

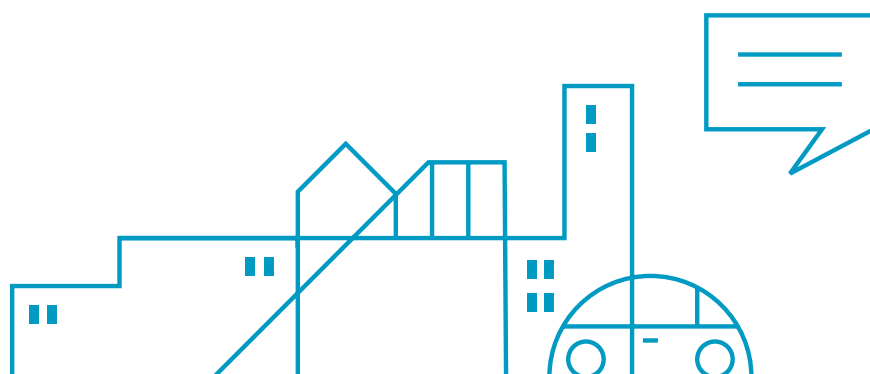
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# Impact Assessment Frontiers Part 2: People, Health and Equality

Thought pieces from UK and International practice



Guest Editor  
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Welcome to the twenty-first edition of the IEMA Impact Assessment Outlook Journal. In this volume we are taking a journey to explore some of the more specialist ‘people-focused’ impact assessments. Some of these have arisen from specific legislation, others to fill gaps on important issues that fall between other impact assessment requirements. Whilst the examples focus on delivery as standalone assessments, there are also opportunities for integration, both with each other and with other types of impact assessment.

In this volume we hear from the field’s experts on some exciting and innovative types of assessment. We explore Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment, Gender Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, and Human Rights Impact Assessment.

Some of the articles focus on introducing these specialisms, others build on those introductions and provide some in-depth case study examples. The case studies cover instances demonstrating the real value the assessments have added and also reflections on the process of developing the conditions for such impact assessments to occur. The latter is demonstrated through two contrasting experiences of developing Health Impact Assessment, one from Italy where the journey is beginning, and another from Wales where requirements, after a long journey, have now been enshrined in statute (though, as the article notes, that is simply the start of a new journey).

This series of articles is reflective about what the future could look like if these assessments, which have historically been at the margins, were to become mainstream. That vision is of the major decisions, in the public and private sector, being developed and implemented with foresight and understanding of the

implications for key societal outcomes, particularly for vulnerable or marginalised groups. That the discussed impact assessments are not currently a routine and widespread undertaking is, in itself, thought provoking and, in this editor’s view, concerning.

*This series of articles is reflective about what the future could look like if these assessments, which have historically been at the margins, were to become mainstream.*

Looking into the volume we see a thread of valuable impact assessments that are challenged by a lack of clear and consistent triggers for them to be undertaken. For example, child rights are secured through various legislations in the UK, but without a legal requirement for Child Rights Impact Assessment itself. Similar experiences are encountered across several other specialist assessments.

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Gender is recognised in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, but generally lacks a legislative basis for assessment; Equality has grounding UK legislation but without requiring Equality Impact Assessment specifically. Even Human Rights with all their recognition and near universal support have variable implementation and application of impact assessment processes. There is a failure to operationalise these freedoms and values through requirements for impact assessments that protect and apply them in specific decision-making processes. Health Impact Assessment has a mixed experience. In some jurisdictions there are statutory requirements, in others the basis is entirely voluntary. Even where there are legal requirements to consider health integrated within the more mainstream assessments such as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) there are also constant pressures to narrow and limit the scope of understanding, preventing a full picture of what a decision would mean in terms of likely and significant effects for people and vulnerable groups.

This volume puts a spotlight on some key impact assessments that ask crucial and sometimes uncomfortable questions about impacts 'to people', including those with little voice and little power. These are, however, questions that a mature society needs to acknowledge and engage with, not just when convenient and low risk, but in all major decisions.

Challenge yourself to read the volume with the following question in mind: 'what are we failing to take into account when we don't have these impact assessments?'



# Mainstreaming Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) came from the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014,<sup>1</sup> which requires the Scottish Government and all local authorities, health boards and other public bodies to report every three years on the steps they have taken to secure better, or further the effect of, the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>2</sup> There are other similar measures, for example, The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.<sup>3</sup>

CRWIA (typically called CRIA in the rest of the UK, so CRWIA and CRIA used interchangeably hereon) is one of the general measures of implementation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and recommends that all levels of government—national, regional and local—should complete a CRWIA as part of any policy development. I would argue that this should also apply for large projects that could have impacts on children and young people.

There is no criteria or significance threshold for needing a CRWIA, but the need is based on the likely impacts of a scheme, policy, and resultant measures. A flow chart process was created by the Scottish Government which has a number of questions to prompt when a CRWIA would be required.<sup>4</sup> In 2018, the Department for Education developed a CRIA template with experts in civil society, including the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) UK, for use within Government departments. It is a tool for civil servants to consider the impacts on children's rights when

developing new policy or legislation, and is part of a wider training package can be found on Civil Service Learning.<sup>5</sup>

So, are there any good examples of CRWIAs that you can go and read? Yes, there are. At a policy level, there is the Strategic Projects Transport Review 2 CRWIA.<sup>6</sup> The consultation included the Scottish Youth Parliament, and a National Equality Workshop was also held with equalities groups and organisations. The CRWIA was used to identify problems and opportunities.

