



REVITALIZING THAILAND'S COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT



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Community Health Impact Assessment (CHIA) has long been conducted in Thailand. The methodology is social norm and belief oriented. We believe in interconnectedness and pay respect to our ancestor's spirit and nature. We consider natural resources as Divine God such as Mother Earth, Water God, Rice God and etc. Some part of Thailand, for example northeast, has its own traditional rule that no one dare to violate because it may cause disaster. With these beliefs, whenever a community initiates activities, villagers will discuss until all sides satisfy. The process of discussion invites villagers to participate in policy decision making at their community.

Since Thailand has geared up to modernization, the social norms and beliefs of the community have been devalued. High and complicated technology has replaced local wisdom. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been introduced with a scientific base. Hence spiritual belief of the community has been gradually ignored. It is led to conflict in communities.

The year 2007 - present, after the National Health Act has been enforce CHIA revitalize as a tool for healthy public policy toward healthy community. More than 30 communities who affect or may affect from projects/policies such as mining, industrial, energy, water management etc. has conducted CHIA. The process and methodology has been improved. The beginning is community history, development in the part and the future reviewing. Drawing their vision and goal, define their health and determinant of health. Study about project or policy that affect or may affect on their health. Using both social and scientific techniques for collect data. Design social communication both insight and oversight community and also influence to policy decision maker. The important thing is all of step need to design as a continuous informal learning process more than formal.

The big CHIA's challenge is meaningful in local and national public policy process especially decision step.



HIA MOVEMENT IN THAILAND

The Path of HIA after the Enforcement of the National Health Act B.E.2550

The ultimate goal of HIA developed by network partners is to be used as a tool to support the improvement of the well-being of Thai people and Thai society. It is supposed to be a commitment rather than enforcement.

2007



“HIA was enclosed in 2 significant laws”

19 March – The announcement of the National Health Act B.E.2550

- **Section 11.** An individual or a group of people has the right to request for an assessment and participating in the assessment of health impact resulting from a public policy. An individual or a group of people shall have the right to acquire information, explanation and underlying reasons from state agency prior to a permission or performance 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.
- **Section 25 (5).** National Health Commission (NHC) shall have powers and duties to prescribe rules and procedure on monitoring and evaluation in respect of national health system and the impact on health resulting from public policies, both in the level of policy making and implementation.

20 August – The Constitution of the kingdom of Thailand B.E 2550 is in effect

- **Section 67, Paragraph 2.** Any project or activity which may seriously affect the community with respect to the quality of the environment, natural resources and health shall not be permitted, unless, prior to the operation thereof, its impacts on the quality of the environment and on public health have been studied and assessed and a public hearing process has been conducted for consulting the public as well as interested persons and there have been obtained opinions of an independent organisation, consisting of representatives from private organisations in the field of the environment and health and from higher education institutions providing studies in the field of the environment, natural resources or health.

2008



“Design of system and mechanism health impact assessment in Thai society”

The National Health Commission Office (NHCO) appointed a working group to draft system, mechanism, rules and methods used to assess health impacts from public policies. The draft was approved by the members of the 1st National Health Assembly B.E. 2551 on Resolution 1: HIA system and mechanism in Thai society.



“NHC announced the 1st HIA rules and methods and ONEP announced the HIA guidelines in EIA”

1. NHC appointed HIA Commission chaired by Dr. Wiput Phoolchareon.
2. NHC set up HIA Co-ordinating Unit (HIA Co-Unit) which is an agency under NH and which works as the secretariat office of HIA Commission.
3. The HIA Co-Unit drafted the HIA rules and methods. Reviews of academic literatures and learned lessons from other countries as well as meetings with working partners and public hearing from concerning sectors were conducted.
4. On 8 November, Prime Minister as a chair of National Health Commission signed the announcement of the 1st HIA rules and methods to be used by government agencies and other sectors as guidelines. The HIA Commission was appointed in order to review and improve rules and report to NHC for further improvement.
5. On 29 December, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment announced HIA guidelines for projects or activities that may cause great impacts to communities. Such guidelines were supplemented to EIA Report in coherence with Article 67 of the Constitution
6. CHIA process was developed.
7. The 2008 Asia and Pacific Regional Health Impact Assessment Conference was held and development of HIA mechanism in ASEAN region was proposed.
8. The document titled “HIA: A Foundation for the Well-being of the ASEAN Community” was proposed in the ASEAN Summit as a part of Social and Cultural Pillar.

