Industry and Competency Standards for SIA Accreditation in the Philippines? Let’s Talk First about Starting Points

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Questions:
1. What is the status of the consulting industry and SIA professionals and competencies in the Philippines?
2. Under what conditions can SIA certification make a difference?
Development Consulting in the Philippines ~ The Great Transformation?

2000

FRAGMENTED
- Large multinational firms, med-sized Filipino firms, sea of consultants
- JVs of foreign and Filipino firms

COMPETITIVE
- Small domestic market, fighting over ODA

LOW ENTRY AND EXIT BARRIERS
- ‘Anyone can be a consultant’

UNREGULATED
- No industry standards or Code of Conduct
- Consulting organizations ~ voluntary membership

2024

STILL FRAGMENTED
- Few multinational firms, med-sized Filipino firms, sea of consultants
- Sub-contracting of Filipino firms

STILL COMPETITIVE
- Small, domestic market, fighting over ODA, threats from Mandamus ruling

STILL LOW ENTRY AND EXIT BARRIERS
- Still ‘anyone can be a consultant’

STILL UNREGULATED
- No industry standards or Code of Conduct
- Pseudo-regulation: international devt standards

Sources: Bolinao and Mosquito, 2001, KII, anecdotal evidence
Barriers to setting up SIA Industry Standards

National Consulting Act ~ no developments, supposedly government-managed (through NEDA or DTI)

Organization of Filipino consultants (COFILCO and IMPHIL) ~ standards around performance and ethics publicized but membership is voluntary

Industry structure is changing ~ acquisitions and mergers; still a market of ‘freelancers’

Very little profit margins ~ subcontracting of Filipino firms, low local rates. **Industry standards have cost implications.**

Mandamus ruling can hurt the industry: LGUs as task-masters in road, health, agri, natural resources, tourism and education projects
The Flipside of Opportunities

• Good and innovative practices
  • Hands-on Expanded Implementation Support (HEIS) ~ product of international consulting firms assigning in-house experts to ADB projects

• Championing/Leadership of performance standards by the national government, LGU and private sector collab

• Guidance in the strengthening of Borrower’s E&S Management Systems (ESMS) using international E&S standards, e.g., World Bank’s ESF, study of Department of Public Works and Highways ESMS

• High demand in capacity building programs of Filipino consultants. **High interest in a Community of Practice**
SIA Practitioners in the Philippines

‘Not all social scientists become social development specialists. But social development specialists are expected to be social scientists.’

Competency: Qualifications and Proficiency
Code of Conduct/ Research Ethics

Where are SIA people in the Philippines?
Consulting firms, government special projects’ offices, NGOs and academe (e.g., third-party or volunteer monitors like in FPIC projects)
Licensed Professionals in the Philippines (Philippine Regulatory Commission - PRC)

Licensing Exam
- **EDUCATION**
- Professional experience and mandatory training (those without the bachelor’s degree)

Professional License
- Points system: Conferences, training
- Renewal (1-3 years) but not mandatory
- Code of Conduct
- Accreditation in international bodies to practice abroad

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- PRC requirements

Source: KII (5 licensed professionals)
Path of Philippine SIA Professionals

- Bachelor’s and post-grad degrees in the social sciences
- ‘Learning by doing’
  - Work experience in social research, private sector and government is a springboard to SIA (consulting)
- Few are licensed social professionals (social work)

Source: KII and CVs of 20 SIA professionals
1. **Competencies vary across professionals (Internal)**
   - **Social baselining and meaning-making – poor to average** use and analysis of official data, ‘cut and paste’ of social data in local government plans; ‘template’ approach to preparing E&S instruments
   - **Research discipline – poor to average** ~ ‘cut-and-paste’, plagiarism; no proper citations, referencing
   - **Over-reliance on ‘natural sciences’ research methods**, e.g., surveys versus qualitative studies (Carino 1994)
   - **Low accountability of professionals** in working with government counterparts
   - **Indiscriminate industry practices**, e.g., ‘CV nomination for a fee’, junior staff performing the work of nominated senior staff
   - **‘Self-help’** ~ personal costs or sponsorships to attend conferences and training
   - **Tendency towards ‘self regulation’** ~ word-of-mouth on ‘good’ and ‘so-so’ professionals; use of networks for repeat engagements
2. **Unregulated industry and very low profit margins breed devaluation of SIA work**
   - Very short engagements versus TOR; e.g., WB coastal project – social analysis and SE for 10 days
   - Combining Social and Environment to reduce costs
   - Very low rate of Filipinos in foreign-funded projects, e.g., NXXXS – USD1500/mo for local Social Specialists

