



# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR A JUST TRANSFORMATION  
24-27 April 2024 | Dublin, Ireland

Get a glimpse of the sessions and activities that made IAIA24 a success.

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# KEY THEMES

Session chairs submitted written summaries after most sessions at IAIA24. These summaries include key takeaways, specific examples discussed, and any recommendations coming out of the session. Here are the key themes drawn from those reports, and continue reading for the full session chair reports starting on page 6.

## KEY THEMES from IAIA24 Session Chair summaries

Just, fair, and equitable solutions require meaningful community engagement.

Early use of IA in the planning process leads to demonstrably better outcomes.

The crucial importance of systems-thinking in driving joint decision making between policymakers, developers, and communities.

The role of IA in establishing necessary networks, discussion, and transparency.

Data lies at the heart of everything -- better sourcing, deeper analysis, better presentation, storage, and availability in data repositories.

Focus on appropriate scales of evaluation: project level IA has to relate and tie to strategic level planning and the use of SEA.

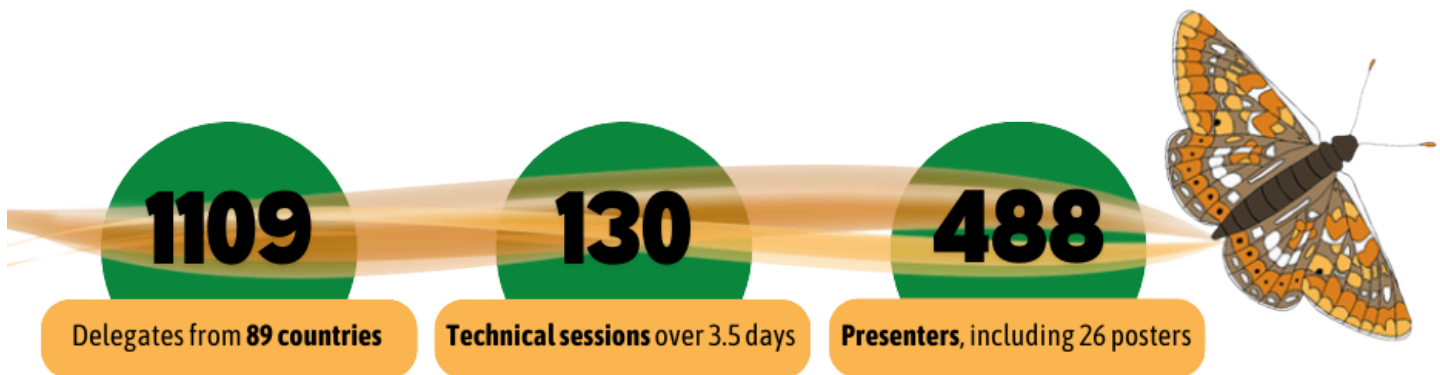
Cumulative effects assessment has to be integrated across all aspects of project assessment.

Nature-positive and people-positive. Strong IA requires strong management plans and clear guidance on follow-up.

It requires a conscious effort to get comfortable with uncomfortable things.



# IAIA24 BY THE NUMBERS



## SECTORS



- Consultancy: 26%
- Academic/Research: 24%
- Government: 22%
- IFI/Banks: 10%
- Civil society/NGO: 7%
- Private sector: 10%
- Other: 1%





# REFLECTIONS ON IAIA24



**Urmila Jha Thakur**

Editor, *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*



IAIA24 in Dublin has been the highlight of this year so far for me! My first IAIA conference was way back in 2004 in Vancouver. However, this year was special since it was my first conference as editor for IAIA's journal, *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal (IAPA)*. With 1,109 attendees from 85 countries, 130 sessions, 488 presentations/speakers and 26 posters, the conference was invigorating, intense, insightful and inspiring! It was also the biggest conference we have had so far – my heartfelt gratitude to the local organizing committee for achieving this tremendous success.

The theme of this year's conference was 'Impact Assessment for a Just Transformation'. I was impressed with the thoughtfulness, care, and creativity behind selecting the conference symbol of the butterfly, depicting how nature teaches us about transformation – from caterpillar to butterfly. Furthermore, the symbol hinted at the important role biodiversity plays in this transformation as the butterfly 'is the only Irish insect protected under the European Habitats Directive'.

The conference theme was also put forward in an opportune moment. With the time-bomb of climate change ticking, countries are pledging their commitment in reducing carbon emissions. The changes involved to enable a transformation in greening our economies and delivering net zero are leading to new approaches, tools, implications and uncertainties. The stakes are high as not being able to transform quickly may have dire consequences. Hence, as we race to gird ourselves and adopt new ways, delivering such changes in a fair and equitable manner poses further challenges and uncertainties.

As a starter, the changes will have different effect on different communities and regions and evidencing such impacts will hold clue in finding solutions that will help us in delivering just transformation. Consequently, the role of IA in enabling just transformation is manifold:

- First, IA has the potential to mitigate and adapt to the consequences of climate change.
- Second, IA can be integrated with existing and emerging approaches, such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Circular Economy (CE), and Environmental Social Governance (ESG) in evidencing the extent to which the desired targets are being met.
- Third, IA can help in democratisation of the decision-making process by incorporating stakeholder opinions, overcoming inequalities and ensuring all communities and age-groups are represented in a fair and just manner.
- Furthermore, as decisions will invariably involve trade-offs for targets and for stakeholders, IA will play a pivotal role in making these trade-offs transparent.

The above four points are not exhaustive but merely indicative of the huge potential that IA can play in this journey.

The conference explored the challenges for IA in delivering just transformation at a great depth. Some of the highlights that emerged in the discussions revolved around: meaningful and inclusive community engagement; early consideration of impacts in the planning process; collaboration and joint thinking in decision making by relevant stakeholders; importance of quality data to inform decision-making, connecting the different scales and tiers of decision-making, learning from the experience with effective follow-up; keeping the full picture in view from project to strategic levels.