2010
2011

“HIA was widely conducted”

- HIA was done mostly as EHIA in order that projects were approved. Map Ta Phut Project in a prominent example.
- CHIA was encouraged all over the country.
- HIA was encouraged to conduct in various areas according to the right to request for an assessment stated in Section 11 of the National Health Act B.E.2550.
- HIA was used in policy-making level in the case of FTA Thai-EU.
- The Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development supported the set-up of HIA ASEAN network by requiring that each country appoint their coordinator and that Thailand hold a workshop for framework development.
- Evaluation of HIA Rules was conducted with the following outcomes:
 - Problems with EHIA processes, especially in Public Scoping.
 - Inadequate number of HIA personnel in Thailand.
 - Community’s needs of capability building on CHIA and relevant knowledge.
 - Needs of research and development on HIA process and relevant knowledge.

2012

4 Pillars of Thai HIA were set up as followed:

1. HIA Commission:

- is the key mechanism in developing HIA rules, procedures and methods, as well as encouraging various sectors to comply with such rules.
 - Evaluated and improved HIA, Volume 2
 - Encouraged and supported agencies especially Local Administrative Organizations to use HIA in development of Healthy Public Policy (HPP) according to their roles and responsibilities.
- is a policy mechanism under NHC who can link directly to the Cabinet and relevant departments in order to propose results of HIA as a part of decision-making.

2. HIA Consortium

- is the key mechanism in doing researches and developing body of knowledge concerning HIA in Thailand, as well as building and capacity of HIA personnel in all areas as scholar network in university across the country:
 - Developed HIA curriculums in graduate school level
 - Developed curriculums for short-period training
- Initiated HIA R&D Unit in universities including Khonkaen University, Chiang Mai University, Naresuan University, Mahidol University and Prince of Songkhla University, Hat Yai Campus.
 - Compiled HIA case studies to develop HIA Methodology, for example health impacts from international trade agreement; health impacts from mining; health impacts from pesticides; etc.

3. Community HIA Network

- Is the key mechanism in empowering community so that communities can conduct HIA and use information in order to share, discuss and negotiate during public policy making processes which will lead to the most beneficial development for community’s well-being.
- Raised CHIA from case studies to learning spaces and synthesized knowledge about CHIA.
 - Held the 1st CHIA academic meeting titled “CHIA for intellectual empowerment towards social and self-determination”

4. HIA Network in ASEAN

- Is the key mechanism in sharing and learning about HIA in ASEAN Community to support trans-border impact assessment.
 - Set up ASEAN Focal Point on HIA (AFPHIA), Terms of Reference (TOR) and action plans together
 - Set up technical Network for HIA in ASEAN to study health impacts from global warming



WHY THE THAI PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN CHIA?

Back to 2007 when enacting the National Health Act – HIA is stipulated in the section of rights and duties to health, and when promulgating the Constitution – HIA is stipulated in the section of community rights, a few people knew HIA. Many people thought it was similar to EIA. Some people wanted to use HIA to halt the unwanted development projects.

At that time, the mega projects, such as electric power plant, mining, industry and free trade agreement, have obviously shown negative impacts to communities. The prohibition against EIA has been increasing due to the inadequate participation in the process, exclusion of community information and concerns in EIA, expert oriented decision making. Not all types of development are permitted to conduct EIA, for example, development in policy level. The results of EIA reports are often discovered irrelevant to reality in communities. The projects where approved based on these unreliable EIA reports have been developed inappropriate with cultural ecology resulting in impacts to all dimensions of communities and eventually leading to conflicts.

HIA is developed to fulfill the impact assessment system in Thailand. Its intention is to create a social learning process to analyze and forecast positive and negative impacts that may occur from policies, projects or activities. Impact assessment can apply a variety of appropriate tools and a participatory process in order to support a decision making which will bring good health to the people.