*The aim of the CRWIA is not to create more paperwork, it is to actively promote change and ensure that the Rights of Children and Young People are considered when decisions that affect them are being made in local or national government.*

At a project level, equality is considered at the early stages of major projects, in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) objectives or referenced within wider project objectives. However, typically, there doesn't tend to be specific reference to Child Rights and Wellbeing.

1 [www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents)

2 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No.5 (2003) General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts.4, 42 and 44, para.6)

3 [www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/2/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/2/contents)

4 [www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessment-guidance/pages/7/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessment-guidance/pages/7/)

5 [www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-learning](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-learning) [login required]

6 SPR2 Report Template for Accessibility ([transport.gov.scot](http://transport.gov.scot))

So what? Well, my gut feeling is that children and young people are not necessarily being considered sufficiently in the development of policy, measures or projects, and that this could be improved through raising awareness of these assessments and what could be and should be done. Some suggestions:

- Community consultation is a very well-established practice but typically doesn't focus on children and young people. It would be easy to refocus this to ensure that specific consideration is given to engaging effectively with under 18s, holding events at schools, ensuring consultation materials are engaging, digital and easily accessible online. Don't expect the children and young people to come to you, go to them. Perhaps specific workshops could be help with key groups (i.e., youth groups, youth parliament or NSPCC). As with any impact assessment, the key is to record this process and how this engagement has influenced the outcomes.
- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) includes the assessment of children and young people since the characteristic of 'age' is a Protected Characteristic (e.g., within England's Equality Act 2010).<sup>7</sup> It is recommended that discussions are held early in any policy/measure/project to discuss how these EqIA and CRWIA can be streamlined/combined or identify any conflicts between the processes early and discuss how they can be resolved. The aim of the CRWIA is not to create more paperwork, it is to actively promote change and ensure that the Rights of Children and Young People are considered when decisions that affect them are being made in local or national government.

Currently, there is no statutory obligation for the UK Government to conduct CRIAs in all policy areas affecting children. There is also a lack of awareness about when the public and private sector should engage in CRWIA.

Looking to the future, a simple approach should be adopted to ensure that CRWIA intentions are considered fully at key decisions stages, with a clear mechanism for recording what decisions were taken and why. Outcomes should be recorded centrally and reviewed regularly to ensure duties are being met and awareness raised. The main goal should be to ensure a pragmatic, effective and fit for purpose approach that ensures that the rights of children and young people are considered, and that this knowledge is used to improve policies, projects and measures.

<sup>7</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)



# Advancing Gender Impact Assessment

## Gender Impact Assessment – what and why?

In recent years, companies and governments have come to realise that integrating gender considerations into project planning is a key component of their wider sustainability ambitions. This is reflected in their commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 5 of which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

An effective tool to help projects contribute towards SDG 5 (and the SDGs as a whole) is Gender Impact Assessment (GIA). GIA is the evaluation of project impacts on individuals based on their gender identity, roles, and other intersecting factors. Large-scale projects are more likely to have gendered impacts such as:

- The inadequate inclusion of women in consultations regarding land acquisition and compensation;
- Loss of land-based livelihoods and resources, which women are typically more dependent on than their male counterparts;
- A subsequent increase in women's unpaid workload;
- Disconnecting women from their traditional support networks;
- Increased risks of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence due to project-induced influx of male workers; and
- Consequent social and economic disempowerment of women.<sup>8</sup>

A GIA aims to identify and mitigate these types of impacts on women, consider the intersection of gender and other identity factors, and generate long-term benefits by enabling women's empowerment and participation and addressing deep-rooted gender norms.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, projects not only align with gender equality principles, but also unlock the many benefits women bring to projects and their communities, while avoiding potential conflicts, litigation, or even project shutdown.<sup>10</sup>

However, various barriers are preventing GIA from becoming standard practice. GIA is not typically required by legislation in most countries, and there is often a lack of awareness, institutional support, resources and funding, and gender expertise that hinders the commissioning of a GIA. Meanwhile, guidance on gender-sensitive approaches to projects remains scattered across various sources and exists only as generalised references within industry standards, in which gender is often one of several factors used to assess individuals' vulnerability to project impacts.<sup>11</sup> As a result, projects and policies can inadvertently perpetuate gender disparities.

<sup>8</sup> Hill, C., Madden, C. & Collins, N. (2017) *A Guide to Gender Impact Assessment for the Extractive Industries*. Oxfam.

<sup>9</sup> Peletz, N. & Hanna, K. (2019) *Gender Analysis and Impact Assessment: Canadian and International Experiences*. Canadian International Resources and Development Institute (CIRDI); and Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) (2019) *Gender Impact Assessment and Monitoring Tool*. WECF.

<sup>10</sup> WECF (2019) (no. 2)

<sup>11</sup> Bogrand, A., Brodeur, C., Mbenna, D., Akoli Atine, J., Ayebare, C., Twesigye, B. & Sellwood, S. A. (2020) *Empty Promises Down the Line? A Human Rights Impact of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline*. Oxfam.