However, **the key message that resonated deeply with me was to be open and not defensive about the future.** Yes, it is uncertain and there are things we don't understand. But just like the caterpillar, we need to evolve and transform and be receptive to the potential of what lies ahead. With so many of us working towards this end, I am hopeful and motivated to make a positive difference to our tomorrow through our concerted efforts in the present.

### IAIA24 TAKEAWAYS *from Urmila Jha-Thakur*

Meaningful and inclusive community engagement

Early consideration of impacts in the planning process

Collaboration and joint thinking in decision making  
by relevant stakeholders

Importance of quality data to inform decision-making, connecting the different scales  
and tiers of decision-making, learning from the experience with effective follow-up

Keeping the full picture in view from project to strategic levels.

Be open and not defensive about the future

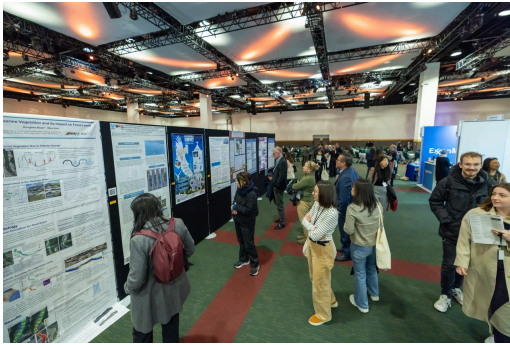
IAIA truly imbibes this spirit by grappling the uncertainties with sincere effort and good intentions. This is reflected in the theme for next year's conference of 'Impact Assessment in the Age of Artificial Intelligence'. I am looking forward to seeing you in Bologna! Until then, please do connect with me if you want to publish your work which has already been presented in IAIA24 or if you are developing ideas for IAIA25. For the latter, please look out for the special issue on 'Artificial Intelligence' currently being advertised in IAPA.

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*By Urmila Jha Thakur, Editor of IAPA*



# IAIA24 SNAPSHOTS





# IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS

*Session chairs submitted written summaries after most sessions at IAIA24. These summaries include key takeaways, specific examples discussed, and any recommendations coming out of the session.*

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## RELEVANCE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES FOR JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Johanne Hanko

**Key Takeaways:** Holistic approaches that integrate community engagement, participatory decision-making, and respect for Indigenous rights, land, and knowledge systems promote balance between environmental protection and social justice. Monitoring and assessment should include Indigenous communities allowing them to share their knowledge on resource management and climate change mitigation strategies. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into decision-making processes and impact assessment is fundamental for achieving sustainable development and a just transformation.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:**

- Indigenous communities have the right to decide what is important for them and their community and should be involved in the decision-making process.
- Indigenous communities can prioritize requirement procedures based on their experience.

Indigenous communities generally wish to maintain their way of life which means that they need to address cumulative effects and safeguard remaining intact landscapes.

- Recognizing Indigenous authorities can facilitate traditional governance structures within their communities and the incorporation of customary law into the decision-making process.
- Meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities contributes to impact mitigation, conflict resolution, and sustainable development.
- Synergizing traditional knowledge with modern and scientific development practices contributes to safeguarding environmental and local resources while promoting sustainable development.
- Cumulative effects assessments empower the community to bring forward their own information to impact assessments and to influence decisions on regional issues, which are important steps for a just transformation.

**Examples/Insights:** In Sweden, a community-led Climate Impact Assessment procedure was initiated aiming to provide guidelines to state agencies, regional governments and municipalities on how climate impact assessments could be integrated into decision-making. Indigenous Sámi reindeer herders collaborated as experts in identifying relevant climate indicators. Climate scientists then extracted the information from climate models and can downscale information to suit reindeer herding needs and identify possible impacts from future climate change. In Northern Alberta Canada, the Fort McKay Métis Nation developed a Community-Based Environmental Monitoring (CBEM) program to coordinate a diverse suite of baseline studies to monitor, assess, and reduce cumulative effects applying a braiding knowledge (or Two-Eyed Seeing) approach to bring together information from different sources of knowledge, including Indigenous knowledge, the scientific literature, and other sources. In Suriname, a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment was conducted as a participatory tool that aims to integrate Environmental and Social considerations into policies, plans and programs in the mining sector's decision-making process and reform. The study showed that meaningful and continuous Indigenous and tribal community participation allows the sharing of traditional knowledge, the promotion of sustainable development as to lead to a just transformation.

**Recommendations:** Participation of Indigenous communities at the initial stages of a project, helps avoid problems or conflicts during the implementation and operation of a project. Ensure that local stakeholders, especially Indigenous communities, include their knowledge and perspective of a situation



or location. Policy makers and other stakeholders need to improve their climate knowledge and strengthen their capacity.

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### JUST TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE COAST AND MARITIME

Session Chair(s): Louise Davis

**Key Takeaways:** 1. It is very important at an early stage to communicate and bring traditional marine user stakeholders, such as fishers, alongside transition plans and projects within the marine and coastal space. 2. The pace of development in the race to net zero across many jurisdictions and permitting regimes makes it a complicated and cumulative picture for Impact Assessors to get to grips within a short space of time. 3. Traditional environmental mitigation measures need to be challenged in line with changing baselines and more suitable nature-based methods, particularly in coastal environments subject to erosion.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** Ensuring that social impact is included in EIA assessments; currently this is lacking in the EU and UK in particular. Ensuring that Strategic/Regional Marine Planning accounts for social and economic impact assessment and creates plans and mitigation to ensure that this is considered in any marine planning.

