

**Source:** Tapani Kauppinen (2003). New perspectives into safety promotion: Human Impact Assessment (HuIA) - assessing the effects of a certain decision on health and welfare. The 5th Nordic Safe Community Conference, Helsinki, Finland, 26 - 29 August 2003. Abstract

### ***New perspectives into safety promotion:***

## **Human Impact Assessment (HuIA) –Assessing the Effects of a Certain Decision on Health and Welfare**

Human Impact Assessment (HuIA) is a tool for planning and decision-making. It allows *ex ante*, prospective assessment of the potential effects, the impacts of planned plans, programmes or policies. HuIA inform policy and decision making to maximise benefits and minimise negative impacts on human beings.

- It is focussed on impacts on people's health, living conditions and amenity. HuIA brings together physical health, mental health, social and economic environment. This integrated impact assessment brings together components of environmental, health, social and other forms of impact assessment in an attempt to incorporate an exploration of the different ways in which policies, programmes or projects may affect.
- Impacts are changes in people's well-being and health. Impacts may be qualitative or quantitative, direct or indirect, for example, or they may be positive for some group of people and negative for others. A decision may even have both positive and negative impacts for one and the same group.
- It is a tool for health promotion. The idea is to ask what will happen if we do a certain thing. In *ex ante* assessment, different Alternative actions and solutions are considered and their effects discussed. At the same time, plans can be made for alleviating any negative impacts.
- It is multiprofessional. Promotion of well-being and health is not a matter for social and health professionals only. It also calls for the participation of local inhabitants, voluntary organisations, businesses, and authorities from all different fields of government. Assessment is a useful way of cooperation between different branches of government. It is also helpful in dealing with conflict situations.
- HuIA is a systemic. 'Systemic' here refers to the notion that everything affects everything. We can ask: "What should I do if you do like this?" System thinking allows us to see that making certain decisions or selecting certain alternatives will support or promote a certain kind of environment or impact. In the systemic model, the work of one community member complements that of others. Different actors recognise the impacts of their work on the work that others do.
- It is a learning process. For the people involved in *ex ante* assessment, this can be a learning process. Learning requires reflection on one's own views and ways of action. Social and health professionals should learn how to describe the environment and the impacts of decisions. Experts in other fields, such as commerce, technology, land-use planning and transport, will have the challenge of recognising the health impacts of their own decisions.

- It is a tool for improving the quality of decision-making. Human Impact Assessment is a tool for impact-conscious planning and decision-making. It enables argumentative cross-administrative planning, which leaves room for indirect effects outside administrative divides. It shows how decisions, plans and programmes support or weaken communities' health, welfare and safety.