Health Impact Assessment: Linking Public Health to Community Decisions

Shannon Griffin
US EPA Office of Research and Development
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INTRODUCTION TO HIA

“The highest standards of health should be within reach of all, without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic, or social condition.”

-Constitution of the World Health Organization
Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Programs, policies, plans, and projects can have intended and unintended health consequences, especially if discussions in the decision-making process are limited to a particular set of issues.

Health in All Policies is a strategy that:

- Strengthens the link between health and other policies, across sectors and at all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people.
- Considers the intentional or unintentional impact of non-health policies on individual or population health.

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What is Health?

Health

“A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being; not merely the absence of disease and infirmity”

- Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization

Health is an indicator of quality of life
What is Health?

Good health is determined by more than money spent on health care.


What Makes Us Healthy

- Health Behaviors: 40%
- Clinical Care: 30%
- Physical Environment: 20%
- Social and Economic Factors: 10%
What is health?

The factors known to directly or indirectly impact human health are referred to as determinants of health.

Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Health impact assessment (HIA) is one of the key strategies for moving toward a health in all policies perspective

- Offers a comprehensive approach to health
- Applicable in a broad range of decision-making contexts

Photos Courtesy of J. Dills, Georgia Health Policy Center
What is HIA?

Health Impact Assessment

“A systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods and considers input from stakeholders to determine the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects.”

What is HIA?

In a nutshell, HIAs:
Evaluate how a proposed policy, plan, program, or project...

...may affect...

Social, Economic & Political Factors
Living & Working Conditions
Public Services & Infrastructure
Individual Behaviors
Individual Factors
Health

...lead to health outcomes...

...and provide recommendations for impact management.
History of HIA in the U.S.

First HIA in the U.S. 1999

Completed HIAs (N=1)

CA 1
History of HIA in the U.S.

HIAs in the U.S. 2009 (10 years)
Completed HIAs (N=54)

Health Impact Project Founded 2009
History of HIA in the U.S.

HIAs in the U.S.
2014 (15 years)
Completed and In Progress HIAs (N=308)

Map created through a partnership between Health Impact Project and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Healthy Community Design Initiative
HIAs in the U.S. mid-2015
Completed and In Progress HIAs (N=354+)

Map created through a partnership between Health Impact Project and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Healthy Community Design Initiative
Context of HIA

Who is Performing HIAs in the U.S.?

- Government Agencies: 49%
- Educational Institutions: 22%
- Non-Profit Organizations: 26%
- Other: 3%

Slide Content Courtesy of J. Dills, Georgia Health Policy Center
Levels of Decision-Making Informed by HIAs in the U.S.

- Local: 54%
- State: 18%
- County: 12%
- Regional: 7%
- Federal: 6%
- Other: 3%
Context of HIA

Broad Applicability/Flexibility
HIA has been promoted throughout the world as a tool for protecting and promoting public health because of its applicability in a broad range of decision-making contexts.

Source: Health Impact Project. Data Visualization: HIA in the United States; accessed 7/17/2015

Other includes: Community Development, Criminal Justice, Economic Policy, Gambling, Physical Activity, and Water
HIA in California (n=82)

HIA in California

Organization type:
- Educational Institution: 18%
- Government Agency: 39%
- Nonprofit: 40%
- Other: 3%

Sector type:
- Agriculture, Food and Drug: 26%
- Built Environment: 7%
- Education: 12%
- Housing: 11%
- Labor and Employment: 24%
- Natural Resources and Energy: 11%
- Transportation: 10%
- Other: 5%

Why perform an HIA?

Benefits of HIA

- Promotes a greater understanding of health and the health impacts of decisions
- Improves the evidence on which stakeholder and policy decisions are made
- Engages and empowers communities
- Provides recommendations for changes to the design, adoption, or implementation of proposed decisions to include health
- Promotes healthy and sustainable communities
Why perform an HIA?