*Women's organisations, marginalised communities, indigenous groups, youth representatives, and gender experts bring valuable insights into the gender dynamics, priorities, needs, and disproportional impacts within a project area.*

#### GIA: How?

So, what does a good GIA look like? At its heart is adopting a human rights-based approach, based on inclusion, participation, empowerment, transparency, attention to vulnerable people, and non-discrimination.<sup>12</sup> Women's organisations, marginalised communities, indigenous groups, youth representatives, and gender experts bring valuable insights into the gender dynamics, priorities, needs, and disproportional impacts within a project area. A bottom-up approach that includes them throughout the project lifecycle not only enhances the quality of the assessment, but also fosters greater ownership among stakeholders. Integrating qualitative and inclusive data-gathering techniques (e.g., community-led studies and narratives) beyond quantitative data is essential to achieving this.

There is a plethora of resources on GIA that expand on these principles, ranging from general guidance<sup>13</sup> to sector-specific GIA guides for the extractive industries, infrastructure projects, policymaking, and so on.<sup>14</sup> GIA can also be linked to international standards, laws, and frameworks, including the SDGs, IFC Performance Standards, Equator Principles, and international human rights treaties.<sup>15</sup> By utilising these resources on GIA, impact assessment practitioners, project developers and regulators can commence more inclusive and equitable progress towards gender equality and SDG 5.

#### GIA: The Future

While the increasing use of GIA in large-scale projects is encouraging, these assessments are still often conducted later in the project lifecycle rather than as a concerted effort from the outset. When envisioning the future of impact assessment, GIA should be conducted from the early conception of a project, pre-empting and avoiding many of the gender issues that are well documented in project development. Incorporating existing knowledge and experience from communities is essential, as is building the capacity of impact assessment practitioners. Following these principles, alongside leveraging the growing resources on GIA, can and should move GIA from the margins to the mainstream of impact assessment.

<sup>12</sup> Hill et al. (2017) (no. 1).

<sup>13</sup> See WECF (2019) (no. 2); Hoogeveen, D. & Harris, W. (2024) 'Gender, Intersectionality and Indigenous Rights in Social Impact Assessment' in *Handbook of Social Impact Assessment and Management*. Edward Elgar; and Vanclay, F. & Arn Sauer, M. A. (2011) *Gender and Gender Impact Assessment: Key Citation Series*. IAIA.

<sup>14</sup> See Hill et al. (2017) (no. 1); Côté, G. E. (2020) *Toolkit: Gender Impact Assessments for Projects and Policies Related to Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining*. Impact.; Tekinbas, E. (2022) *Global Review: Integrating Gender into Mining Impact Assessments*. IISD.; OECD (2021) *Women in Infrastructure: Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure*. OECD.; and Kunstler, S. (2013) *Balancing the Scales: Using gender impact assessment in hydropower development*. Oxfam.

<sup>15</sup> Including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and regional instruments such as the Belém do Pará Convention, the Maputo Protocol, and the Istanbul Convention.

# Key principles of Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

## What are EqIAs?

EqIAs, like other impact assessments, are a systematic process for identifying the likely implications of a project, plan or proposal. While they require a baseline to contextualise and provide an evidence base for impacts, they differ from Needs Assessments in that they are not intended to provide a robust audit outlining the gap between current and desired conditions. Instead, they should define likely impacts based on a sufficient understanding of existing and projected circumstances.

In particular, EqIAs address equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In Great Britain, EqIAs generally focus on the nine protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010.<sup>16</sup>

## What is the value of EqIAs?

EqIAs are a valuable tool in the planning process as they help to identify negative impacts on individuals which may otherwise be considered 'not significant' under assessments where significance is based on the number of people impacted. EqIAs also help to highlight where impacts may be exacerbated for some individuals, either having differential or disproportionate impacts<sup>17</sup> on people due to their having protected characteristics.

*Often EqIA recommendations, which are intended to reduce inequalities for certain individuals or groups, also result in wider community benefits.*

As well as identifying impacts, EqIAs should also include recommendations to mitigate or enhance impacts, where appropriate. Often EqIA recommendations, which are intended to reduce inequalities for certain individuals or groups, also result in wider community benefits. For example, the inclusion of a ramp to improve access for some disabled individuals will inevitably be useful for older people with limited mobility, or even for parents juggling prams and small children. Such interventions also illustrate the importance of considering the intersectionality of EDI issues throughout the EqIA process, and the frequent overlap in the needs of those with protected characteristics.

<sup>16</sup> While the Act broadly applies to England, Scotland and Wales, there is some flexibility as to the application of the Act across Scotland and Wales to accommodate differing legislation under devolution.

<sup>17</sup> *Differential impacts* directly affect individuals in a distinct way due to that individual being particularly sensitive to a given change as a result of having a protected characteristic (e.g., members of a particular religion will be differentially impacted by the loss of their place of worship). *Disproportionate impacts* indirectly affect communities to a greater extent as a result of a protected characteristic having a high representation in the baseline (e.g., children may be disproportionately impacted by the loss of a public park in an area primarily occupied by young families).



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## When should EqlAs be produced?

### *1. Is a public authority involved as a developer?*

Under the Equality Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires that public authorities in Great Britain have due regard to the objectives of s149, including eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. In 2012, requirements to publish equality objectives and information demonstrating their compliance with the PSED also came into effect.

EqlAs are one tool of many for public authorities to demonstrate their compliance with the PSED as they carry out their main functions, including as planning authorities. EqlAs are not explicitly required under the Equality Act but are a widely accepted and useful way for public authorities to consider equalities issues and to show that they have done so. In these cases, EqlAs should be carried out by the public authority or wider project team and reviewed by an independent professional.