**Examples/Insights:** There is an opportunity to share lessons learned between countries e.g. stakeholder engagement practices and economic impact assessments relating to the fishing community in relation to marine developments. Also, there is an opportunity to ensure strategic planning accounts for likely cumulative effects and mitigation that can be filtered down to ESIA / project level i.e. not trying to tackle these issues at a project level.

**Recommendations:** Early stakeholder engagement and tailoring messaging to stakeholder groups is important during Impact Assessments. In the marine space, look to other more established markets for how the technology has been assessed and deployed under SEA/ESIA and what the learnings are. For example, in Italy offshore wind is just starting out but it appears they have very similar issues to that encountered by established offshore wind markets like the UK and other countries that have had this technology for decades. Marine spatial planning and SEA should be carried out at a strategic level to enable a just transition.

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### Effective Use of IA tools and partnerships to protect climate and biodiversity through just transition

Session Chair(s): Susan Scott

**Key Takeaways:** Through sharing practical experiences and tools from our own work we can leverage best practices to enhance the process. Three very practical case studies shared from 3 different parts of the world, 3 different focus areas but all delivered lessons and tools for practitioners.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** IA practitioners from all areas of the practice, regions, perspectives have expertise and experience to contribute and by continuing the dialogue and embracing new ideas, tools and partnerships we can contribute effectively to the just transformation from many directions.

**Examples/Insights:** "Doing the work" through effective IAs and related activities can result in end products that gain buy-in from multiple stakeholders - affected communities, regulators, investors, business etc.

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### **Benefit-sharing for a fair and just transformation**

Session Chair(s): Carlos Perez Brito

**Key Takeaways:** There is a large variation in benefit sharing agreements with multiple outcomes, positive and negative. Communities need support and proven models to improve benefit sharing negotiations and achieve better outcomes. Benefit sharing schemes will continue playing a significant role for the energy just transition.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Strong community engagement and leadership from indigenous communities. Indigenous communities are not stakeholders but right holders.

**Examples/Insights:** There are multiple examples of renewable energy from Canada and Alaska that demonstrate positive outcome for first nations and local communities. Some of those cases have documented their methods and data analysis to demonstrate outcomes particularly cases of community-led energy generation.

**Recommendations:** We need to collect and document more cases of successful benefit sharing agreements with communities and document better how those cases have positively impacted communities. More data is needed to document barriers to develop more benefit sharing agreements. The role and participation of local governments is fundamental.

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### **A REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT APPROACH TO ASSIST DECARBONIZATION**

Session Chair(s): Becky Hitchin

**Key Takeaways:** Regional assessment is hugely varied and important. Consultation needs to lead from a position of non-trust to trust to allow for effective and There was a 40 min meaningful discussion on just transformation - with a focus on regional considerations and community engagement. Regulatory wording can contribute to both positive or negative consideration of just transformation. Context of regional aspects of IA are important, but the transposition of project-specific IA often confounds the 'larger-scale' assessment

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Ensuring that legislation is appropriate for all - for example, the requirements and outcomes of the BBNJ treaty needs to be applicable to all - Ensuring that expert modelling and monitoring evidence can be transposed across boundaries - Ensuring that transboundary impacts are considered fully in IA - Ensuring that communities should not be disadvantaged by consultation exhaustion - Ensuring that there is a positive feedback to communities to reassure them that engagement in IA is 'heard', not lost, and actually results in positive action to inform and resolve significant effects for communities - this is especially the case with either initial impacts on communities, or, through decommissioning and impacts on communities where they have been 'reliant' upon that project/sector, and feel that their concerns about community security and future prosperity are not assessed equitably/appropriately. This factor needs to be more 'upfront' and considered and actioned



**Examples/Insights:** - Consultation that allows communities to 'keep up' with developments and expectations of a just transition - The need for expert and meaningful SEA/REA roles within BBNJ and national jurisdiction - Consideration of regional-scale environmental impacts and the relation to systems/ecosystems, and how these are considered - The capturing of 'lessons learnt' and how 'all' involved can learn and build upon those - Archiving of data, both evidence base and also decision-making determinations, so that these can be accessible to inform future projects, all stakeholders, engagement, and enable consistent determinations/assessments

**Recommendations:** The role of regional assessments and cumulative impact assessments needs to be recognized better. There is a definite need for consultation fatigue to be recognized, and thus, more effective engagement and use of community IA outcomes to better inform projects, and strategic consideration of IA. Practitioners of EIA and SEA should become more connected with stakeholders given an ever-increasing need to understand both environmental and societal aspects of plans and projects. To be aware that rapidly evolving regulatory procedures in the marine environment still have to learn lessons connecting plan-level assessments (e.g. SEA and REA) with regulation/assessment of project-specific IA. If one has robust regional-scale data/assessment(s) then strive to facilitate the connection of those to project-specific IA. Being cognizant of, and accessing, community IA consultation determinations/inputs and ensuring that those are used effectively to inform project-specific IA - for certain sectors/projects this will likely be most critical for construction and decommissioning phases concerning community engagement. Where data repositories are available, then IA practitioners should encourage clients to deposit their data to better inform future plans and projects. Where data repositories do not exist, then IA practitioners should attempt, where possible, to encourage the development of such facilitation. For policy makers, learn lessons from community engagement; look strategically to alleviate consultation fatigue; facilitate the implementation of SEA/REA and ensure that mechanisms are effective in 'drawing down' those assessments to better inform project-specific IA; establish/fund/manage/maintain accessible data repositories for SEA/REA data; establish/fund/manage/maintain accessible data repositories for project-specific IA baseline and assessment data and documents (ES, EIARs etc.) and examination/regulatory determinations.