As a result, HIA is considered as a tool and a process of the society. Whatever public policies are to be developed, health and health equity should be an integral part in the policies.

To achieve the intention of the National Health Act, National Health Commission Office has built capacity of communities in conducting HIA by themselves. Their study is useful when they participate in the policy development process. This is so called Community based Health Impact Assessment or CHIA.

In 2009, National Health Commission announced the rules and procedures for the HIA. According to the rules and procedures, HIA is divided into 4 categories; 1) HIA in the case of a project or activity which may seriously affect communities. This is in conjunction with Section 67 of Constitution 2007, 2) HIA at the level of public policy or planning which may which may seriously affect communities in the future, 3) HIA in accordance with Section 11 of the National Health Act 2007 and 4) HIA as a joint learning process of the society.

CHIA is classified in the 4th category that is to promote mutual learning in communities and to support participation in decision making in policy, project and activity. This effort will lead to well-being and health equity of communities.



CHIA PROCESS AND PROCEDURE IN THAILAND'S CONTEXT

CHIA is considered as a social tool for community development with a focus on community's determination on their future. Its strong point lies in a self design by communities on appropriate tools and process of HIA. They also conduct HIA by themselves. As a result, the tools and process are different according to the context, way of living and culture of each community.

This process creates a bottom-up health promotion in which communities collectively make it up through developing healthy public policies, strengthening communities and creating an enable environment. In addition, this mutual learning process help adjust the way of thinking, paradigm on holistic health, self health care skills and self reliance. This process eventually minimizes the rate of illness, the number of in-patients and the unnecessary health care related expenses. This result indirectly leads to an increase in quality and quantity of medical services and public health care to communities as a whole.

The 4 working steps

First: Developing Tools. This step is very important. Thailand applies the people assessing their health process (PATH process) which starts with defining a definition of "the health of a community", determining the future and vision for their well-being, seeking determinants of health in all dimensions, particularly social determinants. Afterward, developing indicators of each determinant, testing the tools and developing the guideline. Story telling is a vital technique at this step.

Second: Assessing the health of a community. The community uses the tools which jointly developed to assess a coming development project whether it causes a change in determinants of health of the community or not and how, both positive and negative impacts. During assessing, the vision of the community is brought into consideration. Any unclear issues need to find additional evidence to support. Importantly information needs to be checked for accuracy and adequacy

in a regular basis by a community, involved agencies and specialists. At this stage, many tools are applied, but the crucial ones are community mapping and in-dept data collection on community's capacity such as ecological system, way of living, occupation, resources (herbs, food supply sources, upstream forest). In addition, timeline drawing to see the changes from the past to present and to forecast the future is indispensable. Other useful tools include questionnaire, in-dept interview, focus group meeting, case study, field trip and exchange of knowledge with other communities.

Third: Moving forward to decision making process. The information compiled from the CHIA has to be urged into considerations by the policy makers at different levels and related sectors. This can be for the decision making within their own community, local administrations, state agencies at the national government, as well as for the court hearings procedure. Its ultimate goal is to enable the citizen to choose a development project that best suit their community, to settle communal conflicts, and to minimize the existing impacts from development projects or potential impacts.

Forth: Monitoring and evaluation. When the decision is made, the community will follow up the impact to evaluate both positive and negative changes. The community's tools will be employed, whereas they can be adjusted as it deems appropriate according to the situation.

It is noteworthy that communication with the general public plays a crucial role to create the learning process of the society. This learning should be based on information, evidence, facts and good reason, in spite of different opinions. Social communication is also influential to decision making of the concerned parties.

Proposal of Biomass Power Plant Project of 9.4 MW capacity, Wiangneua Sub-district, Wiangchai District, Chiang Rai Province

Request for concession of iron ore mining, Mae Thod Village, Theun District, Lampang Province

“Mae Thod: From iron mining to village of herbs”

From the opposition against the iron mining to the question of what the villagers wanted their village to be. After conducting CHIA, it was found that the area is the watershed of Mae Thod stream where varieties of conservation herbs inhabit, as well as a waterfall and 2 caves. The community then chose to turn their home village into the community of herbs and ecotourism.

