EIA 2020:
Strengthen not weaken this tool for decision-making and democracy
Agenda for reform: CSE
STRENGTHEN, NOT WEAKEN

• Rejection rate of projects, even as per government’s own data, is a mere 2.9 per cent

• Hardly any real scrutiny

• People are heard but not listened to (public hearings have become paper-work; there is no way to telling if what people said has been incorporated and how project has been re-designed/rejected)

• Current system is broken; it is not working for the purpose it was meant for
STRENGTHEN, NOT WEAKEN

• An abused process will lead to abused outcomes, in the interest of none.
• If the EIA process is strengthened-
  ❑ It will ensure environmental damages are mitigated and managed
  ❑ It will minimize risks, delays and even closures of projects
CSE’s Agenda: streamline and strengthen
Convoluted and complicated systems do not work for industry or the environment

Agenda 1: Consolidate all clearances
- One comprehensive impact assessment document covering all aspects of clearances. Link all clearances: Environment, forests, coastal, wildlife so that scrutiny is comprehensive and process is streamlined

Agenda 2: Make EAC/SEAC accountable
- It is important to review their role and make them more transparent
- No responsibility to ensure that the projects cleared do not have a serious environmental impact
- Currently, these faceless committees clear projects (recommend for clearance) and set numerous conditions that they are not responsible to make sure get followed or implemented.
CSE’s Agenda

Agenda 3: Integrate the processes and procedures across different agencies
• The same clearances are given by different agencies, under different legislations; EP Act, Air Act, Water Act, etc etc
• This adds to paperwork, but not effective systems of scrutiny or clearance.

Agenda 4: Deepen public assessment
• Live streaming of proceedings of public hearing
• All information pertaining to the concerns raised in public hearings should be put in public domain
• When project is cleared the report back on peoples concern should be made available – what they said and what was taken into account
• There is no provision to ensure that voices are heard before project is cleared and this then leads to lack of credibility in the system
Agenda

Agenda 5: Review effectiveness of SEIAA/review urban project clearance

• The state agencies responsible for clearance of building and construction projects.
• These agencies have not been effective in controlling pollution or degradation caused by urban projects
• Need to re-think what should be done with urban projects – largest number of projects and these have lead to system getting rigged and abused.
• Need to consider how urban projects – buildings, malls, commercial complexes – need to be cleared by municipal bodies and that the conditions that are set by them need to be enforceable
CSE’s Agenda

**Agenda 6: Strengthen data for assessment and monitoring of projects**
- Need **credible and up-to-date** data on environmental and ecological parameters of the site; baseline data should be in public domain so that impact can be monitored

**Agenda 7: Strengthen MoEFCC’s capacity**
- **Lack** of capacity to monitor leads to the decline of credibility
- Strengthen monitoring by bringing institutions together – converge on monitoring. Currently EC clearance is monitored by regional office of MOEF&CC and state boards monitor provisions of air and water act
- **No monitoring, no deterrence, no enforcement**
The big question

• Whether the governments—previous, present or next—really value the scrutiny of the projects?

• Whether they believe this assessment will improve decision-making and help mitigate irreversible impacts on the environment?

If the answer to these is ‘NO’, then EIA 2006 or EIA 2020 are all just futile exercises