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Socio-Economic Impacts of Large-Scale Natural Resource Projects in Canada: Lessons since the 1990's

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Presentation Outline

- Importance of assessing social, cultural and economic impacts
- Health Canada implication and goals
- Methodology
- List of impacts
- Discussion
- Lessons learned

Why taking into account social, cultural and economic impacts?

- International Study on the effectiveness of Environmental Assessment (Sadler, 1995)
- Increased public demand to consider these dimensions
- Considering social and economic dimensions help to better protect and promote health and avoid having costs fall on governments, the community and citizens.

Health Canada implication

- In 2006, Environmental Health Assessment Services (EHAS-Health Canada) identified research needs to reinforce evidence base to support advice regarding social, cultural and economic impacts of development projects and impacts on health.

Goals

- Identify socioeconomic and cultural impacts of natural resources large-scale projects in Canada.
- Produce an annotated bibliography and synthesize impacts
- Increase evidence base to support policy decision-making, especially health in EIS
- Update first Annotated Bibliography (1993)

Methodology: literature review

- Time boundaries: docs 1992-2006
- Spatial boundaries: Canada (all provinces)
- Themes: social, economic, cultural impacts of development projects
- Different phases when researching

Sectors studied

- Hydroelectricity
- Mining
- Oil
- Oil Sands
- Other (Aluminum)

List of impacts

- Changes in *employment levels* in area and surrounding communities
- Impacts on local *industries & economic development*
- Changes on local & regional *services* and infrastructures
- Changes on *Aboriginals-traditional way of life*
- Changes in local population *quality of life*
- Changes in *land & resource use*
- Changes in use or loss of *Traditional Knowledge*
- *Social-psychological* impacts on communities
- Impacts of *workers* on communities
- Impacts on workers & *working conditions*
- Impacts on health, health care and safety issues
- Impacts of project *decommissioning*
- Emerging social initiatives

Aboriginal people

- Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA) = bringing benefits to communities (training, employment guarantees...)
- Capacity building: partnership, local businesses equity position
- Corporate social responsibility
- Increase in organization
- Still under-represented but efforts made

Gender role: women

- Little mentionned in 1993 Bibliography
- Still under-represented
- Workplace challenges (harassment, stress...)
- Social issues (household problems, gambling, abuse...)

Monitoring & follow-up practices

- Difficult yet necessary to monitor impacts
- Higher awareness
- Progress made in assessing impacts
- Increased trend to demand follow-up studies
- More studies made
- Better access to data
- New practices

Examples of new practices

- IEMA: Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency
- Follow-up citizen committees

Future research needs

- Instaurate systematic practices
- Significant gaps to be filled
- Make surveys among developers and practitioners
- Study more cumulative impacts

Lessons learned

- Availability of data
- Creation of follow-up committees
- Importance of social consequences of changes
- Documenting *early* social impacts
- Better link together social and biophysical impacts
- Include all actors in assessment process

Questions?

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