3. **Emerging demands on Social and unharmonized requirements of international development organizations** ~ gender, climate change/DRRM, conflict, citizen engagement, inclusion, SEA/SH. GBV

4. **E&S standards and requirements versus few training opportunities and good practices locally** to build on, e.g., Cultural Heritage, cumulative impact assessment, health impact assessment
• Example of a ‘ready-made’ RAP budget

Source: Road project funded by Dept of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)
BARMM, Lanao del Sur

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) consists of three (3) component cites, 116 municipalities, and 2,590 barangays. As shown in Table 4-1 below, the entire BARMM has a total population of 4,404,288 based on 2020 Census of Population. Lanao del Sur has a population of 1,195,518, which accounts for 27.65% of the total population in BARMM. Within the province, Marawi City has the highest population, comprising 19.3% of the overall provincial population.

Please include other standard indicators like population growth rate, density, age-sex distribution, sex ratio, and dependency burden, household population, total number of households and household size.

Table 4-1 Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region/Province/Municipality</th>
<th>Population 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BARMM</td>
<td>4,404,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Sur</td>
<td>1,195,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marawi City</td>
<td>207,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saguiaran</td>
<td>26,712</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PSA, 2020 Census on Population

As of 2022, the Philippine Statistics Authority has established the poverty threshold at PHP 12,030 per month for a family of five, or PHP 79 per day per person for food and non-food necessities. Additionally, as of 2022, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has the highest poverty incidence in the country, standing at 37.2%. Unfortunately, the specific poverty incidence for Lanao del Sur is not mentioned in the provided text.

Table 9 Indicative Budget for implementation of SEP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Engagement Activity</th>
<th>Total Cost (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social experts</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation and disclosure</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation sessions in all the works affected communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment and maintenance of website</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio broadcasts</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other disclosure campaigns</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grievance redress mechanism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRM Hotline</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of information on GRM</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and documentation of SEP implementation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification of SEP activities (field visits, etc.)</td>
<td>Included in PIU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travel budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>690,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2021 Full Year Official Poverty Statistics is available in the PSA website. Contains regional and provincial data.
SIA Certification: The Pluses

**Quality in SIA delivery**
- Example of WB ESF accreditation: e-learning and exam, training with experts and specialists and panel interview. With continuing ESF clinics, on-the-job training and mentoring

**Ethics and integrity in research and practice ~ Code of Conduct and quality/performance standards**
- Cleansing of ‘charlatans’ (Vanclay 2020 in Maas and Coakes 2024, p. 39)

**‘Taking SIA seriously’ ~ Rigor and contribution to project development**
- Building proficiencies and quality networks of SIA professionals; recognition of specialists

**Layers of certification can build specialist expertise and accountability in complex and high-risk projects**
- Resettlement, transboundary studies, cumulative impact assessment
SIA Certification: Some Considerations

• Raising SIA competency standards must consider critical industry changes and challenges
  ! Competitiveness and low profit margins, factors behind contraction of local consulting industry

• Political economy of development consulting
  ! Certification does not necessarily lead to higher pay rates or job security
  ! Regulation of international consulting firms

• Professionalization of SIA ~ Building on the Community of Practice
  ✓ Need for dependable stream of knowledge and capacity building support
  ✓ Review of the National Consulting Policy
  ✓ Time for a Bachelor’s degree in Social Impact Assessment?
Bibliography


- Key informant interviews (KII) with five licensed professionals (forester, geologist, social worker, teacher, engineer)

- KII/CV review of 20 SIA Filipino professionals


- Vanclay, Franc and Esteves, Ana Maria, 2024. ‘Setting the scene for good social impact assessment and management’, in Handbook on Social Impact Assessment and Management (eds. Franc Vanclay and Ana Maria Esteves), pp. 2-15
Maraming Salamat Po!