

Family Impact Assessment Framework, proposal on a local framework for policy makers to understand impacts of policies and practices to families

Family Summit 2014

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This proposal is informed by

- The international experience in family impact assessment
- What have already been developed in Hong Kong by the Family Council
- Learnings from the pilot project on “Family Impact Assessment on Statutory Minimum Wage.



History and development of FIA

- FIA is informed by a growing vision of incorporating a family perspective in policy-making (Families Commission, 2005b).
- FIA originated in the United States in the 1970s as a part of the movement for family-centered practice and policy (Bogenschneider, et. al., 2012c).



A policy continuum

(Lawson, Briar-Lawson, Hennon & Jones, 2001)

A family supportive framework:

- The direct and indirect policy impacts on families are scrutinized with an explicit goal to support and build capacity in families.

A family-centered framework:

- Families become the center of attention and their well-being as the highest priority. In addition, “families are partners, co-authors, and evaluators, instead of merely “clients” or “targets”.

Hong Kong : A family-supportive framework

“A family perspective to policy formulation does not mean simply giving the highest priority to the family. The most essential aspects is to consider the policy’s potential consequences on the family.”

(Family Council, 2013, p.3)

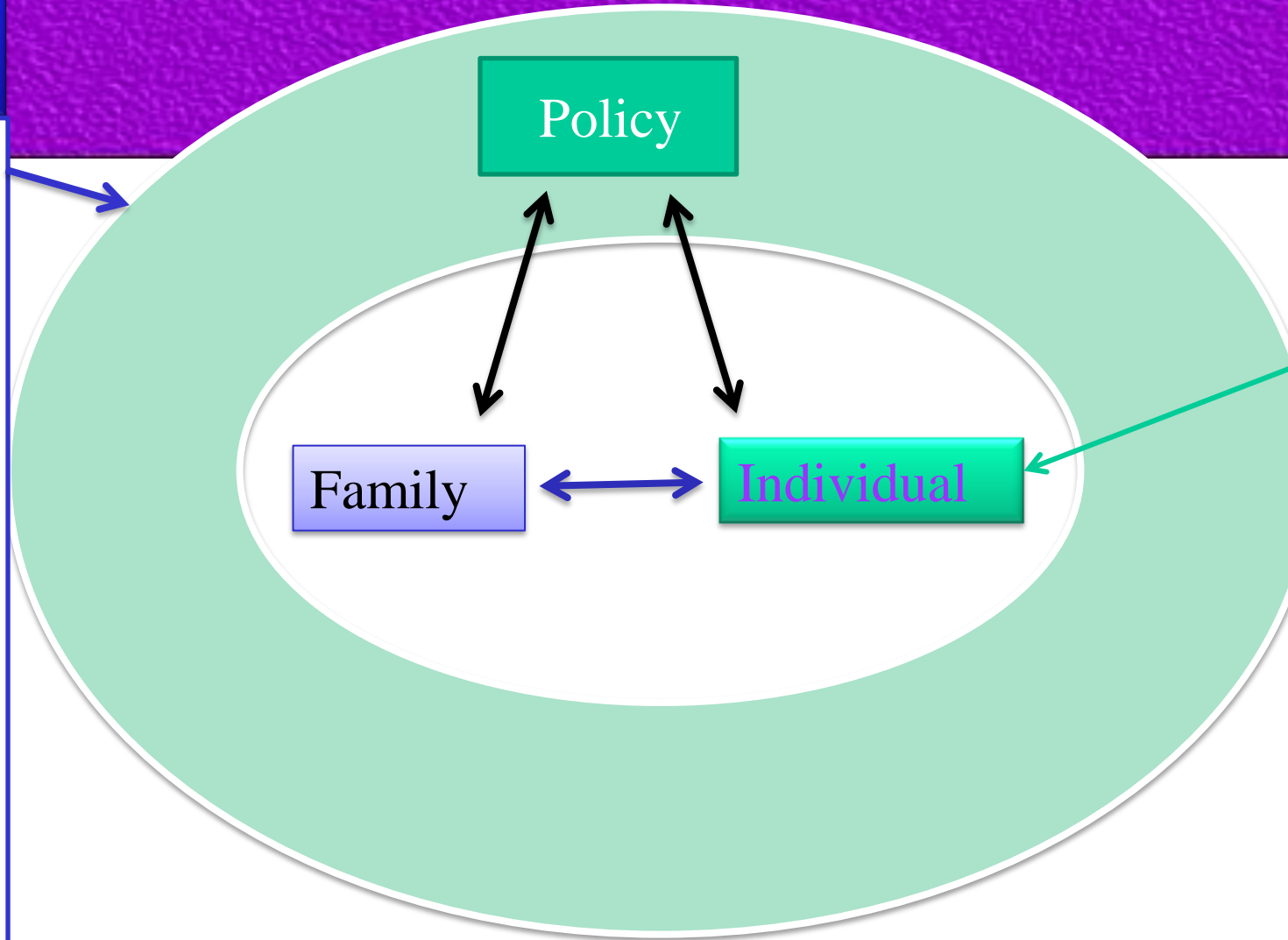
Proposed Conceptual Framework

- The Ecological-Systemic Perspective
- The 3 Areas and & Critical Factors of Influence



Macro and Exo systems:

- Social norms and Ideologies
- Public services delivery and institutional Mechanism,
- Community social Solidarity,
- Town planning, Infrastructure, Physical environment



Micro- and meso-systems:

Finance, Time, Relational Skills and Knowledge, Distance and Location.