Gold mining in Wangsapung District; iron ore mining in Umung Village, Chiang Kan district; and request for concession of copper mining, Nadindum Sub-district, Loei Province

“People and Mines: The Future of Loei”

Since Loei had its first official gold mining in Khoa Luang Sub-district, Wangsapung District in 2006, mining has become prosperous in the area. On the other hand, people living in communities around the mines are found with cyanide, mercury and lead in their blood. External scholars also found that mining army is invading Loei: iron ore mining in Umung Village, Chiang Kan District; copper mining in Huaymuang Village, Nadindum Sub-district; and the proposal for gold mining area expansion to Phulek, Wangsapung District. In broader viewpoint, Loei has several options of development including border trading, agriculture, mining, and tourism. The challenge for Loei people is how they view their home in the future.

Deep sea port and industrial development, Sichol-Tha Sala Districts, Nakornsrihammarath province

“Coastal fishery/ Golden bay/ Self-identified food producers of the world”

The all-form opposition against the development project led to the use of CHIA. Surveys done by Ban Sichol-Tha Sala Fishery Network showed that the area is spawning grounds of over 100 breeds of fish. It is the source of jobs and incomes for the community and can generate 391 million baht a year in average. It is the “Golden bay” which exports food to all over the world. People eventually got together as Nakornsrihammarath Food Producer Protection Network and identified themselves as food producers whose home is food production area for the whole world.

Areas of CHIA practices

Pilot practices of CHIA started in 2008. Most communities using this tool were target areas of the Southern Seaboard Project. Nowadays, it is widely used in various policy-making level including;

- Mining Policy
- Energy Policy (biomass and coal)
- Southern Seaboard policy
- Tourism Industrial Policy

Tourism Development Project, Yoa Yai Island, Pang Nga Province

Thungkai Industrial Estate, Trang Province

Pakbara Port Construction, Stun Province

Request for concession of iron ore mining, Udon

Biomass Power Plant Project of 9.4 MW capacity, Wiangneua

Biomass Power Plant Project of 17 MW capacity, Wiangneua

Southern Seaboard Project

Songkhro Port

Harbor in P



CHIA PRACTICES

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Proposal of Biomass Power Plant Project of
9 MW capacity, Sawangweerawong District,
Ubonratchathani Province

**Coal Power Plant of 600MW capacity, Khoa Hinsorn Sub-district, Phanomsarakam District,
Cha Choeng Sao Province**

“Food-Coal: Development Crossing in Agricultural Area”

Policy on development of energy and agriculture in Phanomsarakam-Sanamchaikhet area informs that the coal power plant of 600MW capacity will emerge in the same area of organic agriculture which covers 2,000 rai of Khoa Hinsorn. It includes mango orchards, premium-grade rice which is exported to foreign market, and straw mushroom cultivation. The power plant will use water from the same sources. It is the 1st project to propose CHIA along with EHIA conducted by the consultant company in order that the policy-makers can see and decide based on all-around information. This case shows the crossing of development of food and coal and that community and policy-makers need to set development direction together.

**Thai -Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant project, Chana District,
Songkhla Province**

“The Return of the Missing Power of Chana People”

Apart from energy to feed the country and the world, Chana people living around the gas separation plant found that their community has changed after the energy industry entered. Money is more valued than religious values. The community falls into pieces and more people from outside rush into the area...

After 10 -year opposition against the project, they could not win. They feel victimized again and again and their choices of life seem limited. The trust in legal system and mechanism is weakened. To overcome such obstacles and regain their confidence, CHIA is used in order to turn their sadness and suffering into information and knowledge with the ultimate goal to develop public policies which value individual life and experiences.