### *2. Are EqlAs required in the Local Plan or Validation Checklist?*

Some public authorities take a proactive approach to the PSED and require developers to deliver EqlAs with planning applications, which may in turn inform planning decisions. EqlAs undertaken by developers are not in and of themselves evidence of compliance with the PSED, but they can help public authorities demonstrate how their planning processes consider equality issues and the PSED.

### *3. What if there is no requirement to provide an EqlA?*

In some cases, EqlAs may not be required by policy, but a developer may still find it useful to include one with a planning application. In voluntarily undertaking an EqlA, a developer can demonstrate its own commitments to advancing EDI and its support of the public authority in discharging the PSED.

## Why should we promote EqlAs?

Standardised guidance notes on EqlA methodologies are few and far between, with most publicly available guidance focusing on how to assess organisations' policies and programmes rather than assessing the built environment. While other impact assessment guidance may be retrofitted to suit EDI, assessors, planning authorities and communities would benefit from more bespoke guidance which targets the nuances of EDI and delivering impactful assessments.

EqlAs play an important role in the planning system, providing an evidence base for impacts which may be overlooked by other reports and ensuring that vulnerable groups are considered in decision-making processes. In undertaking an EqlA, applicants are supporting both public authorities in discharging their duties under the PSED, as well as wider EDI aims and community wellbeing.

# How Equality Impact Assessments can make a difference: case studies

Two case studies exploring how Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) fosters a sense of community involvement and inclusivity in developments and decision-making processes.

Through public engagement as part of EqIA, projects can be tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of the community, particularly those with protected characteristics.

## Case Study 1: Kilmarnock Infinity Loop, East Ayrshire, Scotland

The project is a proposed new active travel corridor which will improve existing paths and introduce new segregated and unsegregated paths to enhance connectivity. The main goal is to promote walking and cycling in the area, especially to and from key attractions and local schools.

The EqIA revealed that in Scotland, men are twice as likely as women to cycle for leisure or transportation purposes. Women tend to take extra precautions or avoid certain public areas, particularly when walking, exercising, or using public transport. Therefore, it is crucial for the EqIA to prioritise making the active travel route safe and appealing to women, in order to address any potential unintended negative impacts.

*Through public engagement as part of EqIA, projects can be tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of the community, particularly those with protected characteristics.*

To ensure clear and accessible communication, a StoryMap website for public engagement was developed. The website allowed members of the public to easily understand and provide feedback on the proposals. The feedback received emphasised the importance of safety, particularly regarding cycling through parks. Concerns were raised regarding lighting in these areas, and the need for clear signage was also highlighted.

Based on the findings from the EqlA and public engagement, the design has been modified to include the following elements:

- Lighting will be provided in the sections going through country and city parks and rural areas;
- Water fountains will be installed at key locations along the routes with signage pointing out their locations;
- Appropriate signage will be provided, including where the nearest public toilets are located;
- Planting along the routes which will both increase climate resilience and adaptation as well as improve safety as street greenery has been shown to reduce levels and perception of crime in urban environments;
- In order to enhance the project and create a sense of ownership within the local community, artwork will be incorporated at key locations, with contributions from artists. By involving the community, it is anticipated that perceptions of safety will improve and a greater sense of ownership of the area will be fostered.

### Case Study 2: Kilmarnock Foregate Civic Space, East Ayrshire, Scotland

A new civic space that will transform the former Foregate multi-storey car park into an aesthetic and functional space, which can host events and markets, and provide the community with an accessible and green space in the centre of Kilmarnock in which to sit, play and walk. It is envisioned that the civic space will be set out as a formal plaza, with green terraces of outdoor seating, a large flexible space and a water feature which can be used as a play feature for children.

Public engagement played a crucial role in shaping the vision for this new civic space. We spoke with East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership who provided the results of a survey seeking local opinion on how community safety could be improved. Issues highlighted the need for increased lighting, CCTV and more 'open' routes/areas. We also discussed

the provision of toilets as women, particularly those who are pregnant, are more affected by the decline in public toilets over the last few years.<sup>18</sup>

We also spoke with a group representing local disabled people (Wheels for Wellbeing). Issues highlighted were, the need for EV charging in disabled bays, smooth surfaces with good grips and not slabs, reduce steep slopes where possible, and the need for accessible toilets and the design of benches to provide sufficient room for assistance dogs, wheelchairs and canes.

We are currently engaged in an ongoing consultation process and part of our effort includes reaching out to a local school teacher to gather valuable insights into the needs of the younger community. It is important to highlight that consultations often tend to overlook this specific demographic, and we are committed to addressing this oversight by actively involving and considering the perspectives of the younger generation.

As a direct outcome of the public engagement so far, at the next stage of the project it is intended the following will be incorporated:

- CCTV at key locations;
- Careful consideration on lighting;
- Disabled parking bays with EV charging;
- Carefully designed benches, some with arm rest, some without, some with back rest, some without;
- Potential for new, accessible toilets and adult changing facilities.

The case studies demonstrate that the advantages of EqlAs, combined with public feedback, can go beyond safeguarding protected characteristics from unintended consequences. They can enhance projects by incorporating even small details that contribute to making spaces safer, more beautiful, more accessible, and enjoyable for all of the local community.

