

“Capacity Building and Strengthening Institutional Arrangement”

Workshop: “Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
(for Assessors)”

Environmental Impact Report Assessment

Environment and Health

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Environment and Health (1)

Human health has often been taken into account in EIAs and SEAs.

However, “even when health aspects are addressed, assessments tend to estimate only the negative effects resulting from expected changes in [physical] environmental media, neglecting the effects of modifications on other health determinants, such as socio-economic ones, and the possibility of promoting health benefits”.

Health is dependent on both environmental and socio-economic determinants.

Further, the human health component of an EIA or SEA is not generally undertaken by a health professional, but rather by an environmental or social scientist, further diminishing the consideration of health.

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Human Health in the EIA Convention and SEA Protocol

Project EIAs have rarely provided sufficient emphasis on such impacts, despite the fundamental importance of human health, focusing instead on the physical and biological environment.

The Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment attempts to redress this imbalance by placing a special emphasis on human health, reflecting the Declaration of the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, London, 16—18 June 1999 (London Declaration on Action in Partnership), which included:

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- **Cross-cutting action: 7.** We will carry out environmental impact assessments fully covering impacts on human health and safety. We invite countries to introduce and/or carry out strategic assessments of the environment and health impacts of proposed policies, plans, programmes and general rules. We invite international financial institutions also to apply these procedures. There will be appropriate participation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and members of the public in the procedures set out in this paragraph.
- **Economic perspectives on environment and health: 45.** We will develop, so far as is needed, our capacities to carry out economic analysis, in order to place this tool at the service of efforts to meet our commitments, and in particular to strengthen our national systems of strategic environmental impact assessment so as to include health concerns, and to ensure the integration of environment and health considerations into policies (paragraph 21(a)). We will promote the full internalization of environment and health costs, and the preparation of strategies for achieving this.

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The European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) acts as the steering committee for the series of ministerial conferences on environment and health, held by the World Health Organization (WHO) every five years. The Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health was held in Budapest 2004.

Environment and Health (5)

The consensus of an *International Workshop on Public Participation and Health Aspects in Strategic Environmental Assessment* was that health should be more broadly addressed in SEAs than at present. As a minimum, 'exposure' (i.e. health effects arising from pollutants, etc) should be included. Other issues that might be addressed include:

- Health determinants and effects (with a need to specify which determinants and priority risk factors are to be addressed);
- Positive and negative health effects (using appropriate indicators); and
- Effects on particularly vulnerable groups.

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In the draft guidance on implementation in the United Kingdom of the SEA Directive, a distinction is made between population and human health on the one hand, and social inclusiveness and economic development on the other; the former is part of SEA, whereas the latter is only part of the broader Sustainability Appraisal.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) methodologies have been developed in a number of countries. However, HIA and SEA have evolved separately and there are differences in methodology and terminology. In addition, health (not just environmental health) and environment are generally the responsibilities of different government ministries and authorities. It is not clear exactly how HIA should be integrated within SEA. However, it is clear that there are opportunities for integration and efficiency gains, for example in public participation.

The draft guidance for the implementation of EC SEA Directive illustrates how health may be fully integrated into SEA, providing examples of SEA objectives and indicators for human health. Similarly, there are examples of HIAs that have been undertaken that illustrate health and planning authorities working together, and that would also fit straightforwardly into an SEA methodology.