

Community participation in community health impact assessment: 3 case studies in Thailand

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Abstract

Community health impact assessment is designed to be social joint learning process by the national health commission. However, it has been found that the participation within the community is inadequate as designated by the constitution and law.

The objective of this work is to describe the level of community participation in community health impact assessment. We reviewed three cases occurring in Thailand and performing data analysis by using the concept of IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation which includes 5 levels--inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. As a result, it is found that the starting point for community health impact assessment in each area is different due to different methods, processes, tools, and stakeholders in the given area. For the first case of the Deep Seaport at Thasala district, Nakhon Si Thammarat province, the level of participation in the area is empower of which people in the communities construct a network and investigate the potential of the area for dictating their own future. The second case of Coal Power Plant at Kaohinsorn district, Chachoengsao province, the level of participation in the area is involve of which people in the area submit their concerns to the related government agencies. The last case of gas separation plant in Chana district, Songkla province, the level of participation is consult of which people in the area expressed their concerns to the related agencies.

Keywords: Community health impact assessment, Community participation

Introduction

National Health Commission Office of Thailand (NHCO) has provided process and procedure for health impact assessment (HIA) into 4 cases in 2009:1) HIA on projects or activities that could severely affect communities as indicated in Section 67 Paragraph 2, of the Thai Constitution 2009 which environmental impact assessment is also included, called Environment and Health Impact Assessment (EHIA). 2) HIA at the level of public policies and the process of planning activities for the development that could significantly affect communities in the future and voluntarily performed by related agencies. 3) HIA as requested following Section 11 of the National Health Act 2007 4) HIA as the social joint learning process or Community Health Impact Assessment (CHIA)[1, 2, 3].

CHIA is undergone with the emphasis on the people participation whose assessment serves for their own health that no one knows better than oneself [4]. In Thailand, the development of CHIA began in 2008 by NHCO by using organized workshops dedicated for community education to perform self-health impact assessment [5]. As a result, there was a pilot area for CHIA in the south of Thailand [1]. Since then the area for CHIA has grown extensively. For seven years, several communities that were impaired by mines, industries, power plants, seaport, are taken part in CHIA over 40 areas throughout the country [6].

This study aims to describe the process and indicate the level of community participation in CHIA by using literatures and group discussion. Three case studies are

Deep seaport and industrial development, Coal Power Plant of 600 MW capacity, and Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant—using the five-level participations given by International Association for Public Participation.

Objectives

To describe the level of participation within the community for CHIA by using the IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation.

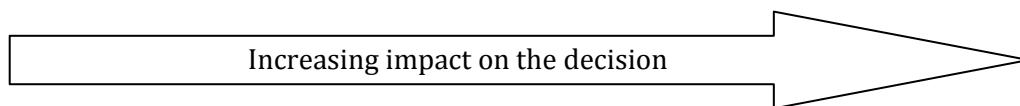
Methodology

Study design

This study is descriptive research. Data are collected by documentary review concerning the three cases: CHIA report and lesson learned CHIA articles. In addition, group discussions are performed for CHIA during 2010-2012 concerning the three cases by HIA activists.

Conceptual Framework

We study the level of community participation in the CHIA process by using the concept given by International Association for Public Participation of which divides the level of participation into 5 categories—inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower[7].



IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation				
Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

Results and Discussion

All CHIA can be categorized into 2 groups— those about to happen— the Deep seaport and industrial development and the Coal Power Plant of 600 MW capacity—and that already occurred—the Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant. The study results are shown as follows:

1. Deep seaport and industrial development

The project belongs to Chevron Thailand Exploration and Production, Ltd. categorized as that could cause severe impact to community. Such project must file EHIA report. The starting point of CHIA in Thasala district came with the purposes of self-defense against the project. CHIA became a tool for intellectual power, direction of

development, and report that belonged to the community. As a result of CHIA, it was found that Thasala bay area is embraced with abundant natural resources with a particular ecological system. In addition, it is a breeding area for valuable marine life that provides income over hundred millions annually to community [10].

For CHIA, it was found that the level of participation covers inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The methods used for CHIA included networking, building common feelings, and projecting future of community. In screening step, the participation is inform and consult level. The community leaders informed the data to make community understanding about project and treats of the project by utilizing informal meeting in teashops constantly and extend to the villages nearby. The networking and common feelings was all made together at the same time. In scoping step, the participation is involve level. The future of community was identified based on “food resources” by group discussion. The concerns of community and issue specification were expressed by discussion acquired by informal conversation both in group and in person. People joining such meetings and discussion grew in great numbers. In addition, there were various discussion stages of all sizes organized in villages over hundred times. Data collecting tools were developed by community and academics emphasizing on simplicity[11] in order to simplify the communication and convey information to people in the community. Such tools are based on the idea “no one knows better than people in the community”.

In appraisal step, the participation is involve level. The data was collected from community informants by people in community. In the other hand, marine life and ecological data were collected life by discussion in the community and mapping to show the relation in environment and abundant of marine life. This method allowed people to see the economy along Thasala bay. Then, the data and finding were presented in reviewing process, which participation is involve level. A meeting of four networking villages was organized to review and validate the correctness and completeness of the data. Collected data were then published as a book, called “Fish book”, telling a story regarding how the area is so abundant with natural resources, capacity of area in food production, path of food and also provides economic information. In decision making step, the level of participation covers involve, collaborate and empower level. “Fish book” was submitted to related agencies for consideration of approving the project. This book was also a tool providing information against that given by the EHIA report of the project. This process brought people together generating self-valued feeling, being proud, and sharing common goal. Such characteristics finally led people to self-defense. Furthermore, there was the cooperation to protect “area of food resource” between network of people, academic institution and local administration. It can be seen that people made their own decision to dictate their own future, means that the participation reaches the empower level.