<sup>18</sup> [www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/taking-the-p-the-decline-of-the-great-british-public-toilet.html](http://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/taking-the-p-the-decline-of-the-great-british-public-toilet.html)

# The path to mainstreaming Health Impact Assessment in Italy

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process which systematically judges the potential, and sometimes unintended, effects of a project, program, plan, policy, or strategy on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA generates evidence for appropriate actions to avoid or mitigate health risks and promote health opportunities. HIA guides the establishment of a framework for monitoring and evaluating changes in health as part of performance management and sustainable development.<sup>19</sup> HIA has become increasingly widespread worldwide, albeit with differences experiences and expressions in different jurisdictions. Regularly using HIA is instrumental in healthier, more inclusive and equitable communities.

In Italy, sustainable development is a fundamental principle of the environmental legislation, including Sustainable Development Goal 3, 'To ensure health and well-being for all and for all ages'. However, existing impact assessments do not include health, despite the fact that many factors that influence the natural environment are also 'determinants' of human health. This is the case in Italy, even though the right to health is the only right that Italian Constitution defines as 'fundamental'. This narrow position is seemingly at odds with the World Health Organization (WHO), which has adopted a broad notion of health, defined not only as the absence of disease, but also as a state of wellbeing. Implicit to the WHO definition of health is a broad range of influences from social, behavioural, economic and institutional factors as well as environmental factors.

*Regularly using HIA is instrumental in healthier, more inclusive and equitable communities.*

During my research activities at Turin University, I investigated implementation of HIA in Italy, both from a national and regional standpoint.

In Italy HIA is mandatory<sup>20</sup> for very few categories of projects, for example, only a subset of those that are subject to Environmental Impact Assessment.<sup>21</sup> These HIAs must be in accordance with the guidelines drawn up by the Italian Health Authority (*Istituto Superiore di Sanità*). However, based on national legislation, HIA is not mandatory for other projects subject to EIA or for plans, programmes or policies. Regions have variously regulated the issue and the situation is fragmented. Case law has stated that HIA is not mandatory unless, based on the precautionary principle, actual preliminary evidence demonstrates the existence of a serious danger to public health.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Winkler, M., Viliani, F., Knoblauch, A., Cave, B., Divall, M., Ramesh, G., Harris-Roxas, B., & Furu, P. (2021). *Health impact assessment international best practice principles* (International Association for Impact Assessment).

<sup>20</sup> Article 23, par. 2 of Legislative Decree 3 April 2006, n. 152.

<sup>21</sup> *i.e.* Crude oil refineries (excluding enterprises producing only lubricants from crude oil), as well as gasification and liquefaction plants of at least 500 tonnes per day of coal or oil shale, and liquefied natural gas regasification terminals; thermal power stations and other combustion plants with thermal power exceeding 300 MW.

<sup>22</sup> Council of State, 29 August 2019, n. 5985.

Whilst standalone HIAs could, in theory, be undertaken more often in Italy, with very few projects having used HIA, e.g., to assess the pollution caused by a specific plant,<sup>23</sup> there are not established methods of practice.

Considering the situation from a comparative standpoint—say compared to HIA practice in Wales—in Italy, HIA is based more on quantitative data (using toxicological, epidemiological and ecotoxicological data) than on qualitative data (e.g., following interviews, workshops etc.). Another difference is the scope of application. Whilst, for example, in Wales HIA is frequently applied to policies and strategies as well as projects, in Italy HIA is much more focused on the project level only.

One of the positive aspects of Italian HIA implementation is that—even if only partially—the path to institutionalisation has been started and the practice of HIA is currently under development. Indeed, the National Prevention Plan 2020–2025<sup>24</sup> adheres to the ‘One Health’ and ‘Health in All Policies’ approaches, expressly recognising the need for methodological and operational guidelines to support national and regional authorities in identifying the conditions under which HIA should be carried out, in order to ensure a uniform approach throughout the country. Training on HIA is acknowledged as a key aspect.

My view is that taking into account the state of the art, an expansion of HIA (along with the introduction of further legislative requirements), is needed to complement the work already done and for future developments.



<sup>23</sup> *Health impact assessment of steel plant activities in Taranto, Italy*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2023, available at [iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/373258/9789289058360-eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/373258/9789289058360-eng.pdf?sequence=1).


<sup>24</sup> *Piano Nazionale della Prevenzione 2020-2025*, available at [www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C\\_17\\_notizie\\_5029\\_0\\_file.pdf](https://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_notizie_5029_0_file.pdf).

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**UGAEIC**  
Uned Gymorth Asesu  
Effaith ar Iechyd Cymru



**WHIASU**  
Wales Health Impact  
Assessment Support Unit

# Successfully creating the conditions for Health Impact Assessment in Wales: a case study

Reflections from the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU), Policy and International Health, World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being, Public Health Wales.

The Public Health (Wales) Act (2017)<sup>25</sup> includes a statutory requirement for Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) to be carried out by public bodies in specific circumstances in Wales. Wales is the first country in the world to ensure that health, wellbeing and equity are considered like this to enable a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach to policy and strategic decision-making. The Welsh Government draft regulations were consulted on in early 2024 and outlined: the circumstances in which HIAs will be required by public bodies, for example, Local Authorities or health boards; how HIAs are to be carried out; and the role of Public Health Wales in providing assistance to public bodies.

This opportunity has very much been enabled by the work carried out over almost 20 years by the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) in Public Health Wales,<sup>26</sup> a specialist world-leading unit for HIA. Work led by the Unit have formed key building blocks enabling the introduction of the regulations. For example, training and capacity building, strategic work on HiAP, engagement with non-health sectors to create advocates across, partnership working, and the promotion of case studies to highlight the importance of health and well-being and the role of HIA in informing and influencing policies and decisions.