**What is Equity?**

*Equity in health implies that ideally everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and, more pragmatically, that none should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential, if it can be avoided.* – Margaret Whitehead, 1992
Health Impact Assessment: The Process

- Screening
- Scoping
- Assessment
- Recommendations
- Reporting
- Monitoring

Engagement with Stakeholders and Community Members
Steps of HIA

**Screening**, to determine whether a proposal is likely to have health effects and whether the HIA will provide useful information.

**Scoping**, to establish the scope of health effects that will be included in the HIA, the populations affected, the sources of data and the methods to be used.

**Assessment**, which is a two step process that first describes the baseline health status and then assesses potential impacts.

*Slide Content Courtesy of J. Dills, Georgia Health Policy Center*
**Steps of HIA**

**Recommendations** suggest design alternatives that could be implemented to improve health or action that could be taken to manage health effects.

**Reporting** presents findings and recommendations to decision makers and stakeholders.

**Monitoring and evaluation** includes monitoring the implementation of HIA recommendations. Evaluation can be of process, impact or outcomes.

*Slide Content Courtesy of J. Dills, Georgia Health Policy Center*
Overview of the HIA Process

HIA Guidance Documents

A number of guides and handbooks have been developed to inform and direct the HIA practice in the U.S. Two of those are highlighted below:

Available at: http://advance.captus.com/planning/hia2xx/pdf/Minimum%20Elements%20and%20Practice%20Standards%20for%20HIA%203.0.pdf

Available at: http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13229&page=1
HIA EXAMPLE
HIA of the Mojave Desert Solar Energy Projects and Tribal Communities

- Conducted by National Indian Justice Center
- Funded through Health Impact Project

http://www.nijc.org/pdfs/HIA%20Project/FinalReport-FtIrwinHIA.pdf
Purpose of the HIA

- Evaluate the potential health impacts of the proposed Fort Irwin photo-voltaic (PV) array facility which will be located in the Mojave Desert region of California

- Focus on the potential health impacts upon American Indian Tribes with homelands in the region
Screening Overview

- Project has the potential to impact the health of tribal communities within the region or who have cultural affiliation with the region.
- Identified a number of potential health impacts related to limiting access to and protection of tribal cultural sites, destruction of native plants and displacement of animals near the site.
- HIA would enhance capacity for effective Tribal Consultation.
- NIJC met with decision makers and tribal government representatives to gauge willingness to support the HIA process.
Scoping Overview

Key Decision-makers
- DOD – Army at Ft Irwin Army Base
- Public Utility Commission
- CA Department of Energy

Key Stakeholders
- Fort Mojave Indian Reservation
- Chemehuevi Indian Reservation
- Colorado River Indian Reservation
- Other tribal communities with cultural resources in the project area
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Local public health agencies
- Community organizations
- Local residents surrounding the proposed sites
- Local businesses
Scoping Overview

2010 American Indian and Alaska Native Health Assessment in California identified three major determinants of health:

1. Sovereignty and Self-Determination
2. Cultural Revitalization
3. Access to Culturally Competent and Affordable Healthcare
Overarching Recommendations

- Engage Mojave Desert Tribes in meaningful consultation prior to construction.
- Employ cultural monitors to evaluate sites for native plants used in tribal cultural practices and to identify landscapes of importance.
- Develop a quarterly meeting schedule with tribal representatives in anticipation of future projects.
- Construction contractor should develop mitigation strategies for potential infectious diseases associated with temporary transient workforces.
- Consider additional observation in an alternative season for the desert tortoise.
HIA at EPA

- Evaluating HIA as a decision-support tool for promoting sustainable and healthy communities
  - Gerena School HIA (Springfield, MA)
  - Proctor Creek Boone Boulevard Green Street Project HIA and Expanded HIA (Atlanta, GA)
  - HIA of Proposed Code Changes for Onsite Sewage Disposal Systems (Suffolk County, NY)

Stay tuned for the HIA roadmap in EPA’s C-FERST!

The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Resource and Tool Compilation: A Comprehensive Toolkit for New and Experienced HIA Practitioners in the U.S.

Thank you!

Presenter contact information: Shannon Griffin
griffin.shannon@epa.gov

For technical information, contact Florence Fulk:
fulk.florence@epa.gov
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