



**THE INSTITUTE OF
Company Secretaries of India**

भारतीय कम्पनी सचिव संस्थान

IN PURSUIT OF PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

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INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AUDITORS

Vision

"To be a global leader in
promoting good
corporate governance"

Motto

सत्यं वद। धर्मं चर। इष्टकारे त्रेह तृपाते। ब्रह्मदेहं तु त्रेह ब्रह्म।

Mission

"To develop high calibre
professionals facilitating
good corporate governance"

Case Study on Draft Social Impact Assessment Standard (SAS) 500

Ensuring Environmental Sustainability, Addressing Climate Change (Including Mitigation and Adaptation), Forest and Wildlife Conservation

Organization Overview

AB Responsible Services is a not-for-profit social enterprise operating in Maharashtra, India. With over 15 years of experience in watershed management programs, the organization was founded to tackle issues related to water conservation, soil conservation, and increasing water availability for irrigation. Their efforts have led to enhanced agricultural productivity, improved livelihoods, and increased green cover in project areas.

The primary project sites are in the districts of Ratnagiri and Raigad, which experience extreme water shortages despite receiving substantial rainfall. The hilly terrain results in high water runoff to the sea, and building storage facilities is costly. To address this, AB Responsible Services seeks to raise funds for an Integrated Water Management Project (IWMP). The IWMP aims to boost water storage capacity, conserve fertile soil, harvest rainwater, recharge groundwater, create green belts, enhance agricultural productivity, and foster community development.

Key activities include constructing check dams, farm ponds, desilting, borewell recharge, and installing water pipelines for household drinking water. The project spans 18 villages, benefiting a population of 25,000 people. AB Responsible Services has invested a total of Rs. 45.3 lakhs in the IWMP.

Section I: Introduction

Objective and Scope

Ratnagiri and Raigad districts in Maharashtra are located between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, receiving heavy monsoon rainfall. Rainfall is critical for agriculture, domestic water supply, hydroelectric power generation, and industries. However, water resources are highly vulnerable to climate change, posing threats to food and environmental security. Factors such as changing rainfall patterns, the steep slopes of the Western Ghats limiting water storage, and inadequate resources prompted AB Responsible Services to develop the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP).

The IWMP was implemented to increase agricultural productivity, enhance livelihoods, and expand green cover across 18 villages in Ratnagiri and Raigad, serving over 25,000 local residents.

Section II: Evaluation of Social Impact

Data Collection

Stakeholders engaged for data collection included:

- Direct beneficiaries (e.g., villagers, farmers, local business owners).
- AB Responsible Services' implementing team.
- Local government representatives (e.g., Panchayat members, taluka and district officials).
- NGOs focused on environmental issues in the districts.

Data collection methods comprised Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and quantitative surveys. Questionnaires were designed and administered by AB Responsible Services. A 5% sample was selected from direct beneficiaries (farmers, local business owners, and community members) across the 18 villages.

Desk Review

A desk review of existing documents provided deeper insights into the evaluation process and impact assessment. Reviewed materials included:

- Reports under environmental protection laws.
- Annual reports.
- Sustainable development curricula.
- Staff/trainee feedback forms.
- Photographs of IWMP activities.
- Data on improved soil fertility.
- Rainfall and water availability data.
- Agricultural productivity improvements.
- Details of plans, programs, and future initiatives.
- Water Conservation Management Policy.

Inspection and Personal Interviews

Physical inspections of check dams, borewells, farm ponds, and water pipelines assessed program effectiveness. Personal interviews with selected stakeholders evaluated the social and environmental impacts of the IWMP. This involved 20 FGDs, 10 KIIs, and 500 quantitative surveys.

Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions were reviewed to analyse stakeholder responses and identify changes. This informed the assessor's views on key aspects:

a. IWMP Implementation

- What watershed management activities were conducted in the villages?
- What water supply challenges did the village population face?
- What current efforts are local governments making for better water availability?
- What permissions were obtained from government departments for IWMP activities?

b. Impact on Agriculture

- What is the increase in irrigated land area due to the watershed development project?
- How many farmers were impacted by watershed activities?
- Have beneficiaries enhanced their standard of living through vegetable gardens and improved cultivation?
- Has biomass production improved?

c. Impact on Health and Standard of Living

- How many villagers gained access to better drinking water?
- Have incidences of waterborne diseases decreased?
- What is the increase in annual income from enhanced agricultural productivity and local businesses?

d. Impact on Environment

- Has water quality in the area improved?
- Has biomass production increased?
- Is there any impact on aquatic life?

Key Metrics for Evaluation of Project/Program

The social impact assessor reviewed project documents to establish evaluation criteria. Key metrics from baseline, mid-line (monthly/quarterly), and end-line assessments were analysed to evaluate impact. Aspects covered for direct beneficiaries include:

(a) Demography

- Financial and social background: Age, gender, occupation, family income, and income sources.

(b) Water Resources for Domestic, Commercial, and Industrial Use

- Water supply quality.
- Amount spent by villagers on additional water supply.

(c) Agriculture

- Current agricultural practices.
- Land under irrigation before and after IWMP implementation.
- Increase in farm production.
- Growth in agriculture-related activities.
- Increase in agricultural income.

(d) Commercial Activities

- Change in income.

(e) Environmental Factors

- Enhanced soil and water quality.
- Improved biodiversity.
- Improved groundwater levels.

Assessment of Evaluation Criteria (Illustrative Key Impact Indicators)

The following quantitative and qualitative indicators were identified to capture the social and environmental impacts of the IWMP:

(A) Quantitative Criteria

1. Over 25,000 direct beneficiaries impacted, including farmers, village populations, and local businesses.
2. Over 100,000 indirect beneficiaries from neighbouring villages.

3. 177 hectares of land brought under irrigation.
4. 76% increase in water availability.
5. 45% increase in annual income.
6. 27% decrease in medical expenses for villagers.
7. Average of 4 watershed management activities per village.
8. 6,875 households gained access to better drinking water.
9. Average 12% increase in farm production.
10. 18% increase in total water resource utilization.

(B) Qualitative Criteria

1. Improvement in living conditions with better sanitation facilities.
2. Improved health due to reduced water pollution and restored soil quality.
3. Enhanced standard of living from increased annual income.
4. Improved per capita water availability.
5. Increased awareness of watershed management practices.
6. New employment opportunities for watershed maintenance.
7. Increase in hydraulic energy generation.
8. Greater awareness of rainwater and stormwater harvesting.
9. Changes in soil quality.
10. Increase in horticulture practices.
11. Changes in green cover over total surface area.
12. Shifts in migration patterns due to better employment and living conditions.

Section III: Assessment of Challenges and Limitations

Challenges/Areas for Improvement

Challenges identified through primary data collection include:

- Difficulty understanding the importance and application of watershed management practices.
- Inability to recognize the immediate impacts of climate change.
- Lack of general awareness about biodiversity.
- Insufficient knowledge on maintaining watershed activities.
- Underestimation of changes in rainfall and storm impacts.

Limitations of the Assessment

Limitations include:

- Unavailability of baseline data for all indicators, particularly qualitative ones.
- Overlap in stakeholder roles (e.g., farmers also part of the local community).
- Respondents' difficulty in answering certain questions, especially quantitative ones.

Source: NISM Series XXIII: Social Impact Assessors Certification Examination workbook