

The System and Mechanism of Health Impact Assessment in Thai Society

The first National Health Assembly

Having considered the report on the system and mechanism of health impact assessment in the context of Thai society.

Realizing the human rights principle which state that good health is a basic right of every individual, and realizing that the framework of rights and freedom of the Thai people, as contained in the constitution of The Kingdom of Thailand 2007 Section 26, specifies that the use of power by state agencies must consider the dignity, the rights and freedom inherent in human beings; and realizing that provisions of this constitution gives to the individual rights in judicial proceedings, rights to property, rights and freedom in decisions on occupation and studies, rights to receive public health services and welfare from the state, rights to information, rights to complain, right to act to protect the constitution, and community rights.

Realizing that community rights according to Section 67 paragraph one of the 2007 constitution says the rights of a person to participate with the state and community in the conservation, preservation and utilization of natural resources and biological diversity; Section 67 paragraph two states any project or activity which may seriously affect the community in terms of the quality of environment, natural resources, and health shall not be permitted, unless its impact on the quality of the environment and health condition of people in the community have been studied and evaluated; and public hearing(s) by the people and those affected are held prior to the operation of such project or activity; Section 67 paragraph three states that the rights of a community to sue a government agency, state agency, state enterprises, local government organization, or other state agencies which are juristic persons, so that it performs the duties as provided by this Section of the Act shall be protected.

Realizing the possession of rights in accordance with Section 11 of the National Health Act which states that an individual or a group of people has the right to request an assessment of health impacts that results from a particular public policy, and has also the right to participate in such assessment; and realizing also that an individual or a group of people shall have the right to acquire information, explanation of underlying reasons from a state agency prior to its giving out permission or prior to its implementation of a programme or activity which may affect his or her health or the health of a community, and shall have the right to express his or her opinion on such matter.

Understanding the principle of good governance that consists of six important qualities which are: public accountability, transparency, public participation, predictability, efficiency and effectiveness, political ethics, and morality.

Realizing the problems existing in environmental impact assessment, realizing that there are conflict, violence, and impacts on health in various dimensions--including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual--that arises from public policy and development projects at all levels.

Supporting the idea of health impact assessment as one of the many important tools available to support the development of healthy public policy. That is, health impact assessment is designed in accordance with the purpose of the reform of the health system, such that it will become a process of mutual learning together in the society about health impacts that might occur or have already occurred and affecting any group of people as a result of implementation of a development policy or an activity. The aim of health impact assessment is to support a decision-making process which will result in the best option, that is one that will enhance and protect the health of everyone in the society.

Understanding the idea of development of a system and mechanism of health impact assessment that integrates with environmental impact assessment, and a health impact assessment that is done at the local and community level, and which is discussed in the health assembly; furthermore, understanding the idea that health impact assessment should be done in a comprehensive manner that is, at the community and local level, at the project and policy level, and also to assess impact across borders.

The National Health Assembly thus issues the following resolutions:

1. It is proposed to the National Health Commission that it appoint a committee to develop a system and mechanism for health impact assessment, a committee whose composition and proportions follow the principle of equity and justice for all sections of society. The committee is to have the following responsibilities and powers:

1.1 Promote and support the development of a system, mechanism, form, organization, principle, and technique of health impact assessment and of guidelines to protect against impacts on health. The assessment is to be done prior to commencement of projects, during and after implementation of projects, and the assessment is to be inclusive of every level of projects, from the national down to the provincial, the local, and the community level. The assessment is also to be done in a connected and continuous manner. There should also be more learning of lessons from the conduct of environmental impact assessment in order to further develop the efficiency of health impact assessment. All these development efforts should be done and completed within one year, with provision for expression of opinions from all sections of society.

1.2 Promote and support the work of networks on health impact assessment at all levels, by coordinating and linking up with networks and other agencies that have been established and are in the process of being established. An agency to do such coordination work should also be set up.

1.3 Promote and support the building up of knowledge, of knowledge management, of capacities, of public communication capabilities. An HIA data system should also be developed.

1.4 Promote and support the process of public participation in the development, the use, the follow up, and the dissemination of the results of health impact assessments. This is order to use it as a tool to develop public policy on health, such work to be done through health assembly channels and other channels as well

1.5 Set up subcommittees or working groups as necessary and appropriate.

1.6 Do other work as assigned by the National Health Commission.

2. The local administrative organizations, related agencies, and members of the National Health Assembly should support health impact assessment at the local and community level, prior to development of a local public policy or prior to implementation of any project or activity that might affect the health of people. This is in accordance with the principle of good governance.
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