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### ADDRESSING MINING IMPACTS DRIVEN BY AN ENERGY TRANSITION

Session Chair(s): Laura Sonter, Luis Sanchez

**Key Takeaways:** Minerals are a key component for an energy transition but addressing environmental risks is essential for transformation.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** 1. New, improved and more comprehensive datasets are needed to quantify risks and impacts of mining, and 2. energy transformation decisions must be guided by the science underpinned by these new datasets and analyses.

**Examples/Insights:** New methods in impact assessments are needed to address the unknown species, ecosystems and functions threatened by mining and energy projects.

**Recommendations:** Assessments needed across multiple spatial scales - from project level EIAs to global scale assessments. More in-depth considerations of biodiversity threats from mining are needed for energy transformation.

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## IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS *continued*

### Asian S3EA: Strategic, spatial and sustainable EA (I)

Session Chair(s): Myungjin Kim

**Key Takeaways:** IA method and system should support the strategic decision for just transformation. For persuasion reliable data is so important.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** IA method and system should apply with reliable and easy to public access.

**Examples/Insights:** The future of IA is the future of IAIA. IA method and system should develop for just transformation society with wisdom.

**Recommendations:** IA idea and wisdom can be inferred from old sayings and saints particularly in Asia. Practitioners would develop themselves with sound thought, research and practice. With wise pride they should develop society for just transformation based on science and experiences. In policy level IA is so important and communication between policy makers and stakeholders should focus for well-being and just transformation.

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### Asian S3EA: Strategic, spatial, sustainable EA (II)

Session Chair(s): Takehiko Murayama

**Key Takeaways:** Sharing formal and informal systems, experiences and challenges among various countries.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Consideration of priorities in view of importance, effectiveness and feasibility.

**Examples/Insights:** - Implementation case of SEA in coastal area in Saudi Arabia - Comparative study of the relation between SEA and land use planning - Case study for tourism impact in view of blue economy

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### BLUE ECONOMY, SEA AND MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING

Session Chair(s): Arthur Neher; Arend Kolhoff

**Key Takeaways:** SEA tied early into the planning and decision-making process shows to be not only cost-effective and avoids adverse impacts in the marine environment, but also incorporates all relevant stakeholders in a timely manner at all stages, and promotes a balanced approach considering the best alternative in a transparent manner. SEA is much related to the context it applies to. Most low- to middle income countries do not avail over the required capacity and financial means, even if understanding of SEA is present. Practical examples facilitate understanding and acceptance, and incorporation in legislation in less-advanced countries. Adequate financial support within the national budget should be made available to implement SEA, avoiding unwanted cost of wrong decisions and encourage ownership. If not (adequately) available, the international donor community should step-up in support.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** SEA needs to be an integral part of the decision-making process from the start. In the presentations in our session such early integrated approach resulted in good and transparent marine plans and presented the follow-up actions to mitigate issues in situations of conflicting interest.



**Examples/Insights:** To effectively support (marine) spatial planning, prior to embark on the required SEA process and serving as input to the scoping and monitoring phase, much data and information needs to be collected. This may be a barrier to many low- and middle income countries due to capacity and finance involved. Integrating SEA in decision-making requires collaboration of all (sectoral) parties involved and adequate funds to complete the process. A roadmap developing a framework prior to starting the SEA is required for consensus on roles and responsibilities.

**Recommendations:** An SEA ideally should be connected to a regional, national, or sub-national single- or multi-sectoral plan, in which sustainability objectives are connected to a vision for a pre-set period. Assessment of impacts can be better performed if such framework is available, and proponents of SEA (often the national government) should be encouraged to incorporate SEA in the appropriate (level of) plans. Policy-makers: integrate SEA as early as possible in the planning process, have adequate budget and capacity (including required scientific data) available, and budget for monitoring and compliance. Additionally, ensure public participation and awareness during the entire process and after implementing the SEA. This can be achieved through having sufficient budget available for communication tools.

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### BRAINSTORMING BEST PRACTICE IA PRINCIPLES FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Session Chair(s): Steve Mustow

**Key Takeaways:** 1) The extraterrestrial environment has significant value and should be protected. 2) Impact assessment has an important part to play. 3) Mistakes made on earth regarding environmental protection should not be repeated in space.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** The publication and adoption of the draft IAIA international best practice principles discussed in the session will support this.

**Examples/Insights:** Numerous helpful insights and comments were provided by the workshop participants which will be taken into account when finalising the international best practice principles.

**Recommendations:** Practitioners undertaking impact assessment of space sector activities need to consider impacts to the extraterrestrial environment as well as to environments on Earth. Recommended to follow the new extraterrestrial IA international best practice principles when accepted and published. It is recommended that policy makers and other stakeholders take appropriate account of the international best practice procedures once accepted and published by IAIA.

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### CLIMATE, ENERGY AND AGRICULTURE / FORESTRY LINKAGES

Session Chair(s): Ijeoma Vincent-Akpu

**Key Takeaways:** How impact assessment has been used in fisheries production and working with the community to protect their Rivers

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Habitat protection and good Aquaculture practice should be considered before any approval should be given.

**Examples/Insights:** For a just transformation, there is need for social inclusion and benefits for the people to lead to their acceptance of the transformation

**Recommendations:** There's need to have a global network for people with similar problems or solutions on impact assessment so as to avoid reinventing the wheel. Making greater use of networking and connection to speed up impact assessment conversation. Connection within and outside IAIA. Impact Assessment of individual project is not enough but should regard more on Strategic thinking or Strategy Environmental Assessment.

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### COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUNDS - CHANGEMAKERS OR APPEASEMENT

Session Chair(s): Rebecca Roebuck

**Key Takeaways:** Community benefits funds can potentially be both changemakers and appeasement. There is mixed evidence about their demonstrable long term positive social impacts. Social impact assessment could link more to community benefit funds.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Collecting impact data after & monitoring effectiveness is a key factor that could support the contribution of community benefit funds to just transformation. Decision making could be assisted by more global evidence about the effectiveness of community benefit funds and when and in what circumstances they should be used as changemakers rather than primarily for corporate social responsibility or community social licence building.

