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**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE INDONESIAN EIA PROCESS:  
PROCESS, PERCEPTIONS, AND ALTERNATIVES**

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## ABSTRACT

The implementation of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a planning tool has been utilised for a relatively long time in Indonesia. It was introduced formally through the Act No. 4/1982. A supporting regulation was established in 1986 when Government Regulation No. 29 was enacted. After developing the EIA system over a period of fourteen years, Indonesia finally recognised the importance of emphasising public involvement in the EIA guidelines of 2000. In the previous Indonesian regulations, i.e. Regulation No. 29/1986 and No. 51/1993, EIA did not provide guidelines for direct public involvement.

The Indonesian Government Regulation No. 27/1999 is currently accommodating the above issue. Guidelines for public announcements and public involvement have been introduced in a decree issued by the Head of Indonesian Environmental Impact Management Agency (BAPEDAL), No. *KepDal* 08/2000. This was officially enacted on 7 November 2000 in response to the demand for more public involvement, an issue which was ambiguous in the previous legislation. Compared to other countries in Southeast Asia, the Indonesian EIA system is noted for its lack of public involvement practice, which is commonly found in other developing countries.

This thesis evaluates the implementation of public involvement in the Indonesian EIA system and investigates the involvement of stakeholders in the EIA process. The challenge of this study is to examine the characteristics of public involvement in the EIA process where recent democratisation processes in Indonesia were expected to introduce more participation. Through comprehending the development of public participation practice in EIA in Indonesia, it will enrich the knowledge of public participation practices in less developed countries and in the broader context of international EIA practice.

This research was designed to evaluate the implementation of public involvement policy in the Indonesian EIA process through the observation of three EIA case studies. The research investigates the development of EIA in Indonesia since the mid-1980s until late 2003. Recent improvements in EIA legislation incorporated the introduction of public involvement. Following the enactment and dissemination of guidelines for public involvement procedures, these procedures were incorporated into project proposals which advised their implementation. After an introduction stage, constraints are apparent but it is believed that they will not diminish the value of public involvement implementation. EIA will continuously improve with the support of all EIA stakeholders.

After two decades of EIA implementation and two amendments of EIA regulations, Indonesia started to introduce public involvement in the EIA guidelines. However, public involvement is only incorporated into a few stages of the EIA process: in the scoping and review process, and not in the overall EIA stages as suggested by the theoretical EIA process. Findings from the field research suggest that there are still many constraints in applying public involvement in the Indonesian EIA. These include the lack of procedures, EIA budgeting system, the availability of information infrastructure, the public's lack of knowledge about EIA, and the absence of a representative culture.

Case studies show that some public notices were inadequate, either because of poor media selection or cost factors. Public notices were not accompanied with the provision of related EIA information resulting in less focused comment from the public. Furthermore, information infrastructure such as libraries, environmental centres, and document distribution strategies are inadequate. Case studies show that the willingness of the proponent is an important factor in an effective public involvement process. The lack of a public representation structure in Indonesian communities complicates the participation process where public representatives need to be elected as members of the EIA Review Commission. Participation through traditional means, which is expected to be the trigger for a local community to initiate involvement in the EIA process, is not well developed. Particular attempts by EIA stakeholders are necessary to promote and adopt traditional methods in order to facilitate public involvement.

Public involvement in Indonesia appears different to other developing countries for a number of reasons. First, the implementation plan for public involvement in EIA was introduced at the same time as the EIA institutional changes and other over-riding legislation. Second, the move toward better public involvement in EIA came at the same time as Indonesia's decentralisation process resulting in the transfer of the EIA administration authority to local governments. Third, BAPEDAL as the main institution administering EIA was no longer responsible for coordinating EIA.

This research proposes models for improvement of the public involvement process in the Indonesian EIA. While the research focuses its review on the Indonesian EIA system, the experience is hopefully relevant to many other developing countries which are starting to promote public involvement in their decision-making processes. Thus, this research is expected to contribute towards better international EIA practices.

*Keywords: Indonesia, Environmental Impact Assessment, Public involvement*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DECLARATION .....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vi
ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF TABLES .....	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xv
LIST OF BOXES .....	xvi
<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Public Involvement in EIA .....	2
1.2 Factors Affecting Public Involvement in EIA.....	4
1.2.1 The Principle of Democracy .....	4
1.2.2 The Role of Non Government Organisations (NGOs) .....	5
1.3 Comparative Study of Public Involvement in EIA .....	6
1.4 Research Aim and Objectives.....	10
1.5 Thesis Structure.....	12
<b>CHAPTER 2 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	13
2.2 Research Framework.....	15
2.3 Research Design .....	17
2.3.1 Case Study .....	19
2.3.2 Data Collection .....	20
2.3.3 Research Participants .....	25
2.3.4 Data Processing and Presentation .....	26
2.4 Research Limitations .....	27