Key Areas & Critical Factors of Influence

Whether policy **motivates, creates the opportunity and supports** people to value, form and strengthen committed family relationships, discharge personal *responsibilities* pertaining to *relationships within the family*, and conduct relationships in ways that enhance the *wellbeing of the family*



7 Critical Factors of Influence

1. Finance
2. Time & energy
3. Location, space & physical Environment
4. Social norms & ideologies
5. Relational skills & knowledge
6. Frontline public services delivery & institutional mechanism
7. Social capital & community social solidarity



Definition of family

- Acknowledgement of family diversity and sensitivity to the impact of policy on different types of family is an integral part of family impact assessment.
- the work of FIA is to examine the definition of family operationalized in the policy initiative, the coherence of the definition and value placed on the definition in comparison to other policy frameworks, and the impact of the definition and its coherence across policies on families.

Definition of family

- The assessment of family impact must consider both structural and functional definitions of family depending on the intent of a specific program or policy

Example of a functional definition of family

“The term ‘family’ is loosely used here to refer to two or more people in a committed relationship from which they derive a sense of identity as a family. This definition would include other non-traditional families that may be outside the traditional legal perspective – families not related by blood, marriage or adoption.”

(The consultation team, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, HKU, 2001, p. 69).

Step 1

Identifying types of families being affected

Step 2

Identifying the family impacts

Assessment guided by the 3 Areas and 7 Factors Framework

(Brief assessment, less time consuming, applicable at any stage of policymaking especially new policy initiatives before their implementation.)

Negative impacts identified

Modification of policy

Assessment guided by the use of Family Impact Checklist

Full Family Impact Analysis

Applicable at any stages of policymaking

Negative impacts identified

policy change advocacy

Step 3

Disseminate and apply the results

Family impact statements

Family impact seminars

Step 1 Identify types of families affected by the policy

- Explore if the policy affects:
 - A particular family structure
 - Families in a particular stage of the family life cycle
 - Families from particular incomes or educational levels
 - Families from particular cultural, geographic, racial/ethnic, or religious background
 - Families who have members with special needs (e.g. developmental, physical and emotional)
 - Those who function as a family even if they are not legally recognized as such

Step 2 Identify the Family Impacts - 3 choices:

- **Assessment guided by the 3 Areas and 7 Factors Framework**
 - Analyze the chain effects of policies at both the individual and family level.
 - Intended for analysts with training and understanding of policy and family impact assessment methodology.
- **Assessment guided by the use of the Family Impact Checklist**
 - Intended for professionals without specific academic training on family impact assessment and expertise in family science.
 - The Australian Checklist is recommended.
- **Full Family Impact Analysis**
 - Recommended for policies which have been assessed at earlier stages to have a significant impact on families.
 - A mixed method approach with both qualitative and quantitative data is recommended by a team of researchers with expertise in families, family impact assessment and the specifics of the policy.



Step 3 Disseminate and apply the results

- The most practical use of the results is to inform the formulation of the family impact statements in policy papers.
- Results of a full family impact analysis may inform revisions or modifications to policies to prevent harm to families or to facilitate greater positive impact.



Expertise required in an assessment team

Family

Family impact assessment

The specific policy



Limitations & Caution in Doing Family Impact Assessments

- Policy staffs may require training or access to expertise for the effective execution of the assessment.
- Quality and plausibility of family impact assessment may also be limited by the adequacy and quality of information and knowledge available to the policy analyst.

Limitations & Caution in Doing Family Impact Assessments

- A balance between recognizing the impact on families as well as the individual will facilitate a family perspective in policy making that does not infringe upon individual rights and freedoms.
- Being sensitive to gender and family diversity issues that may be implicit in current practice and policy implementation is essential to the research process.

The Way Ahead

- A more detailed and comprehensive general family checklist has to be developed in Hong Kong.
- The Family Council is recommended to take up the responsibility of overseeing, implementing, monitoring and coordinating the development of family impact assessment as well as the pooling and centralizing of empirical knowledge on family life in the changing context of Hong Kong to assist policy staffs responsible for the family impact assessment.

The Way Ahead

- Setting up of a Family Impact Studies Centre to continue the FIA project and the development of a training protocol on doing FIA for policy staffs, as well as serving as a platform for cross-sector collaboration.



The Way Ahead

- Envisaging the long-term development of family impact assessment in Hong Kong, its application in program, organization and even community with specialized checklists for specific settings is a desirable goal to achieve.



The Way Ahead

- The refinement of the proposed protocol on family impact assessment framework and the promotion of family perspectives in policy making require joint efforts across sectors.
- I would like to appeal for your participation in this meaningful mission.



References

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