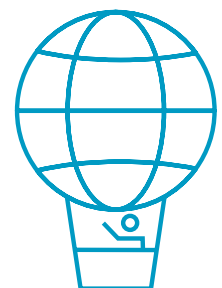
<sup>25</sup> Welsh Government. Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 [Internet]. 2017 [cited 2023 Feb 16]. Available at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2017/2/contents/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2017/2/contents/enacted)

<sup>26</sup> Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit. Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit. 2024 [cited 2024 May 1]. Homepage. Available at: [phwwhocc.co.uk/whiasu/](http://phwwhocc.co.uk/whiasu/)

Reflecting on our journey within WHIASU over that time has enabled innovative legislation to grow from theory to practice. HIA practice in Wales has also been able to grow at a number of levels; from strategic to operational and from national to local. Although this legal change is in the process of being enacted, it is very much only the start of the journey. It is key that policy- and decision-makers have a developed understanding of HIA in order to advocate for it. Providing a consistent interpretation of HIA, and terminology by the Unit as experts, is integral to effective and meaningful implementation and institutionalisation. Looking forward, we will work closely with Welsh Government to ensure uniform language is employed and key guidance is developed and updated to enable public bodies to undertake high quality, effective HIAs.

The creation of strategic and local advocates has been essential to help build the case and promote awareness of HIA. We have done this using both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches, using all available levers to promote the benefits of HIA and HiAP. This included reiterating the importance of community involvement, sustainable development, integration and the avoidance of unintended negative consequences of decisions which could impact on health, wellbeing and equity. The added value of undertaking HIA and evaluating successes has also helped build the case for HIA in Wales. Although Wales' enabling policy context has been crucial, decision-makers can still be influenced to use HIA if they can understand the value of using it. We within WHIASU have helped this progress by providing specialist advice, guidance and resources.

One final learning experience, as we reach the next stage of the implementation journey, is to have a clear vision and plan for what we want to achieve through the process of making HIAs statutory in specific circumstances; to improve health, wellbeing and equity for all in Wales. By having a strong voice and providing expert leadership in HIA, we will continue on our mission to help to achieve this vision in Wales and will continue to share learning along the remainder of our journey.





# Fairbourne climate adaption and resilience Health Impact Assessment: a case study

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Fairbourne is an idyllic seaside village in Wales, nestled on the fringe of Snowdonia and blessed with a wealth of natural beauty, community amenity and spirit. However, it is often more commonly known as one of the communities facing significant challenges and risk due to climate change. The Fairbourne Moving Forwards project was set up to help the community of Fairbourne navigate the complex issues associated with climate change over the next 40 years. As part of the project, the Savills Health and Social Impact Assessment team were commissioned to undertake a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), the objective of which was two-fold:

- to investigate the health and wellbeing impacts of living with climate change in Fairbourne today; and
- to explore community led suggestions and solutions to aid adaptation, build resilience and improve health.

This community level, climate change focussed HIA was the first of its kind, exploring a complex range of community concerns, but also feelings of disempowerment and a lack of trust, which underpinned many of the immediate, but often uncommunicated impacts of climate change on communities. Namely: the uncertainty, risk perception, climate change anxiety and blight, and the impact this has on immediate life choices, and health and wellbeing.

The HIA explored local community circumstance and experiences, and gathered community led recommendations to inform and refine strategic investment and local planning. The community engagement comprised online and hardcopy questionnaires and a three-day drop-in session event, applying an adaptive and mixed mode of consultation methods that best catered to the demographic needs of the community.

Trust was a key issue, where communities often feel talked at rather than engaged with, and this can mean that the most immediate impacts and most effective solutions can be missed.

Once trust was garnered, and the objective of the HIA better understood, participants became more forthcoming. A great deal of heart-to-heart discussions were had, which not only resulted in community led initiatives focused on improving transparency, but also building greater ownership and influence on climate change adaptation and resilience for the community.

These suggestions aided in bringing control back to the community, addressing climate change anxiety, and enabling a more 'solution-focused' partnership between the community and the wider Project Board. Engagement with the Fairbourne community helped to further identify institutional factors that also need to adapt, with UK-wide ramifications.



The HIA process provided a valuable opportunity for community members to catalogue and better communicate their concerns, and also provided a platform to explore and discuss potential solutions relative to the community's immediate perceptions, priorities and needs. Many of these have since been put into place, including the formal position that there are no plans to decommission the community, and more detailed analysis and climate modelling is underway.

*The HIA process built a greater understanding of local health circumstance, priority and need, but also empathy and awareness that cannot be generated through a review of the scientific evidence base.*



A key issue that underpinned many of the community concerns, was a feeling of abandonment, which became symbolised by the loss of the community's sea ramp. The provision of a temporary sea ramp not only reconnected the community to a much-cherished asset, but addressed feelings of abandonment, revitalised trust, and imbued community empowerment and control.

Equally, the community forum has since revised its Terms of Reference to expand eligibility for wider grants and charitable funds linked to regeneration, sustainability and climate adaptation, bringing more resource to building climate adaptation and resilience, and making the community a partner in its delivery.

The HIA process built a greater understanding of local health circumstance, priority and need, but also empathy and awareness that cannot be generated through a review of the scientific evidence base. The actions, mitigation and support initiatives generated through the HIA carried this context, and as a result generated outputs with far greater value to, and opportunity for, the community.