<b>CHAPTER 3 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN EIA.....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	30
3.2 The Scope of Public Involvement.....	30
3.3 The Public.....	33
3.4 Why Involvement is Necessary .....	34
3.5 Forms of Public Involvement.....	37
3.6 Examples of Public Involvement Implementation .....	38
3.6.1 The US NEPA System .....	39
3.6.2 EIA System in British Columbia.....	42
3.6.3 The Australian Commonwealth EIA System.....	44
3.6.4 The Philippines' EIA System .....	50
3.6.5 Thailand's EIA System .....	55
3.6.6 Malaysia's EIA System.....	58
3.7 Lessons from Public Involvement Practices .....	62
<b>CHAPTER 4 – EVOLUTION OF EIA IN INDONESIA SINCE 1982.....</b>	<b>67</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	67
4.2 EIA Evolution in Indonesia .....	68
4.2.1 Pre-1987: Limited EIA Implementation .....	69
4.2.2 1987 – 1993: the Enactment of Government Regulation No. 29/1986 .....	70
4.2.3 1993 – 2000: the Enactment of Government Regulation No. 51/1993 .....	73
4.2.4 Post-2000: the Enactment of Government Regulation No. 27/1999.....	76
4.3 Public Involvement and Transparency of Information in the EIA Process.....	79
4.4 What is being Implemented and has been Achieved in the Indonesian EIA .....	81
<b>CHAPTER 5 – STAKEHOLDERS IN THE INDONESIAN EIA SYSTEM.....</b>	<b>86</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	86
5.2 Proponents .....	89
5.2.1 Business as Proponent.....	90
5.2.2 Government and NGOs as Proponents.....	95
5.2.3 Proponents in the Indonesian EIA System .....	97
5.3 Environmental Consultants and EIA.....	100
5.4 NGOs - Non Government Organisations.....	104
5.4.1 Democracy, Civil Society and NGOs.....	105
5.4.2 NGOs in Indonesia.....	109
5.4.3 Environmental NGOs and EIA in Indonesia.....	115

<b>CHAPTER 6 – THE EIA PROCESS IN THE CASE STUDIES .....</b>	<b>119</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	119
6.2 Case Studies Selection.....	121
6.3 Jakarta Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Project.....	123
6.3.1 Environmental Setting.....	124
6.3.2 Project Description.....	126
6.3.3 Administrative Requirements and Chronology of Events.....	130
6.3.4 Major Issues .....	131
6.3.5 Outcome of the Case .....	133
6.4 West Java Hazardous Waste Landfill Project.....	135
6.4.1 Environmental Setting.....	137
6.4.2 Project Description.....	138
6.4.3 Administrative Requirements and Chronology of Events.....	140
6.4.4 Major Issues .....	140
6.4.5 Outcome of the Case .....	142
6.5 West Papua Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Project .....	143
6.5.1 Environmental Setting.....	144
6.5.2 Project Description.....	146
6.5.3 Administrative Requirements and Chronology of Events.....	147
6.5.4 Major Issues .....	148
6.5.5 Outcome of the Case .....	152
<b>CHAPTER 7 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PRACTICE IN THREE EIA CASE STUDIES: SURVEY RESULTS.....</b>	<b>154</b>
7.1 Introduction.....	154
7.2 Public Involvement in the Early Stage of EIA: Information Disclosure .....	158
7.3 Public Participation during the Scoping Process .....	171
7.4 The Involvement of NGOs in the Case Studies.....	190
<b>CHAPTER 8 – DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>196</b>
8.1 Introduction.....	196
8.2 The Evolution of Public Involvement in the Indonesian EIA System .....	197
8.3 Evaluation of Public Involvement in the Indonesian EIA Process .....	205
8.3.1 Public Involvement in the Early Stage .....	206
8.3.2 Public Involvement in the Screening Stage .....	207
8.3.3 Public Involvement prior to Scoping: the Public Notice and Information Disclosure.....	208
8.3.4 Formal Submission .....	213

8.3.5 Public Participation during Scoping.....	214
8.3.6 Public Involvement during the EIA Study.....	217
8.3.7 Public Participation during the Assessment Stage: the EIS and EMPs Review.....	218
8.4 Factors Influencing Public Involvement Implementation: the EIA Institution and Overriding Legislation.....	220
8.5 Broader Issues in the Implementation of Public Involvement and EIA.....	223
<b>CHAPTER 9 - PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT .....</b>	<b>228</b>
9.1 Further Research.....	233
9.2 Alternative Models for Public Involvement in the Indonesian EIA.....	234
9.3 Prospects for Public Involvement in the Indonesian EIA.....	243
<b>REFERENCE.....</b>	<b>247</b>

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 US NEPA 1969, CEQ Regulations for Implementation Section 1506.6 regarding Public Involvement
- Appendix 2 Requirement for Public Involvement Set by Intergovernment Agencies
- Appendix 3 Publication in *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*
- Appendix 4 The Institutional Framework and Policy-Making of Public Involvement in the Indonesian EIA system