**Examples/Insights:** Examples in this session were the key question about who benefits from community benefit funds and equity considerations.

**Recommendations:** Impact assessment needs to muscle into community benefit funds. Encourage evaluation and impact measurement of the social change generated through community benefit funds. Don't assume community benefit funds will have a positive social impact or generate meaningful social change.

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### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND BENEFIT-SHARING CONTRIBUTIONS TO A JUST TRANSITION

Session Chair(s): Orlando San Martin

**Key Takeaways:** Supporting a just transition and community acceptance of renewable projects, regulatory landscapes need to be understood and community benefit sharing mechanisms strengthened, ensuring renewable projects operate in a way that adds value to shareholders, countries, and local communities. Evaluating people-positivity of renewable energy projects can help propell progress towards a more just transformation, similarly to carbon and biodiversity net-impact measurement frameworks. The approach taken by a successful project included early engagement allowing the opportunity for local people to input on the project development path. Importantly, feedback from the community on both the project design, and the local benefit was incorporated into the project proposal. Sharing benefits from the projects in order to promote a just transition should be discussed and understood better among multiple stakeholders.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** We propose that there is a need for a people-positive evaluation framework in order to deliver a just transformation. The shared value approach is crucial to avoid business' obstacles. An entrepreneurship progr at the local tech school empowered local businesses, and a Social Fund gave back to the community through NGO.

**Examples/Insights:** Actively demonstrating an understanding of local communities - and a willingness to accommodate and adapt to their needs is vital in developing renewable projects. Two examples in Scotland demonstrate this in practice. With a wind farm in proximity to the world-famous Loch Ness, pro-active engagement with tourism stakeholders was seen as essential by the engagement team. The social acceptance gained from the open, transparent and inclusive public engagement approach is delivering for both the project and the local community. No legal challenge was taken on the planning permit secured and the project is being constructed and moving towards the operational phase. The local community benefits being delivered as part of this project have been guided by early-stage involvement and feedback from the local community. Leaving coal behind, Spain created ENTAMA to foster business entrepreneurship and reskill. The Sines Coal Power Plant shut down was known 6 months before its closing. An action plan was set: A consortium of 2 Univ. studied the Local Economy: future jobs, cultural outlines, reskill. With the City Hall and the Nat. Employm't Instt., we created a local cabinet, with job training, psychological support and social rescue for the population. An entrepreneurship program at the local tech school empowered local businesses, and a Social Fund gave back to the community through ONG.

**Recommendations:** Impact assessment practitioners and community engagement and liaison staff will benefit to clarify scope of impact mitigations - which are usually mandatory - and demand more rigorous SIA - from community benefit sharing that not necessarily are proportional or related to the impacts but search to promote a just transition. Policy makers contribute to multistakeholder dialogue regarding best practices for benefit sharing -- there are so many opinions about the matter that projects and companies even with the best intention might end up doing wrong due to confusions and misunderstandings.

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### COMPLIANCE/ENFORCEMENT FOR TRANSFORMATIVE ESIA PROJECT IMPACT MANAGEMENT

Session Chair(s): Bryony Walmsley

**Key Takeaways:** a. Good implementation is essential b. Environmental auditing should be embedded in legislation c. Transparency in decision-making and compliance auditing d. How to deal with the issue of scope creep or the incrementation development of projects.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** a. Clear roles and responsibilities relating to enforcement b. Capacity building of enforcement agencies is needed c. Consistency of decision-making

**Examples/Insights:** a. Lack of capacity within regulatory authorities is a major challenge b. AI presents an opportunity with regards to supporting decisions c. Improved levels of inter-ministerial collaboration/coordination

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### CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLANET

Session Chair(s): Caroline Brodeur

**Key Takeaways:** - We are still in the early stage of bringing environment and human rights together. Importance to learn from both discipline. - Complexity of the 2 disciplines which require different skill sets. - Importance to keep people at the center and ensure meaningful participation of rights holders in complex processes.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** - Bringing different expertise together. - Need to break the silos and understand the interconnection between human rights and environment. - A healthy environment is needed to ensure respect of human rights.

**Examples/Insights:** Major human rights abuses in the seafood industry, the repercussion of decrease in marine population + pollution of sea on human rights of local communities + small scale fishers. Importance to consider how the environment is affecting their rights. Importance to bring together environmental and more quantitative approaches to support the more qualitative data from human rights impact assessment.

**Recommendations:** Take the time to learn from local communities and indigenous processes, important learning to be made from those participatory processes. Policy makers need to make human rights due diligence mandatory. This will level the playing field and ensure greater quality of impact assessment + greater respect of human rights.

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### CONSIDERATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN IA OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Session Chair(s): Bobbi Schijf & Ishara Autar

**Key Takeaways:** Collaborate with indigenous people from the start of the assessment/project

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** We have a lot of knowledge about the impacts of CC, but we need to translate it to a specific context

**Examples/Insights:** HIA of Wales (uk), we know climate factors for health

**Recommendations:** Green transition is not just, because we do not assess climate impact. Don't call indigenous people stakeholders, but rightholders.

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### CONSIDERATION OF WIDER HEALTH DETERMINANTS IN IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Session Chair(s): Hung Shiu Fung

**Key Takeaways:** Impact Assessments in different disciplines can look at things differently, using different approaches to assess impacts. A just transformation requires impact assessments to cover new subjects and explore new approaches and adjusting the terminologies. As environmental assessment extends the environmental impact to wider health determinants and health assessment incorporates the implications of environmental change, we need the expertise and experience in both the environmental and health impact assessment practices.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Identifying determinants, engaging stakeholders, training, and providing guidance are the key factors to ensuring that impact assessment focuses on the cause of the problems and develops solutions.

