

CHALLENGES ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT FACES IN IMPLEMENTING MONITORING AND AUDITING PROGRAMMES



The Environmental Affairs Department (EAD) is charged with the responsibility to ensure that the developers comply with the EIA provisions in the EMA. To ensure that there is compliance, the department has the monitoring and auditing programmes. According to EIA Guidelines, **Environmental Monitoring** is defined as ‘means the continuous or periodic assessment of the actual and potential impact of any activity on the environment’. **Environmental Audit**, on the other hand, is defined as ‘means the systematic documentation and periodic and objective evaluation of protection and management of the environment and the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources’.

During the interface, the department, in the first place, clarified the fundamental difference between monitoring and auditing as presented in the EIA Guidelines. Monitoring is meant to be the continued practical process of visiting the development to keep abreast with the rate of compliance to the EIA. Auditing, on the other hand, is understood as the overall process of assessing what has been achieved as prescribed in the EIA, what has not, and also coming up with recommendations regarding the entire process. These two processes are supposed to be done by both EAD and the developer. To mean, the developer is supposed to have its own monitoring and independent audit team, and so should EAD. Actually, EAD said that they have a monitoring team and also an auditing team that carries out the processes. In fact, they even agreed, again, that they have monitoring and auditing programmes.

EAD, however, disclosed that they do, indeed, carry out monitoring and auditing programmes. However, there is no specific period upon which they do monitoring activities—say, may be monthly, quarterly or bi annual. To mean, the processes are ad hoc, and mostly, done when funds are available. The department was not forthright when asked to recall the last time they held visited development sites to do the monitoring. The major challenge that the department spelled out is to do with financing and staffing. They argued that the department does not receive adequate budgetary allocation to manage the two processes effectively.

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Gaps

Monitoring and auditing the compliance levels of developers is the heart of EIA. However, it was observed that these processes are not as central to their department as we would have all wanted. There is no specific plan of execution of monitoring and auditing, as a result, the processes are ad hoc something which questions even the effectiveness of the processes if carried out.

Recommendation

- Resources, in the first place, will always not be available. The department, as such, should find means to work within their budgetary allocation and also find ways of raising funds that should support monitoring and auditing plans
- Treasury should help the department by increasing budgetary allocation to enable it implement its activities adequately
- There is need for recruiting more staff so that at least every district should have an Environmental Officer responsible for Monitoring activities within the district.