

Intro: Health Impact Assessment #1 a useful & effective policy, program, or plan assessment tool

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What is Health Impact Assessment?

The World Health Organization (2012) defines Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as “A combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population.”

HIA can serve as a tool/institutional mechanism for different sectors of the economy, which can be used during planning and decision making processes to examine and assess the health benefits that can be achieved, and the health costs which can be avoided when taking into consideration the links between health, sustainable development and the human/social dimension.

Which are the steps of the HIA Process?

The HIA process is composed of **six steps** as follows:

1. Screening entails determining whether a proposal (be it a policy, program or plan) is likely to have negative and/or positive impacts on health and health equity. A decision is taken at this stage whether the proposal would benefit from a HIA and whether the HIA process will be the best option to address such concerns/impacts.

2. Scoping is carried out following a decision to undertake a HIA. It identifies HIA goals and objectives, sets the framework for assessments which need to be conducted and identifies the information which needs to be collected to measure the extent of health impacts and determine affected populations.

3. Assessment. Indicators for health status, social, economic and environmental health determinants identified in the scoping stage are used to guide data collection, assessments and compilation of evidence based information. Data quality and data collection methodology appraisals are also carried out.

4. Recommendations stage involves prioritizing the assessed health impacts, based on likelihood of impact, distribution of its effects and concerns highlighted by impacted populations. Recommendations for action are also developed during this stage, and are based on prioritized impacts.



5. The Reporting stage concerns the presentation of the HIA results and recommendations to the HIA's stakeholders. This takes place via a pre-planned dissemination strategy, and should be carried out in a format which is both accessible and easily understood by the HIA's target audience/s.

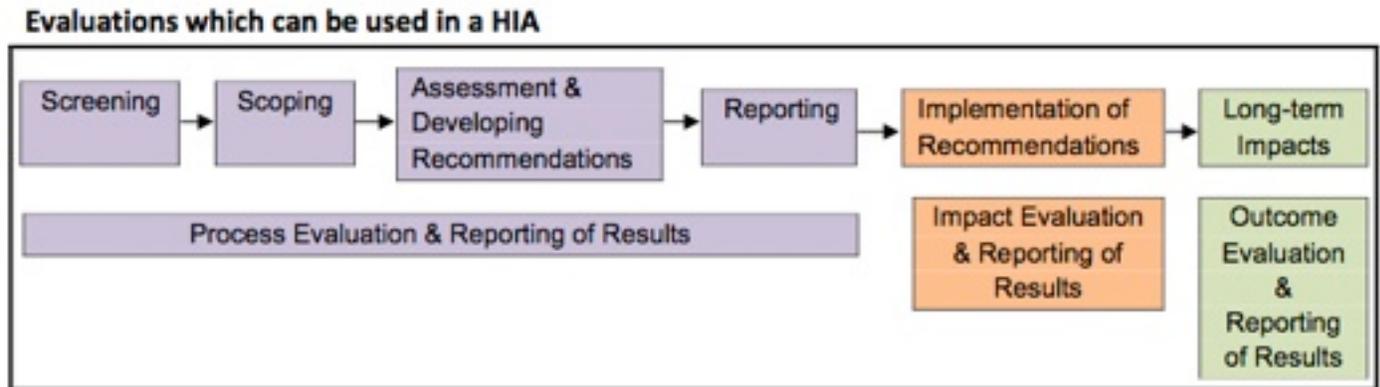
6. The Monitoring and Evaluation stage is actually conducted throughout all the HIA stages. It is employed to determine whether the HIA was effective in carrying out its objectives and ultimately achieving its health goals, and helps to identify areas in the process which may need to be improved. Evaluation options which can be employed throughout the HIA are shown in the diagram on the next page.

For More Information:

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