

I. Stage 3: Profiling

Aim: To describe key aspects of the health status and demographics of the population that can act as a baseline against which possible health impacts can be assessed.

Learning objectives:

1. To characterize the population in terms of size, density, distribution, age, sex, employment rates, SES and other demographic information.
2. To determine the health status of the population in terms of mortality, disability and morbidity data.
3. To identify health risk behaviors and locations where at-risk groups may be concentrated.
4. To determine the environmental conditions of the population.

Profiling provides a broad picture of the health and socio-demographic context of the policy or program identified in order to better understand the potential health impacts and consequences. This stage involves collecting data numerous indicators that are expected to be relevant given the content of the policy or the program being assessed. Indicators are measurable variables that reflect the state of a community such as housing conditions, mortality rates and air quality.

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Analytical Procedures:

1. Compile a profile of the areas and communities likely to be affected by the project using available socio-demographic and health data and information from key informants (Scott-Samuel et al, 2001).
2. Describe key aspects of the health status and general make-up of the population, particularly in relation to factors that are believed to be susceptible to change or that may act as indicators of anticipated health impact(s) (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2001).
3. Assess the nature and characteristics of groups whose health could be enhanced or placed at risk by the project efforts. Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups require special consideration (Scott-Samuel et al, 2001).

Product:

A comprehensive description of the socio-demographic and health profile of a community or population.

A Comprehensive Profile

Depending on the nature of the project/policy being assessed, information collected from affected communities may include (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2001):

1. Characteristics of the population covered:
 - a. Size
 - b. Density
 - c. Distribution
 - d. Age and sex
 - e. Birth rate
 - f. Ethnicity
 - g. Socio-economic status
 - h. Identification of at-risk groups
2. Health status of the population, particularly of at-risk groups, e.g., gathered from mortality, disability and morbidity data.
3. Levels of employment/unemployment.
4. Environmental conditions of the population covered:
 - a. Air/water/social quality and ability to increase capacity e.g., of a water supply of effluent disposal
 - b. Transport issues if relevant
 - c. Quality and quantity of affordable housing
5. Locations where at-risk groups may be concentrated, e.g., particular streets, schools, nursing homes etc.
6. Health behavior indicators, if relevant, e.g., rates of alcohol use and alcohol-related harms.