**Examples/Insights:** Impact assessment provides the tools to understand the issues in a just transformation and the platform to engage with stakeholders. For example, it can help understand the vulnerability of the local community and formulate actions to address the risks. However, there are still challenges in turning information into action and getting commitments in higher-level decision-making.



## IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS *continued*

**Recommendations:** Practitioners in different impact assessment types (Environmental, health, social, etc) could learn from each other, especially in the framing of problems and the approaches used in the assessment. For policymakers, the international experience could be a good reference, but understanding the local context is crucial in making the policies.

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### DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENT-FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT (DFDR)

Session Chair(s): Eddie Smyth and Susanna Price

**Key Takeaways:** The top lesson was that we must implement a fair and equitable approach to projects in order to achieve a just transformation. The Declaration was very well received and the attendees agreed to endorse the Declaration through an applause at the end of the session.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** Current approaches to securing project land access are disempowering, and they marginalise and impoverish affected people. We presented six principles and 26 recommendations on how impact assessment can contribute to a just transformation.

**Examples/Insights:** We had an Indigenous leader present his experiences from impact assessment in Canada where communities are giving almost no support but expected to play a role in responding to thousands of projects EIAs on their territories. He made the case for significant resources to be provided to Indigenous Peoples to enable co-design and co-decision-making around projects.

**Recommendations:** Read the Dublin Declaration on FELA and provide feedback to the Working Group  
Co-Chairs: eddiesmyth@intersocialconsulting.com and susanna.price@gmail.com

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### DECOLONIZING SIA THROUGH THE ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS OF PRACTITIONERS

Session Chair(s): Alex Cisneros Menchaca

**Key Takeaways:** Despite good efforts by individuals, groups, developers, and regulators to uphold a just transformation, there are wide systemic and cultural challenges to achieve it, starting with our understanding of justness and equity. A just transformation will require a deep look in the way we conduct Social Impact Assessments (SIA), and a deeper look at the attitudes and beliefs of SIA practitioners and regulators and the way we relate to each other as people. Without a self-reflexive, intentional attempt to decolonise SIA, we run the risk of perpetuating coloniality in relations between project developers and communities.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** With a growing discourse on the need to go faster and farther in the transformation, the discussion on whether we are even going in a just direction is often eclipsed. One of the key factors that can help make sure that IA contributes to a just transformation is by countering the growing sense of urgency that corners any discussion into a single response. A more equitable transformation will require varying rhythms and contrasting meanings of development. It will require placing policy makers, developers and communities as peers in joint decision-making for any justness to get started, and most importantly, it will take conscious effort to be comfortable with uncomfortable timings that will often be at odds with wider industry, policy priorities, and global economy speeds.

**Examples/Insights:** The session illustrated the challenges of SIA with great examples, from analysing culturally unprepared systems (mis)regulating SIA, to regional policies that dilute the participation of indigenous peoples to imperceptible extents in final decision-making, to the way practitioners' beliefs shape the design and implementation of SIAs and ultimately the way developers and communities relate to each other. The opportunities to reverse these trends lie on practitioners and regulators unlearning what we have come to accept as traditional SIA practice, and reconsider our approaches to see SIA as a relational practice with which we can shape more equitable relations.

**Recommendations:** Taking one of the key messages from IAIA23, a 'green' project (e.g., renewable energy) does not automatically make it a just project. The way projects are planned, constructed, operated and closed matter much more than imagined. The attitudes and beliefs with which projects are developed frame the type of relations it will build with local communities. Respectful, recognitive, and decolonial attitudes will form more equitable relations and foster relational justness, which is more relevant to sustainability than irreflective technological transitions.

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### DEVELOPING AN IAIA AGENDA FOR SEA ACTION TOWARDS A JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Rob Verheem

**Key Takeaways:** Looking at 25 years of SEA we see many improvements, including worldwide application, recognition as an important tool, good practice well understood, guidance and capacity development available and quality and effectiveness improving. However, we also see a number of elements where SEA still falls short, including insufficient influence on strategic planning and decision making, uneven quality, limited understanding within many governments, too legalistic application and insufficient stakeholder participation.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** An IAIA action agenda to deal with current shortcomings in SEA transformation should evolve around 4 priorities: intensified advocacy and awareness raising, innovation, research and strengthened legal and institutional arrangements.

**Examples/Insights:** The session discussed a draft proposal for an IAIA agenda for SEA action and research. Under each of the 4 priorities actions were discussed and prioritized. Also, several actions were discussed needed to start implementation of the agenda. Amongst these is the possible revitalisation of the SEA section.

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### DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS

Session Chair(s): C. Kelly

**Key Takeaways:** Disasters and crisis need to be considered in impact assessment. Disasters present diverse opportunities using impact assessment.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Participation; social vulnerability, adjusting how impact assessment is done to match the real situation.

**Examples/Insights:** New World Bank framework for impact assessment in fragile or conflict-affected countries. Social vulnerability analysis of the impact of hazards as part disaster risk reduction.

**Recommendations:** Consider the possibility of disasters or other crises in the assessment process. For policy makers, expect disasters or other crises to be mentioned in impact assessments.

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### EFFECTIVELY ACHIEVING AND MEASURING BIODIVERSITY (II)

Session Chair(s): Nicola Faulks

**Key Takeaways:** The process of biodiversity enhancement needs to be measurable, at the current time this is a developing practice. There are many developing systems and methodologies to do this, but each needs to be evaluated for effectiveness on a project by project basis. Net gain is required, and the path towards net gain needs to be measurable. The ability to measure loss, and net gain is still very much in development. So a lessons learned, eyes open approach to IA is required.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Look at what is being done, and has been done. Look at emerging technologies. Apply lessons learned and future new technologies to continue to develop the use of net gain in decision making.

