



Title **Quick guide to Health Impact Assessment**

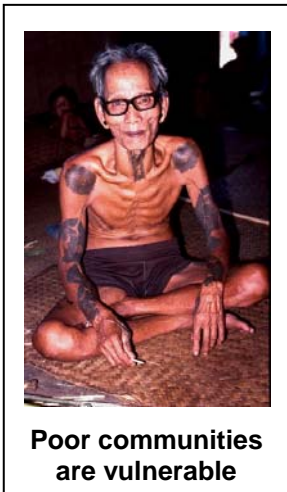
Audience **Impact assessment managers and advisers
in multinational corporations**

Aim **Overview of reasons, benefits, skills and trends**

Many corporations state in their business principles that they seek to do no harm, to contribute to sustainable development, to manage all risks, and to benefit society. For each new project they have procedures to answer the following questions.

- Could this project do harm?
- What must be done to prevent the harm?
- Are all known risks being effectively managed?
- What kind of risk, how much, and for whom?
- Could this project have unexpected benefits?

What kind of risk to health?
Malaria, HIV, diarrhoea, poisoning, malnutrition, traffic injury, depression, violent injury, alcoholism, and loss of well-being.

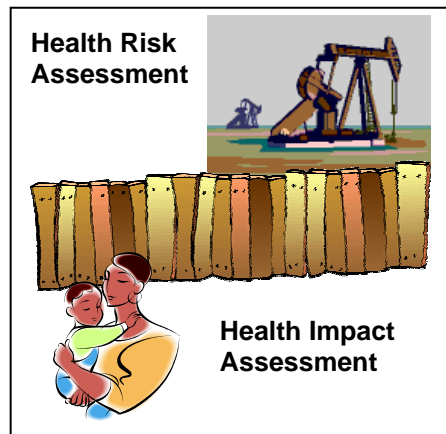


Harm can happen

Harm to people can happen in complex, unexpected ways and affect their health and well-being. The ways include: creation of mosquito breeding sites, influx of construction workers, environmental emissions, damage to food stocks, undermining local authority, creating unrealistic expectations, involuntary resettlement, inflation of market prices, social disruption, commercial sex, and increase of road traffic. Poor communities are more vulnerable.

Outside the fence

Inside the project fence, health and safety issues are well understood and managed by Health, Safety and Environment management systems. There are issues that cross the fence, like the fear of explosions, use of hazardous materials, and emissions. But there are also wider issues that affect the health of surrounding communities and these are identified through health impact assessment.



Gains

Projects can bring health gains to surrounding communities through employment, education, economic growth, health care, and infrastructure.

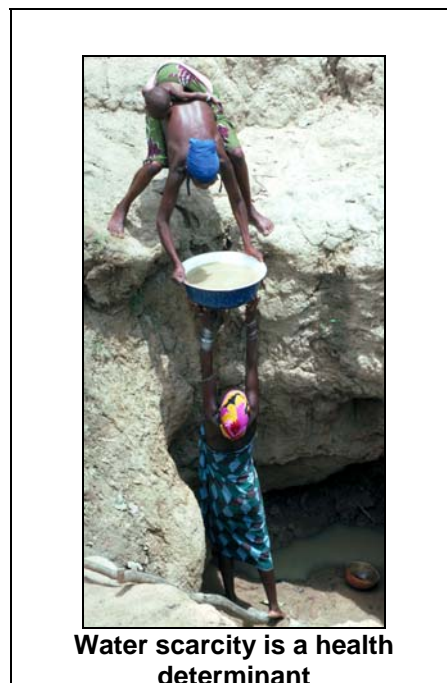
HIA provides a structured method of looking ahead at how both positive and negative impacts could arise - during construction, operation, and decommissioning stages. It provides practical safeguards against harm and initiatives for health gain. It is a continuing process requiring the engagement of all stakeholders.

It is integrated with social and environmental assessment and forms part of sustainable development and social performance management. The method is based on separation of health outcomes and health determinants: concepts which are new to many people.

Competence

Knowledge and experience of HIA is still very limited both within and outside many corporations. So capacity building is essential and defined levels of competency are required.

