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## Screening the Environmental Significance of the Effects and Consequences of Strategic Actions of Rural Development Based on SEA Approach (Case Study: Strategic Action for Economic Development of Region Planning 2 in Khuzestan Province)

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### Abstract

Strategic environmental assessment system is a preventive and structured approach for predicting, identifying and evaluating the environmental, economic and social impacts of development options at different levels of the planning system. The purpose of this research is to use the strategic environmental assessment method to screen strategic measures for rural development with emphasis on the "Strategic Document of Economic Development of Planning Region 2 of Khuzestan Province". The present research is applied based on the purpose and type of research, and descriptive and survey (analytical) methods in terms of nature and method. Screening has been done by using checklist and screening matrix in the framework of Fuzzy Delphi Method and with the advice and survey of 26 responsible practitioners in various fields of planning about 3 components and 36 key environmental criteria. The results showed that strategic action is of significant importance in terms of communication with the comprehensive and common directions of economic and social development at the national, regional and local levels, especially for improving the welfare and human livelihood of rural communities. Screening showed that based on legal and formal guidelines, planning areas covered by strategic action are identified and introduced as areas of development with potentially significant environmental impacts and strategic action is of significant environmental importance in terms of linking and influencing other strategic actions in the planning system. Also, the results showed that the degree of complexity and importance of environmental issues, problems and constraints related to the target planning areas in the covered rural areas is higher than significant. The degree of streamlining and integration of environmental considerations and concerns, especially the consideration of standards, values, laws and regulations (legal/civil requirements) related to the environment, is less than significant. In addition, the screening results showed that strategic action in each of the target planning departments has provided a framework for the creation and development of other activities and operational projects at the micro level

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and, based on the consensus of experts, can lead to significant potential effects with diverse nature and quality on geographical and natural areas and cultural areas, including rural and urban settlements with dense population and densely populated areas in the counties of Abadan and Khorramshahr. Given that, it can be concluded that the strategic plan for many screening criteria and key environmental components are vital. Furthermore, its implementation can have significant effects and consequences and irreversible damage to the environment of rural and urban areas. Thus, based on the findings of environmental screening, the need for accurate environmental and technical assessments of the strategic initiatives to identify and analyze the effects and, if necessary, review, modify, improve or change the designed content and strategies. Also, it is recommended to anticipate and prepare appropriate mitigation actions.

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**Keywords:** Strategic Actions, Rural Development, Khuzestan Province, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Screening.

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