**Examples/Insights:** Nature and ecosystems are so diverse, there will be no one system fits all.

**Recommendations:** Don't work in isolation, look at emerging technologies, and read up on the many examples out there where loss has been evaluated and net gain achieved, or being aimed for. Use and adapt examples. For policy makers: Creating an accessible data base of project where offsetting has been used or on site compensation to achieve, or fail to achieve, net gain. This can be used as a reference database, and with time, lessons learned can be drawn from this, as well as proven technologies.

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### EMERGING PRACTICES IN INDIGENOUS LED ASSESSMENTS

Session Chair(s): Rosanne Van Schie and Sara Mainville

**Key Takeaways:** 1. Indigenous led assessments bring in values and participation beyond mainstream EA processes 2. Relationships with Decision-makers to coordinate and cooperate is incredibly important 3. Good examples of where lack of relationship led to good intentions bearing no benefit for the Indigenous peoples, Indigenous peoples need to be co-decision-makers in what accommodations/capacity will truly be helpful/have utility

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Cumulative Effects approaches need to include Indigenous values and perspectives of what is important and if the approach taken to the study is sound Proponent Led Studies are exclusionary rather than inclusive (Indigenous Led Studies aim to be relational and inclusionary) Indigenous Knowledge is best approached through Indigenous led assessments Proponent/Government/Indigenous Led collaboration is very important

**Examples/Insights:** The challenge is to find a new process that approaches collaboration at the decision-making level. Less opaque government processes in how they consider Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous decision-making within their own considerations and assessment (holistic, transparent, measurable) Government to Government approach in Impact Assessment – a way to align processes and information gathering from stakeholders and proponents seems to be a path forward.

**Recommendations:** Net positive should be the goal of Impact Assessments and early collaboration on processes to collaborate and cooperate. Engage Indigenous peoples inclusively – technicians,

government, youth, and Indigenous knowledge keepers Water protection and sacred site protection are incredibly important values that must be managed appropriately seeking out Indigenous led perspectives on best approaches. UNDRIP conformity is a measure for all Governments in regarding to Indigenous territories. Very complex in regions such as Nigeria, a very ethnically diverse population with their own languages and cultural traditions across the country. For policymakers: Review below report and particular passage: "Land is the foundation of the lives and cultures of indigenous peoples all over the world. Land rights, access to land and control over it and its resources are central for indigenous peoples' wellbeing throughout the world. To survive as distinct peoples, indigenous peoples and their communities need to be able to own, preserve and manage their lands, territories and resources but the intensification of natural resource exploitation continues to adversely affect their lands and territories." State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Rights to Lands, territories and resources, 5th Volume, available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wpcontent/uploads/sites/19/2021/03/State-of-Worlds-Indigenous-Peoples-Vol-V-Final.pdf>

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### ENSURING JUST TRANSFORMATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (I)

Session Chair(s): Camille Heaton

**Key Takeaways:** Scorecards are a useful tool to assess sustainability. Borrowers are working with country legislation to align standards. Environmental data can enhance sustainability and offset goals. Private companies can learn from international standards of MDBs.

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### Ensuring Just Transformation of Infrastructure Projects (II)

Session Chair(s): Camille Heaton

**Key Takeaways:** Practitioners can promote the SDGs as essential parts of EIAs; as was done for the Copenhagen metro; it will take time for contractors and regulators to accept. Balancing all environmental and social aspects in routing of a road (Hong Kong) can be supported by in-depth social assessments.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Continue to look at alternatives--a Hydropower dam in Cameroon reduced the walls by 15 meters and saved many areas from being flooded. Have a vision and environmental and social principles up front when developing master plans (case from Saudi Arabia county).

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### ENSURING JUST TRANSFORMATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (IV)

Session Chair(s): Camille Heaton

**Key Takeaways:** Private companies can use international environmental and social standards from lenders to improve their business practices. Analysis of environmental incidents can lead to prevention and quick response.

**Recommendations:** Involve the long term owners of the management plans and ensure they are involved. Get the private companies and/or utilities that are sponsoring programs to have environmental social management systems that utilize best practices. For policy makers: Use analysis and international standards to improve environmental assessments as well as outcomes.

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### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR A JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Alan Chenoweth

**Key Takeaways:** Two lessons: A. Environmentally-responsible and socially sustainable resource management of marginal grazing land in sub-Saharan Africa requires balancing land restoration / soil protection measures (for Net Zero targets) with the needs of local communities & indigenous peoples engaged in subsistence farming/grazing, in the face of a variable and changing climate; and B. An important element in any environmental Just Transformation is TRUST (affected communities/stakeholders need to trust the competent assessment and honest advice of professional IA practitioners). This requires our work to be based on a sound foundation of ethics, both theory and practice. C. Impact assessment to date has not developed an adequate philosophical or ethical basis for addressing a just transformation. A new approach to ethically-based assessment is needed to achieve societal transformation to sustainability, 'Ecological humanism' and 'the categorical sustainability imperative' are two such approaches.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** A. Consider the social, economic and cultural implications of recommendations regarding land use in marginal lands, where the livelihoods of disadvantaged groups has depended on certain land use practices for many generations, but sustainable land management and re-forestation may require changes to grazing/farming intensity; and B. In order to be trusted as impartial and accurate assessors & advisors, IA practitioners need to consider and regularly discuss the ethical basis of their overall approach and specific recommendations, with respect to both theory and practice, and both professional ethics and environmental ethics.

