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**Successful dialogue
in preparation of the investment project in western Ukraine**

Development projects often lead to acute disputes among different groups and sectors of the society. The government and local governments are called to settle such disputes to assure that a desirable economics growth is achieved without unnecessary damage to communities, environment, cultural heritage and existing traditions of urban and rural life in the area. To organize an open discussion of the proposed development projects, authorities and investors can use well-developed, nationally and internationally accepted tools and instruments, such as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

While EIA is a nationally regulated process, there exist numerous international instruments like international conventions (Espo Convention on EIA in transboundary context, Aarhus Convention), EU directives, operational procedures of the World Bank and EBRD. EIA developers in any country could use approaches that are prescribed by these instruments if they do not contradict national legislative and regulatory framework.

To demonstrate that internationally recognized EIA procedures would work in Ukraine and that this type of EIA would benefit business development, the community, and the environment, a demonstration EIA project was implemented in Ukraine in 1997-2000. The project was a cooperative effort of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), United States Agency for International Development and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported by numerous agencies and organizations within Ukraine. Funding for the project was provided by the US Government and UNDP.

USEPA's strategic partner for the project was the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine which is responsible for reviewing environmental assessment statements under Ukrainian law.

An investment project under consideration was an expansion of production at the Pasichna oil field in Western Ukraine. The investor, JSC "Ukrnafta" agreed to conduct an open and transparent EIA process with a full-scale public participation. This decision was strongly supported and approved by Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast Administration. All practical work was lead by a team of EIA developers from Ivano-Frankivsk State Technical University of Oil and Gas, with technical assistance from US EPA experts.

The Pasichna oil field is located on the territory of three communities with a total population of about 20,000. Representatives of stakeholders (investor, state agencies, local authorities, scientists, and public) were invited to work on a Steering Committee for the project. To guide and facilitate participation of the public, a Public Advisory Council had been established and four information repositories were organized. Four public hearings were held in local communities. The EIA efforts were highly valued by the public, national, oblast and local level authorities.

The project clearly demonstrated that an open dialogue during EIA process not only improves environmental safety of an investment, but it also raises public awareness and helps to build mutual understanding and Cupertino in a society.