The Fairbourne example reinforces that building climate adaptation and resilience isn't something that can or should be done *to* communities but must be done *with* them.

The Savills HIA Team remains indebted to the residents of Fairbourne for their grace, candour and innovative solutions, and they are an inspiration and model for all communities and local authorities in similar circumstance.



# Human Rights Impact Assessment in infrastructure development

Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) is the practice of attributing severity to actual and potential impacts on the human and labour rights of workers, communities and those involved in a project's supply chain to find the most salient, or critical, impacts. It draws on international covenants developed in the aftermath of World War II to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all human beings and the fundamental rights of workers as determined by the International Labour Organisation. HRIA identifies prevention and mitigation measures as well as remediation processes and actions to restore victims of human rights impacts to their state prior to the harm occurring.

Human rights requirements are increasingly relevant to infrastructure projects globally, including in the UK and Europe, via changes to national and international laws, scrutiny of human rights issues by the media and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and application of lenders' policies.

## Guiding principles and requirements

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) were established in 2011 setting out three key commitments for businesses to adhere to: respect for human rights; doing human rights due diligence (including HRIA); and providing remedy where human rights are harmed.

Compliance with the UNGPs and other similar guidance is increasingly required by international laws and corporate responsibility frameworks. These include the EU Taxonomy (a classification system defining

environmentally and socially sustainable economic activities), the forthcoming Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive due to be enshrined in EU and members countries' laws, as well as the Equator Principles, used by lenders to manage environmental and social risk. Several EU countries including France, Germany, the UK and Austria now require scrutiny of, and action on, human and labour rights impacts in supply chains. This means that more HRIAs are being commissioned over and above the traditional environmental and social impact assessment scopes.

*HRIA's ethos and methods illuminate aspects of projects and their impacts which other impact assessments typically do not.*

We are seeing HRIAs entering the UK and European, as well as global, contexts. Skillsets of social practitioners experienced in international social performance standards are being adapted and transferred to bring HRIA to projects seeking international finance, social license to operate, legal compliance, and consumer/ shareholder approval.

## The value of HRIA

In HRIA, especially where impacts are severe, direct consultation with rights-holders (individuals and sometimes groups who can make legitimate claims that their rights have been contravened) is fundamental. Depending on the project, this may include workers, communities whose lives or livelihoods are affected, land and water users, consumers, indigenous peoples or other vulnerable groups. Hearing from them first-hand enables a deeper understanding of impacts and collaboration on potential solutions. However, in some contexts, there is a risk of reprisal (threats, harassment, violence) associated with engaging rights-holders and defenders, especially where there is conflict or where political regimes discourage open engagement and dialogue. The human rights approach encourages identification of reprisal risks, planning and mitigation to prevent them.

*HRIA encompasses a holistic view of impacts across the spectrum of human rights which includes environmental, labour, safety, security, developmental, basic needs, and social elements.*

HRIA's ethos and methods illuminate aspects of projects and their impacts which other impact assessments typically do not, for example, supply chain aspects, gender equality and differential impacts on women, (non-)discrimination, privacy and fair remuneration. An HRIA includes mechanisms for effective remedy over and above the usual grievance mechanism and may be supported by a programme of capacity building to improve project performance and deliver improved social outcomes for rights-holders.

Demonstrating the benefits of HRIA, a review of human rights issues arising from the re-development of a border post between two countries in Southern Africa identified risks and proposed mitigations relating to space and service provision for detainees, lighting of the bridge to prevent gender-based violence, measures to identify and manage human trafficking, data privacy, waiting times and information provision to migrants crossing the border.

## The future of HRIA

There is a clear trend towards HRIA as standard which means actively looking at projects through a human rights lens, using a rights-compatible and non-discriminatory approach. HRIA encompasses a holistic view of impacts across the spectrum of human rights which includes environmental, labour, safety, security, developmental, basic needs, and social elements. The focus must always be on rights-holders, not on impacts to the business, and beneficial impacts are left to other scopes. Supply chain impacts must be unpacked to drive improvements where often the most severe human and labour rights impacts occur. It is no longer acceptable not to investigate, understand and act on human rights harms; new laws dictate that ignorance is no defence. HRIA is a crucial tool to drive the responsibility and accountability to which rights-holders are entitled and which consumers, governments and NGOs want to see.

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# Do you make effective use of ALL of IEMA's IA member resources?

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IEMA's website contains a treasure trove of impact assessment-related content, as well as information about IEMA's volunteer network groups, blogs, webinars and policy. But not everyone makes the most of this free member content, including:

- Future events and webinars
- Recordings of past webinars, with over 24 hours' worth of IA content
- IA Guidance & advice, such as the recent guides on Digital EIA, Land and Soils, GHGs, Health in EIA and Traffic and Movement
- The Proportionate EIA Strategy
- Over 1,300 articles, case studies and webinars related to EIA, developed by Q Mark registrants in recent years
- Individual and organisational recognition specific to EIA, through the EIA Register and EIA Quality Mark schemes respectively
- Opportunities to get involved with:
  - IA Steering Group
  - IA Network and Working Groups
  - Geographic/Regional Groups.

