disease.

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# How to Value Environmental Data in the EIA Process



# How to Value Biodiversity Data in the EIA Process

- > Environmental impact assessment (EIA) 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.
- > Since legal requirements for EIA may not guarantee that biodiversity will be taken into account, consideration should be given to incorporating biodiversity criteria into existing, or the development of new, screening criteria

# "Life-cycle" of the Biodiversity Data

The life-cycle of biodiversity data depends on type and scale of project, it is necessary to considered:

- > Assessing the type of EIA
- > Specific EIA requirements
- > Clients expectations
- > Associated cost of expanding scope
- > Environmental Baseline survey
- > Impact assessment
- > Presentation of the findings



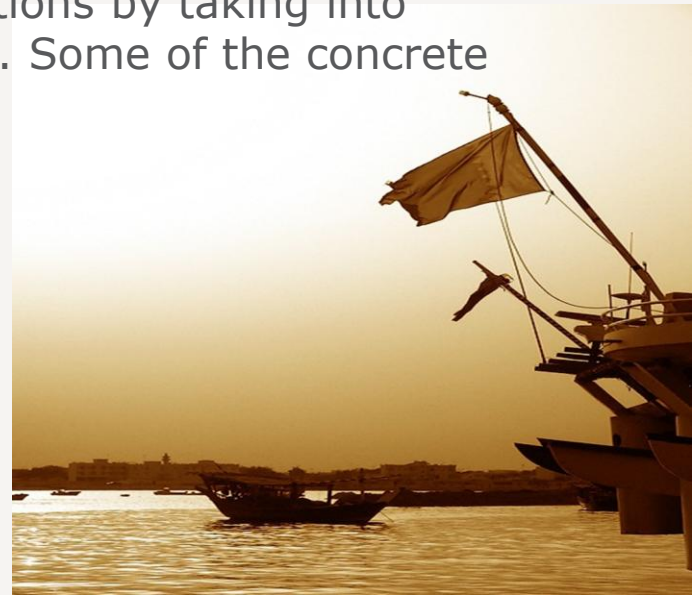
# Pertinent Questions From a Biodiversity Perspective

Taking into account the key fundamental questions which need to be answered in an EIA study include:

- > Would the intended activity affect the biophysical environment directly or indirectly in such a manner or cause such biological changes that it will increase risks of extinction of genotypes, varieties, populations of species, or the chance of loss of habitats or ecosystems?
- > Would the intended activity surpass the maximum sustainable yield, the carrying capacity of a habitat/ecosystem or the maximum allowable disturbance level of a resource, population, or ecosystem, taking into account the full spectrum of values of that resource, population or ecosystem?

## What Need to be Done

- Achieving environmental sustainability requires more concrete efforts to protect and conserve natural resources, particularly energy, water and soil resources, to improve efficiency in the use of non-renewable energy and water resources and to correct market failures and distortions by taking into consideration the environment in national accounts. Some of the concrete actions needed are:
  - Data collection and dissemination
  - Improve reliability of environmental data
  - International collaboration and standardization
  - Achieving environmental sustainability



# Data Collection and Dissemination

- > A lack of suitable infrastructure for environmental statistics.
- > Several departments collect data on environment and the different departments do not follow the same methodology and appropriate cooperation networks are virtually absent.
- > Inadequate monitoring of the state of the environment.

# Improve Reliability of Environmental Data

- › Invest in environmental data collection (financial, technical, human resources).
- › Set up environmental monitoring systems to compile comprehensive data based on systematic measurements.
- › Ensure quality assurance and quality control practices (QA / QC) according to international guidelines.
- › Increase temporal and spatial coverage to generate time-series data to be used for monitoring environmental trends across the country.
- › Disseminate quality environmental data regularly.
- › Enhance regional cooperation in the field of environmental monitoring and data collection.

# International Collaboration and Standardization

- > Enhance environmental co-operation with other countries – defend the need for open, equitable, rule-based policy making.
- > Enhance our capacities to develop local technologies that can compete in the fast-growing environmental technologies market.
- > Ensure corporate environmental responsibility and accountability.

# Achieving Environmental Sustainability

- Evaluating the resources available to it - natural, human and financial - and then evaluating the realistic options available to the country.
- Decision makers moving from *react-and-cure* to anticipatory and preventive policies through applying the whole series of strategic and cumulative environmental assessments and project impact statements.
- Applying the new environmental economic tools: cost / benefit analysis, risk analysis, environmental accounting, natural resources accounting, ecological accounting, life cycle analysis and finally the latest tool, the ecological footprint (Natural Capital Accounting)
- Ensuring public participation in the decisionmaking process and in the implementation of development strategies.

## Closing Thoughts

- > Is all this possible? I believe it is. But it requires strengthening the institutional framework at both local and regional levels.
- > At the regional level we need the provision of adequate financing for the implementation of regionally agreed best praxis environmental management programmes.
- > Enhance the development of national State of the Environment reports

# Questions

> Thanks for your attention

