

SIA Section meeting

Thursday 8 May 2008

Perth

Australia

Present:

Charlie Wolf

Martin de los Rios

Ana Maria Esteves

Alfredo Anderson

Jacki Schirmer

Frank Vanclay

Scott Phillips

Ed Ely

Ruth Davies

Rabel Burdge

Peter Hoppe

James Baines

Jacquie Tracey

Sheri Coakes

Takehiko Marayana

Belinda Strachotta

Phillip Belling

Daniel Marsh

Marie Verschuer

Ilse Aucamp

Introduction:

The meeting was chaired by Ilse Aucamp, the current SIA section chair. Charlotte Bingham (IAIA president) and Lea den Broeder (Chair section coordinating committee) attended the meeting for a short while. The previous minutes was accepted by all members present. The following topics were discussed at the section meeting:

Participation from the section:

The importance of section members participating in section activities was underlined. The current experience is that there is limited participation from the section. There was a call for more support from section members to the section chair for next year's conference in Ghana. Even if people could not attend the conference, it would be useful to get their input into the programme. There was also a request that members suggesting activities at the conference should copy the section chair in their communication with the

programme coordinators. The reason for this is to ensure that there are no overlaps between different social section activities, and it would allow the section chair to look after the interest of the section members. It was decided that there is a wealth of expertise and knowledge in the SIA section, and that the section chair should tap into that resource. She would approach certain people to assist her, and they could point her to others, by doing that the involvement could be encouraged using a snowball effect.

General comments on the conference

People expressed that they enjoy the round table format which has been utilised by the SIA section now for the past four years. It must be ensured that discussions are focussed and direct questions are posed. The World Café format was seen as something that should be explored next year, especially if particular issues need to be discussed. There was a feeling that there were too many concurrent sessions at any given time, and it limited people's opportunity to participate. Given people only five minutes to present is not adequate, it is not enough time to convey any message.

Integration with other sections

The section articulated that the principle of joint sessions is acceptable to them. There was a joint session with Public Participation, Health Impact Assessment and Social Impact Assessment. This session did not reach its full potential, but it is something that can be explored further in Ghana. The sharing of issues is important to everybody, and there are many other disciplines that overlap with the social field that should be explored, i.e. disasters, biodiversity, privacy etc. It was mentioned that the World Café format may be a good way of exploring these issues.

List serv

The list serv remains a problem. IAIA HQ is exploring solutions from an IT perspective. The Health Impact Assessment section requested that the list serv and section lists should be opened to the general public as a public communication forum, and not only limited to members of IAIA. As an experiment, the HIA list serv will be opened. There was a general feeling that this would enhance networking amongst practitioners internationally. The section chair encouraged those present to join the list serv and the section list, to ensure better communication. There was an interest in people setting up "communities of professionals" amongst SIA practitioners in their countries of residence for direct sharing, which could be linked to the international list serv. In general SIA communities are relatively small, so there was a question about the viability of such communities. People were encouraged to try it on a country-based level. The section chair shared that South Africa is trying to set

up such a community, but it needs a definite champion and time allocated to it. Once again, because the organisation is run by volunteers it remains a challenge.

SIA bibliography

The SIA bibliography is seen as a useful tool. It is a public tool on the IAIA website. Every practitioner can add their own references, reports and other grey literature on the bibliography. It includes annotated (short abstracts/notes). IAIA have committed to continue hosting the bibliography. It is a priority for the IT department and the new version will be up on the website in a matter of weeks. Frank Vanclay will then send an e-mail to alert everybody. James Baines will count every two months to see how many updates there were, and send it to the list serv. Practitioners are encouraged to use this tool, and encourage their colleagues to use it as well.

SIA Principles

There was a discussion about the International Principles of SIA. Some practitioners find it hard to apply, whilst others find it a useful tool. There is a feeling amongst the section members that the experience of practitioners regarding the SIA Principles should be explored. The initial thinking was that the principles should be followed by guidelines. It was suggested that the SIA section should have a session in Ghana next year where they revisit the Principles of SIA. Questions like whether the principles travelled well over time, whether there should be international guidelines etc. could be explored. It was suggested that a small working group who will do action research on the myriad of available guidelines should be started. The Delphi technique could be used, and the group could operate via e-mail. It must be ensured that there is representation from different regions. The SIA section needs to have a philosophical discussion on the revision of the principles, and be open about guidelines.

Planning for IAIA 09 in Ghana

Numerous informal ideas were shared about planning for the IAIA 09 conference in Ghana, with the theme of "Impact Assessment and Human Well-being". Some of the topics to explore were:

- Strategic thinking – what is our agenda/larger purpose?
- The social sector should set the social agenda – how does SIA serve the social agenda?
- What policy, changes, legislation strategy is necessary in our field?
- We need to assert ourselves – SIA doesn't help fixing things, but can be used as a planning tool

- Sustainability
- Strategies for promoting well-being.

It was decided that a SIA Section Steering Committee should be established to assist the section chair with SIA business, especially planning for the conference in Ghana. The people on the Steering Committee are willing to be called on if help should be needed. The following people committed to be available on the Steering Committee:

Charlie Wolf
Martin de los Rios
Ana Maria Esteves
Jacki Schirmer
Frank Vanclay
Scott Phillips
Ed Ely
Ruth Davies
Peter Hoppe
James Baines
Sheri Coakes
Ilse Aucamp

The meeting was closed and followed shortly after by a very enjoyable conference banquet, with lovely food and interesting dancing from all the delegates.