In general, neither corporate staff, nor the environmental consultancy companies have appropriate competences. A framework is emerging in the oil and gas sector that recognises four levels of competence. A limited number of training courses are available.



Competence framework

Level	Knowledge obtained	Background of participants
1	What is required	General manager
2	How to manage it, the skills required and how to find them	HSE, EIA, SIA
3	How to do it	Health related education, experience
4	How to change it	International research

Trends

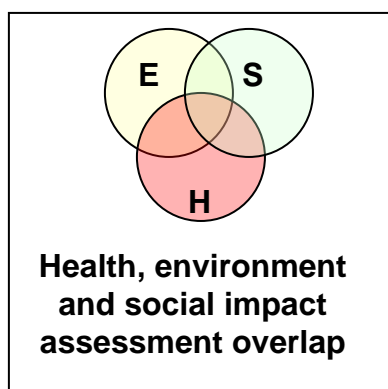
Health Impact Assessment is joining Environmental Impact Assessment and Social Impact Assessment as both a regulatory requirement and an essential planning tool. The impetus has come from the project level (integration of health in EIA), government policy level (healthy public policy), and trans-national policy level (Treaty of Amsterdam).

Guidelines have been published by development banks (World Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank), government departments (ODA/DFID, Health Canada, En-health Australia), trade associations (OGP/IPIECA), and multinational corporations (Shell).

During 2005, the International Finance Corporation modified its Performance Standards, formerly known as safeguard policies. These form the basis of the Equator Principles and so affect most lending banks.

IFC draft standard

“The client will evaluate the potential risks and impacts to the health and safety of the affected community during the design, construction, operation, and decommissioning ... “



Costs of HIA

The cost of HIA is shared with EIA and is commensurate with the project stage. Impact assessment is iterative. It starts by being cheap and rapid. It adds time, staff, and fieldwork as required. Safeguards are often win-win and small changes to design or location are often less expensive than crisis management.

Benefits of HIA

Corporate social responsibility is a rapidly evolving concept. Companies today are expected to do more than turn a profit. They are expected to consider the impacts of their work, including on human health and well-being. HIA is at the cutting edge of this process.

Corporate benefits of doing HIA well include:

- Reputation
- Risk management
- Risk rating
- Sustainability
- License to operate
- Employee retention
- Cost of borrowing
- Benefit to society

Current example of reputation damage – mining sector

The Government Guyana is being called on to immediately withdraw three Guyana Geology and Mines Commission reports addressing the environmental and social (including health) impacts of mining in the Upper Mazaruni. The competence of the impact assessors has been heavily criticised by an independent international reviewer. Numerous health concerns were raised. (31 Jan 2006 www.stabroeknews.com)

Examples of negative health impacts in the mining sector

Communicable diseases	<p>Iron and magnesium mines in India have been halted by malaria.</p> <p>Tin mining in Zaire has lead to higher levels of schistosomiasis.</p> <p>In South African mines the incidence of tuberculosis rose dramatically.</p> <p>Sexually Transmitted Infections are commonly associated with large-scale mining.</p>
Non-communicable diseases	<p>Lead mines in Nigeria caused widespread lead poisoning.</p> <p>Residents in a US mining community were exposed to lead and cadmium and the prevalence of kidney, heart and skin diseases was significantly elevated.</p> <p>Pollution from a Papua New Guinean mine has threatened rivers, food crops, and fish.</p>
Malnutrition	<p>Changes in land use have led to loss of wild food resources.</p> <p>Indigenous people displaced by a Papua New Guinean mine became increasingly reliant on imported rice and tinned fish.</p> <p>Traditional subsistence from growing and trading was eroded.</p>
Injury	<p>Abandoned tin workings in Nigeria have caused drowning.</p> <p>Occupational injury is widespread.</p> <p>Traffic related injury is associated with the movement of heavy vehicles around mines.</p>

Source: Birley (1995), "Health Impact Assessment of Development Projects".

44 Woodbines Avenue
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey
KT1 2AY

Birley HIA
Health Impact Associates
T: + 44 (0) 208 546 0823
E: consult@birleyhia.co.uk
W: www.BirleyHIA.co.uk