IAIA Webinar: Understanding Environmental Impacts on Vulnerable Populations through Psycho-Social Impact Assessment (PSIA)

Part 2: Questions and Answers

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This question and answer session with Michael was recorded to respond to the large number of questions received during the original webinar that there wasn't time to address. Questions were grouped by category. The questions below include a time stamp to match with the PSIA Q&A recording at http://www.iaia.org/webinars.php.

General

1.   What are the specific considerations to make when deciding if psycho-social impact assessment is warranted? (1:55)
2.   Can you explain more about the regulatory, legal or methodological arguments for inclusion of psycho-social impact assessment (PSIA)? (3:33)
3.   Is it better to do a psycho-social impact assessment at the project's design or implementation stage? (7:11)
4.   Can PSIA be done by an SIA practitioner who is a social scientist not trained in psychology or does it require the input of a psychologist for better rigor? (9:21)
5.   How do you mix social science approaches in impact assessment? (11:27)
6.   Is PSIA stand-alone or can it be integrated/appended to social impact assessment (SIA)? (13:18)

Theory

7.   How does human psychology change with environmental changes, and accordingly, what role does the environment play in this type of assessment? (14:06)
8.   How do you account for life changes and psychological distress that occur with or without development projects? (15:48)
9.   How much does your approach differ when working with people from other cultures? Do you find that western centric models are still applicable? (18:35)

Method

10.   Does general opposition to big development projects make it difficult to get true measures of stress, anxiety or depression related to a proposed action; would it not be better to reserve such measures for post-project assessment or after a disaster? (21:05)

11. Can you provide an example of how to eliminate bias in the "careful" selection of samples? (25:27)
12. In the jurisdictions where I typically work there seems to be a bias against impact information that is "subjective" vs. something that can be measured physically. How do you suggest overcoming this? (28:08)
13. What methodology do you use to project the future scenario if you rely mostly on qualitative data? (31:40)
14. Given your focus on assessing after a turbulence has occurred, how do you do an anticipatory assessment, including mitigation and management measures? (36:32)
15. Once you have reconstructed a baseline, assessed the current frame and projected a future frame, how do you identify the best mitigations to address the main impacts you have identified? (38:36)
16. How do you identify vulnerable people? (42:58)
17. Can you address the selection/development of social vulnerability indicators? (48:32)
18. How can I develop PSIA tools to incorporate into Environmental Health Studies? (53:04)
19. Can you provide some guidelines or a handbook on PSIA? (57:52)
20. How do you measure the effectiveness of PSIA? (58:39)
21. Do you need to set quantifiable thresholds to identify projects that cause irreversible psychological harm? (1:01:28)

Case/examples

22. Do you have an example where SIA has been used in the context of assessing historical/legacy issues associated with environmental impacts and community dislocation in developing countries? (1:03:33)
23. How have communities in general responded to your work? (1:06:41)
24. Do you formally follow up with information to specific communities? (1:09:59)
25. Tribes I have worked with have a specific sense of "owning the data." Have you encountered this? (1:11:27)
26. When turbulence occurs in some pattern of repetition, floods for example, do people's adaptations become normal for them? (1:15:11)

Applications/Interventions

27. Can you speak to some of the ways you can communicate the necessity of P-SIAs to regulatory agencies so that they recognize the positive sides of integrating community wisdom to their decisions, despite the risk of this assessment potentially pointing towards halting a project. (1:19:59)
28. How would you advise that companies deal with the high demands they place on their communities in engagement? (1:26:51)

29. Are there studies that value the change before and after interventions to reduce psycho-social impact on affected populations? (1:30:25)
30. How can PSIA on urban developments on a 'smaller' scale improve SIA without funding? (1:32:13)
31. Could you tell us how the Indigenous communities you have worked with were able to mobilize to have PSIA conducted for their issues, and what were those issues? (1:34:16)
32. What sets PSIA in contexts like a terrorist attack apart from other contexts like climate change, waste/nuclear disasters and others? (1:38:21)
33. How can I better stress the cumulative impacts of "modern agriculture" approaches and a consumerism-oriented development model on disappearance of some climate resilient farm management strategies in Third World rural communities like Haiti? (1:42:14)
34. What experience have you had in resettlement planning, implementation and pre-audit, and what lessons have you learned? (1:45:33)
35. How can we improve the response of proponents towards Project Action Plans when there are emerging project-triggered issues? (1:50:15)
36. What management and mitigation measures can proponents use to address psycho-social effects? (1:53:39)
37. Impact Assessment presumes the rule of law. Yet many people live under extreme social turbulence---organized crime, gangs, violence, delinquency, drug trafficking, protest and revolt, terrorism, paralyzing corruption---absent state control and the ability to assure that human needs are met. Does PSIA have a role in such situations? (1:57:06)

Final question

38. What would you say are the main benefits and challenges with the implementation of psycho-social impact assessments? (2:01:06)