Health impact assessment in San Francisco: Incorporating the social determinants of health into environmental planning

Case Metadata
USA--San_Francisco_SPR_Coburn_and_Bhatia_2007-2007

Intersectoral Action Experience Approximate Start Date: Wednesday, June 16, 2004
Intersectoral Action Experience Duration: 3 years (on-going)

Case Geography
Jurisdiction(s) of Implementation: San Francisco municipality, Mission neighbourhood, Potrero Hill neighbourhood, South of Market neighbourhood
Country: United States

Policy Issue
Policy Issue: In the 1990s, environmental justice issues were raised about the "local, largely African American, population" in Bayview/Hunters Point neighbourhoods. In response, the San Francisco Department of Health "partnered with environmental justice groups and academic scientists to explore and document the environmental health burdens" in the neighbourhoods. The results of a 1999 household survey indicated that residents experienced, not only issues with pollution, but substandard housing conditions, unemployment, lack of access to healthy food, and safety/crime. Subsequently, the Environmental Health Section (EHS) of the Department of Health became involved in non-health-related policies, including performing a health impact assessment on a proposed living wage ordinance in San Francisco. At the same time, gentrification was taking over neighbourhoods, creating issues of affordable housing and the loss of locally-owned businesses. As it became clear that resident health was impacted by neighbourhood redevelopment, the EHS along with activists from the Mission, South of Market and Bayview neighbourhoods unsuccessfully petitioned the Department of Planning to incorporate health into their formal environmental impact assessments. In this case, the policy issue reflected a health gap between residents of Bayview/Hunters Point and Mission neighbourhoods and other neighbourhoods in San Francisco.

Explicitness of Equity: Explicit
Type of Inequality: Gap between two populations
Short Phrase: Environmental justice/sustainability

Policy Solution
Overview: Health impacts assessments performed jointly by the Environmental Health Section (EHS) of the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) and residents of the Eastern neighbourhood communities (i.e., Mission, Potrero Hill, and South of Market neighbourhoods) were performed on planning policies that adversely affected resident health.

Policy Solution: Constituents

Sector To Whom Implementation of Policy Solution is Accountable: Sectors participating in health impact assessments for policy-making were accountable to the San Francisco Department of Public Health at the municipal level.

Instruments for Implementation and Institutional Context: Municipal initiative implemented by municipal level of government and multiple neighbourhoods.

Financing: MI
Program Theory

**Strategy**: The Eastern neighbourhoods Community Health Impact Assessment represented a target group strategy since it considered the health impacts of development in the Eastern neighbourhoods communities.

**Category of Main Strategy**: Targeting/selective [3]

**Scope of Intervention**: Residents of the Mission; Potrero Hill and South of Market neighbourhoods

**Unit Level of Intervention**: Individuals, families and communities [4]

**Social Determinants of Health Entry Point**: "San Francisco addressed differential exposure to health damaging factors of populations living in specific neighbourhoods with potential developments by improving intermediate determinants of health such as living and working conditions."

**Social Determinants of Health Category**: Intermediary: material circumstances [5]

**Summary**: A health impact assessment project developed jointly by community stakeholders and city agencies addressed a health gradient using a target group approach with three neighbourhoods in San Francisco.

**Details on Intersectoral Engagement Process Leading To or Implementing Intersectoral Action**: Yes

**Phase of Policy/Intervention Cycle**: Development or Planning, Implementation, Evaluation

**Main Intersectoral Coordination Mechanisms and Tools Utilized**: A community committee was established for purposes of establishing a decision-making structure. Participants included individuals from 30 non-profit and private sector organizations, four public agencies, in addition to from city planning and public health sectors.

**Institutional Arrangements or Structures for Policy Development**: A municipal-level planning committee selected agencies, organizations, and residents for the Stakeholder Council. This occurred prior to health impact assessment formulation, however, it is unclear of the specific role of the Stakeholder Council. The municipal-level council including representatives of health and planning agencies, community groups and city agencies formulated the Eastern neighbourhoods Community Health Impact Assessment.

**Institutional Arrangements or Structures to Implement Policy Solutions**: A municipal-level council including representatives of health and planning agencies, community groups and city agencies instituted the Eastern neighbourhoods Community Health Impact Assessment (ENCHIA) project. The Department of Public Health evaluated the impact of the ENCHIA.

**Sectors Involved in Leadership**: "Initiation: MI Development: In the late 1990s, the health sector at the municipal level appeared to play a leadership role by developing the technical capacity for the Environmental Health Section (EHS) of the Department of Public Health to perform health impact assessments (HIAs). ""It also spurred the establishment of the programme on Health, Equity and Sustainability within the SFDPH which has the mission of improving population health by addressing the environmental, social, and economic conditions under which San Francisco residents live and work."" The EHS also designed the community-based HIA process, which brought stakeholders and government agencies together to set goals and priorities of a health neighbourhood. The EHS played a leadership role in evaluating the Eastern neighbourhoods Community Health Impact Assessment outcome and process. Implementation-Evaluation: MI"

**Description of Industry/Private Sector Involvement**: In designing health impact assessments (HIA) in the Eastern neighbourhoods, the Environmental Health Section consulted with "40 interest groups and private organizations to gain input into the proposed HIA process". "[P]rivate sector organizations" also joined the Community Council to determine goals and priorities for a healthy neighbourhood.

**Description of Civil Society Involvement**: In helping to set the political agenda, "community organizations formed a health advocacy coalition that worked to hold the Environmental Health Section (EHS) accountable for studying the social determinants of health and encouraged the agency to institutionalize their commitment to social justice". In designing health impact assessments (HIAs) in the Eastern neighbourhoods, the EHS consulted with "40 interest groups and private organizations to gain input into the proposed HIA process". "[N]on-profit organizations" also joined the Community Council to determine goals and priorities for a healthy neighbourhood. Community groups also appear to be involved in the evaluation of the Eastern neighbourhoods Health Impact Assessment project.
Description of Academic Involvement: N/A
Description of Use of Impact Assessment: Yes
Concept of Success of the Policy Solution: MI

Source URL: https://extranet.who.int/isacs/case/1110

Links:
[3] https://extranet.who.int/isacs stratégie-type/targetingselective