For more information

www.nationalhealth.or.th
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The Thai Community Health Impact Assessment (CHIA) started in April 2008 when the National Health Commission Office (NHC) in collaboration with the Healthy Public Policy Foundation and the Research and Development Institute, Khon Kaen University hosted a workshop titled “CHIA Guideline Development”. Interested participants were from 14 communities, most of which were the target areas of industrial development stated in the Southern Seaboard Development Plan initiated by the government. After that, 2 sequel meetings were held. In this regard, 8 cases were actually practiced by the communities. During working process, continual learning and sharing forums among practitioners from different area were done until the Southern CHIA Network was set up. Information and data gathered during that HIA practice were synthesized and

In 2012, CHIA has been done in 13 areas affected by biomass power plants. Among these communities, 4 cases have been completed. This CHIA process led to the review in granting permission criteria for biomass power plants. Also, it was enclosed as an agenda in the National Health Assembly meeting in order to consider policy proposal in prevention and reduction of health impacts from biomass power plants.

Over 5 years of CHIA development in Thailand, CHIA has been done in over 30 areas in various fields of policy, such as industry, mining, energy, etc. CHIA receives high attention and acceptance from the society. When the first academic CHIA conference titled “CHIA for Intellectual Empowerment towards Social and Self Determination.”



LESSON LEARNED

proposed to be an agenda for consideration during the meeting of the National Health Assembly in the end of 2009. NHC and the Cabinet approved to revise mechanism and procedures of the Southern Seaboard Development Plan by including all relevant sectors in the process so that the Plan actually meets the local capacity.

In 2010, CHIA was done in areas affected by mining policies. The NHC; the Environmental Litigation and Advocacy for the Wants; and the Civil Society Planning Network hosted a capacity building workshop for mining-affected communities. Communities from 13 areas attended the workshop and CHIA done by 2 areas obviously affected decision making of policy makers in both local administration and central government levels. During this time, more and more communities were keen on doing CHIA, especially those affected from industrial development, coal and gas power plants.

was held last July, more participants than expected turned up (500 from 300). These included people from all sectors; local communities, state agencies, local administration, private sector, NGOs, consultants, scholars, students and media. In this conference, 2 important lessons from CHIA practices in Thailand were reflected as followed:

1 CHIA offers 4 benefits for Thai society: 1) a tool for development of public policies concerning health; 2) development of participatory democracy; 3) mutual learning of all sectors through practices and development; and 4) a tool for empowerment of civil society. The evidences of this can be seen from the following quotes:

“Community power derived from HIA process is community identity which appears more in public space. The process is welcome from the new coming groups while the opposition groups are more open

to different opinions. Though the community is not very certain about their roles of data collection, they trust in the power of the whole community which stands up together... So far, we have not passed much information to policy-making level. Instead, we share it with media, scholars, Local Administrative Organizations, the Regional Office of Environment, the Foundation for Consumers, etc... However, today working capital will be important for designing future work to achieve constructive public policies. We will stand up as producers and protectors of food resources of the world. The path may seem far but we will reach there as now we have come so far from the beginning. The rest is today and tomorrow, and we will walk there together...” Pavinee Chaipak, CHIA practitioner, Chana, Songkhla Province.

communities to gain confidence in standing up and fighting despite the results... Today, the draft is proposed to HIA Commission but it does not mean that this is the end. Rather, this is the beginning of the sharing of what is learned. We hope the voice from an individual will come together and create greater change in the society...” Kobmanee Leutpichitkul, CHIA practitioner, Cha Cheong Sao Province.

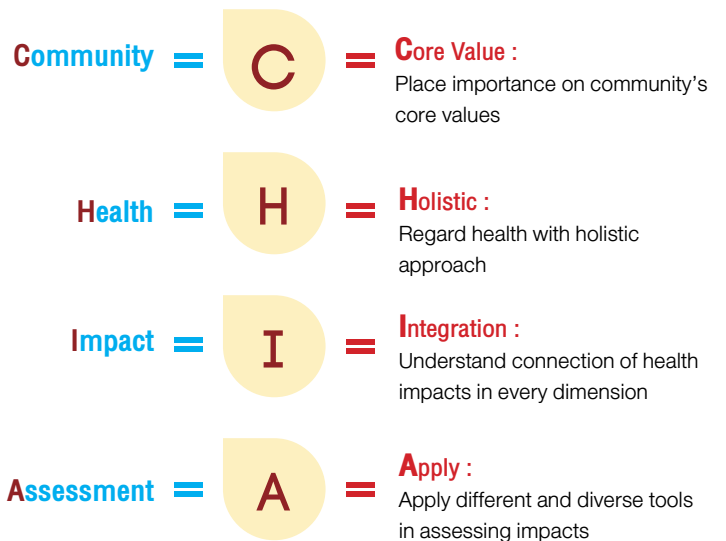
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With CHIA, impact assessment will be done cautiously, thoroughly, and fairly for all as it consists of 4 significant characteristics.