[www.iema.net](http://www.iema.net)

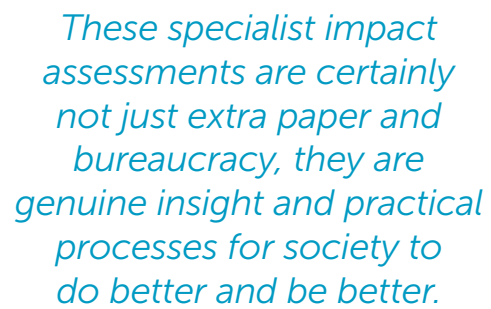


# Summary

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We have completed our exploration of the diversity within the impact assessment field. We have encountered novelty and commonality. Common themes include the need for all impact assessments to be initiated early in the development of a new proposal, whether it is a policy, programme, plan or project. We have also had confirmation of the strength of purpose of those involved in these impact assessments to deliver added value and public goods. These specialist impact assessments are certainly not just extra paper and bureaucracy, they are genuine insight and practical processes for society to do better and be better. Too many fundamentally important specialist impact assessments are on the sidelines. The statutory and policy triggers to get those assessments into play are needed urgently.

Sustainable development is a uniting endeavour of society. It covers not only tackling climate change, but also wider challenges of inequalities, biodiversity loss and fairness in the freedoms we should all enjoy. Inherent to the concept of sustainable development is that the decisions we make affect both people and the environment, with both needing to be safeguarded. It is also the case that people and the environment are inherently linked. We are part of a single system, such that a focus on either people or environmental outcomes alone ultimately undermines achieving sustainable development. Arguably there is currently a strong weighting in the formal triggers for impact assessments that focus on environmental outcomes. It is good that there are these triggers to safeguard the environment; we are, I'm sure, biased to having a people-focused agenda for our decisions. However, without a consistent understanding of what a decision really means for people, there is a high risk the decisions made will put people in conflict with the environment rather than progressing harmonious sustainable development. Such understanding of the implications for people is greater than just the environmental exposures such as air quality and water quality, but goes into livelihoods, ways of life and cultural practices. This includes how more vulnerable members of society may unintentionally be placed in positions of hardship.



*These specialist impact assessments are certainly not just extra paper and bureaucracy, they are genuine insight and practical processes for society to do better and be better.*

A further challenge is that achieving sustainable development is governed by decisions largely out of the individuals' level of control. These major society-shaping decisions control, to name just a few, the economy and financial system of earning and making transactions, the market condition for when and where we can be educated and employed, the mechanisms by which we can access and choose food and other commodities, and the general environmental conditions in which we breathe and access leisure and recreation. The path to sustainable development therefore relies heavily on decisions made by those who govern these structural factors within society. These are decisions that strongly affect both people and the environment. They are decisions taken in the private and public sector. The current picture is that those making these decisions, although no doubt intending to make good choices, lack the information required to avoid unintended consequences or to identify better options. That crucial information comes from impact assessments such as those discussed in this volume: Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment; Gender Impact Assessment; Equality Impact Assessment; Health Impact Assessment; and Human Rights Impact Assessment.

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Society is focused on a positive goal of sustainable development but those who make the decisions to deliver this have incomplete information. This blind spot is large and is across many factors that determine how people are affected by, and respond to, the circumstances in which a major decision places them. There are established specialist impact assessments that identify the future consequences of a proposed action. These impact assessments on the margins can fill the information void and, if mainstreamed, would greatly enhance the speed and surety with which sustainable development is achieved.

Ryngan Pyper  
July 2024



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**IEMA's EIA Quality Mark:** A scheme operated by the Institute allowing organisations (both developers and consultancies) that lead the co-ordination of statutory EIAs in the UK to make a commitment to excellence in their EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed. Founded in 2011, the EIA Quality Mark is a voluntary scheme, with organisations free to choose whether they are ready to operate to its seven EIA Commitments: EIA Management; EIA Team Capabilities; EIA Regulatory Compliance; EIA Context & Influence; EIA Content; EIA Presentation; and Improving EIA practice.

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## Impact Assessment Frontiers Part 2: People, Health and Equality

This twenty-first edition of the Impact Assessment Outlook Journal provides a series of thought pieces on specialist 'people-focused' impact assessments, including how decisions affect vulnerable members of society. In this edition, the Guest Editor, Ryngan Pyper, has selected eight articles produced by IEMA professionals and impact assessment experts. The result is a valuable yet quick read across some of the different aspects of UK and international practice exploring different types of social- and health-related Impact Assessment.

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### About the Guest Editor: Ryngan Pyper

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Ryngan is an international Health Impact Assessment (HIA) expert and leads the RPS Health and Social Impact team. Ryngan works across the fields of public health, environmental science and impact assessment with a strong academic, legal and project management background. Ryngan works with the private and the public sector, including to provide standalone HIA and HIA integrated into Environmental Assessments. Ryngan advises Government and professional bodies on good practice and is the author of key national and international guidance, including publications by IEMA, the World Health Organization and the Institute of Public Health. Ryngan works closely with environmental scientists and health organisations to ensure that development is safe, sustainable and promotes health and wellbeing. Ryngan has a strong commitment to impact assessment quality and transparency.





## About IEMA

We are the global professional body for over 21,000 individuals and 300 organisations working, studying or interested in the environment and sustainability.

We are the professional organisation at the centre of the sustainability agenda, connecting business and individuals across industries, sectors and borders.

We also help and support public and private sector organisations, governments and regulators to do the right thing when it comes to environment and sustainability related initiatives, challenges and opportunities. We work to influence public policy on environment and sustainability matters. We do this by drawing on the insights and experience of our members to ensure that what happens in practice influences the development of government policy, legislation, regulations and standards.

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