As a consequence of intellectual and knowledge objection, Chevron has finally halted the construction of seaport on December, 2012 in Thai Gulf. The company sent a document to the related government agencies to confirm the decision; however, Chevron was still under obligation to submit a complete EHIA report for further consideration [12].

2. Coal Power Plant of 600 MW capacity

This power plant project is proceeded under the supervision of the National Power Supply Limited Company (Public). The power plant employs coal as its energy source and is located in Khoa-Hinsorn sub-district, Phanomsarakam district, Chachoengsao province. This project is categorized as that could severely impact the community and must file the EHIA report.

This project was deterred by community. Protesting was put to work along with road obstruction, submitted documents to the related agencies, and petitioned to the King. Ultimately, in October 2010, the petition was received by the NHCO with the request of using people right section 11 of the National Health Act 2007 for being parts of HIA. The HIA committee screened the petition and the consensus met to support the CHIA for the preparation of data and evident in order to effectively provide information and ideas during EHIA process. [8] CHIA for this case was done by using group discussion and community mapping process which brought people sharing common goals and built networking. As a result, it was found that the level of participation covered inform, consult, and involve. Describe as follow:

In scoping step, the participation is inform, consult and involve level, meaning that community was informed to understand project approval process, including current situation regarding the power plant. The concerns of community were expressed through focus group discussion in many issues such as acid rain, water shortage, damage of agriculture products and labors migration [8]. For clarified scoping, community mapping process was used for identifying issues. In appraisal step, the level of participation is consult and involve, meaning that community was asked for their data and opinions by various techniques and the data is validated by community. In reviewing step, the participation is involve level. The findings from appraisal step were presented in two meetings. The first meeting was “public review” to present initial findings for knowledge sharing and data verification. The participants were governmental agencies, academics and communities. The second meeting was “expert review” to present draft report for suggestions and recommendations. The participants were academics and related agencies.

In decision making step, the participation is involve level, meaning that the CHIA report was considered as supplementary information along with the EHIA report in expert committee meeting for considering EHIA report. The EHIA report was considered in expert committee meeting on 2012, 2013, and the latest on January of 2016 and was disapproved for all 3 considerations.[9].

3. Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant

This plant is an international joint venture between Thailand and Malaysia located in Chana district, Songkhla province. The area is designated as a joint development area where both countries share the benefit from the natural gas. The plant was completed and operated in 2005 even though the EIA report was disapproved and there were conflictions with people in the areas and the failure from public hearing. As a result, there were networking and objection center established.

The beginning of CHIA process started from the network of people in Chana District who attended the workshop for CHIA developing skills in 2008 and showed their interest in undergoing CHIA as a result of the continuation of industrial development in the area. This CHIA case showed the level of participation covering inform and consult. Describe as follow:

In screening step, the participation is inform and consult level. The leader of objections group and people in the area were informed to understand CHIA concept such as health, health determinants, and defining the future. Meanwhile, the determinants of health in the area were identified in four issues such as religious principles, health, career changing and social [5]. In appraisal step, the level of participation is consult, means that people were asked for data and opinions, collecting by using questionnaire, group discussion, and in-depth interview. Data was analyzed and written into publications to present to the public. Furthermore, some issues were chosen to make community media for presenting on television program. In reviewing step, the level of participation is also consult. The results of the studies were presented in informal meeting in order to verify and assure the completeness of the results. However, the results were solid enough for making the CHIA to the policy making level [13].

All 3 cases can be summarized as the table below.

CHIA Process	IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation				
	Inform	consult	involve	collaborate	empower
Screening	¹ Informal conversation	¹ Community hearing ² Regulation	-	-	-
Scoping	² Focus group meeting ³ Meeting	² Focus group meeting ³ Group discussion	¹ Small-large group discussion, Informal conversation ¹ tools development for data collection as collaborative efforts between community and academics ² Community mapping process	-	-
Appraisal	-	² Field survey, focus group, questioning and in-depth interview ³ Questionnaire, group discussion, and in-depth interview ³ Publication, Citizen journalists, Community media	¹ Data collecting by people. ¹ Community discussion-environment mapping, marine life. mapping ² Data validating by community	-	-
Reviewing	-	³ Informal meeting	¹ Meeting of 4 networking villages ² Public review and expert review	-	-

CHIA Process	IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation				
	Inform	consult	involve	collaborate	empower
Decision Making	-	-	1 "Fish book": information for project approval process 2 CHIA report : information for project approval process	1 Cooperation for conservation Thasala bay as "area of food resources"	1 Community dictate its own future
Monitoring & Evaluation	-	-	-	-	-

Remarks : 1 : Deep seaport and industrial development
2 : Coal Power Plant of 600 MW capacity
3 : Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant

Conclusion

All 3 CHIA cases were implemented according to the HIA process; however, the methodology of each step was different. The level of community participation in each case was also different depending on many factors. Such as

The entry points for conducting CHIA, Deep seaport and industrial development used CHIA for against the project by using CHIA network, Coal Power Plant of 600 MW capacity used Section 11 of the National Health Act 2007 for against the project. While Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant used CHIA for joint learning process and monitoring and evaluation by using CHIA network.

The situation and context of community also affected the participation level. Deep seaport and Coal Power Plant of 600 MW capacity were the projects that were undergone and EIA must be filed for project approval while Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant were already happened although its EIA report was not approved. Similarly, the community networking and facilitators for conducting CHIA process, the facilitator of Deep seaport and industrial development and Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and gas separation plant case were community activists while Coal Power Plant of 600 MW capacity case was HIA activists from NHCO. Another factor was the time period of CHIA process. However, it can be seen that community participation in CHIA process can take community concerns and values into decision making.

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