“The important key of CHIA is not to fight with the rivals but to build intellectual power in order to take community out of the conflict, or at least to avoid physical attack. Our community chose to use intellectual power and the tool called “CHIA”. The then beginning led us away from conflicts with Chevron Company and the coal power plant. We built process which defined our own future and identified that “We are food producers and the whole area is used for food production for our friends in the world...” Prasitchai Noonual, CHIA practitioner, Sichol-Tha Sala, Nakornsrihammarath Province.

“Throughout 2 years of CHIA process, it is to learn that this process does not focus on the “end” but its efficiency is derived from the “means”. It begins with a small group of people who are aware, love and cherish their homeland. They are weaved together with friends who share similar ideology. Together, they learn and search for true capacity of communities via internal and external communication which reinforces the process. Every little bit supports and empowers





NEXT STEP

TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF CHIA IN THAILAND

In 2009, the HIA Commission hosted a workshop titled “What Should the Thai HIA Look Like in the Next 5 Years?” with participants from various sectors: local communities, local administration, state agencies, NGOs, private sector, and scholars from different fields. In doing this, they reflected the image of ideal “HIA”. In summary, HIA should be a commitment rather than enforcement. It should become a culture in all levels of public policies on public health, from local communities, projects, programs to policy levels. All stakeholders should share mutual trust, understanding, access and ownership over HIA. Focus should be upon participation and learning process. Lastly, it should be shared by people from multi-disciplinary areas and regarded as social responsibility, instead of merely the public health sector.

HIA in Thailand consists of 4 significant pillars: HIA Commission, HIA Consortium, CHIA Network and HIA in ASEAN Network. Learning and sharing process are regularly practiced among the 4 of them and communication with the society is done continually, especially the National HIA Forum which is held annually.

Nowadays some communities in various places start learning about and conducting CHIA while others become more aware of benefits of doing CHIA by themselves. The number of these communities is increasing. It can be said that today HIA is slipping out of specialist’s hands and Thai people begin to feel the ownership over it. It is now becoming a culture in the public policies process.

Nonetheless, strengthening CHIA, one pillar of Thai HIA, has faced some challenges and the most challenging thing to overcome concerns paradigm shift, which includes:

- 1** Health Paradigm: Despite Thailand’s effort in shifting health paradigm into the concept of well-being for over 10 years, a lot of people still regard health in one dimension, which is illness, and do not understand health determinants, especially social determinant of health (SDH). This leads to contestation and argument, particularly when HIA is proposed in decision-making level. Common expectation is that results from HIA process will address ailments and possible treatment. The question, then, is how to create process which will enable Thai people to view health in holistic approach.
- 2** Impact Assessment: CHIA is a part of Thai HIA system and HIA belongs to a greater impact assessment system composed of various tools such as EIA, SEA, SIA, City Planning Assessment, Environmental Safety Assessment, etc. Some scholars and technicians, especially those from non-health sectors, therefore, cannot see how CHIA is beneficial. Then, how to get activists and those who works in community empowerment, as well as academic specialists and policy makers to open up and apply CHIA in their work?
- 3** Protection of Community Right: Communities being invaded by development projects expect to use HIA as their fighting tool against the projects. How can they go beyond that and use CHIA as the tool which truly directs future of the community based on community’s eco-culture?

Now that CHIA is still in its early days, a lot more work is waiting to be done. To strengthen and continue the movement, important missions needed to complete in 3 years include: 1) Building clear-cut understanding about key concepts, knowledge, CHIA guideline and application in different fields; 2) Creating enough Critical Mass, in terms of quality, in order to create change; and 3) Creating concrete application of CHIA in various policy areas, e.g. city planning, energy planning, food security, disaster management, international trading, etc.