**Examples/Insights:** A. Some environmentally-sustainable 'solutions' to land degradation (for example reducing deforestation of degraded marginal land in sub-Saharan Africa) may cause social, economic and cultural disruption for vulnerable local communities & indigenous peoples, which require a long term multi-disciplinary approach to minimize disruptive impacts B. Some expert assessments of likely environmental impacts and their significance may be technically objective but appear unethical or biased when perceived by affected communities or NGOs/conservation groups. A key question for practitioners is whether or not they would provide the same assessments/advice if engaged by or for project opponents as they would for project proponents.

**Recommendations:** A. Effective land resource management strategies for mitigations greenhouse gas emissions and preserving biodiversity must be inclusive, and consider social and cultural dimensions, it the changes are to address socio-economic disparities and avoid disproportionate burdens on disadvantaged/marginalized groups B. Develop, consider and regularly discuss the ethical basis for impact assessments, ensuring that our perspectives, advice and recommendations would be consistent irrespective of who is our client. For policy makers: A. Give equal weight to social equity considerations as to technical assessments and environmental sustainability, to ensure the burden of change does not fall disproportionately on local communities, disadvantaged communities and indigenous peoples B. Require IA practitioners to adhere to code(s) of professional ethics

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### ENVIRONMENTALLY, SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY JUST CARBON NEUTRALITY

Session Chair(s): Yuan Xu, Shigeo Nishikizawa

**Key Takeaways:** Carbon neutrality is mainly an opportunity for a just transformation. Impact assessment can help identify and realize such opportunities. Impact assessment can be a useful decision-making tool for climate mitigation and adaptation to create opportunities and minimize challenges.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Impact assessment can facilitate decision making by scoping, screening, comparing and identifying environmentally, socially and economically sustainable pathways toward just transformation.

**Examples/Insights:** Our discussion spans across countries. A key insight is that alternatives are available, but it is not a guarantee that a sustainable and just pathway will be taken. Countries face very different shaping factors in their assessment and realization of such pathways.

**Recommendations:** Climate mitigation and adaptation are an expanding and crucial field for impact assessment practitioners. Policy makers can use impact assessment as a key tool for achieving climate mitigation and adaptation goals in sustainable and just manners.

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### EQUITY, JUSTICE, AND THE ENERGY TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Dr Richard Parsons and Dr Madeline Taylor

**Key Takeaways:** Our session highlighted the importance of three key principles in energy development: Justice, Equity, and Fairness (JEF), and how IA can support these principles. The lessons learned stemmed from a variety of case studies across the world, including Australia, Japan, Africa, and India, on the importance of community-led decision making. Each of these case studies emphasised the critical need for communities to ensure that integration into development decisions aligns subjectively with their specific purposes. Throughout all presentations, participatory justice emerged as crucial for embedding fairness and equity into the IA process. Is it possible for (S)IA to truly deliver just, equitable and fair project outcomes, or is it a blunt tool in the face of structural power relations and corporate-capitalist agendas?

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Key factors discussed included integrating energy justice in impact assessments for large-scale solar energy on sensitive land uses, such as agriculture, the importance of sustainable community opportunities in subsistence agriculture, different interpretations of the Social Licence to Operate, and the need to shift from DAD (Decide, Announce, Defend) perspectives on social risk to DAVE (declare dilemmas and issues, acknowledge, vision, and evaluate). The common factor underpinning these ideas is to fundamentally embed fairness by asking questions about what fair looks like in each project and who defines what is fair?

**Examples/Insights:** Several key insights emerged from our divers session including: the importance of early engagement and risk-based regulation was highlighted in several presentations to avoid community 'outrage' by addressing 'hazards' at the outset; the need to shift from authorisation regulation to risk-based regulation to assess all risks in energy development and ensure they are As Low as Reasonably Practicable and prescribing rights and duties between states, proponents, and communities; and in the energy transformation, regulation and policy should be linked to a duty to transform communities for sustained wellbeing beyond impact mitigation.

**Recommendations:** Continually reflect on our practice and our role in either perpetuating or challenging processes that deliver unfair, inequitable, and unjust outcomes. For policy makers: Develop legislation and regulations that supports the urgent need for a transformation that is just, fair and equitable.



Without this institutional support, development outcomes will continue to reflect and reinforce the dominant unsustainable paradigm.

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### EXPLORING THE LIMITATIONS OF SIA IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Session Chair(s): Yaakob Hassan, Herlina Ab Aziz

**Key Takeaways:** 1. Collaborative Approach : The cornerstone of success in SIA when diverse stakeholders, from government agencies to industry players and SIA practitioners, come together to foster innovation, facilitates knowledge sharing, and drives the development of effective solutions to complex social challenges. 2. Transformative power of innovation and technology integration, leveraging tools like GIS and decision support systems has revolutionized our approach to SIA, to streamlines processes and enhances data accuracy and decision-making. 3. Just transformation requires holistic approaches to balance the need of business sectors, accountability of decision makings and understanding of challenges at communities and household level. 4. The importance of a dedicated impact association to represents impact assessors to support government initiatives and to be the mediator between them and the construction industry.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Collaborative approaches and technology integration to streamline processes and strategies in engagement and decision making.

**Examples/Insights:** 1. The commitment of PLANMalaysia, the caretaker department of SIA in Malaysia to prepare an SIA guidelines that provides clear step by step reference guidance in project preparation, evaluation and approval of SIA . 2. The Darul Hana Renewal Development example, that shows strong commitment by the state government in managing public engagement and social impacts of their government-led project to impacted communities.

**Recommendations:** Continuous enhancement of skills and capacity in handling and balancing the stakeholders, project proponents and approving authorities expectations, including quality assessment, timely approval and minimum business risks. Government full support to impact assessment as a tool to achieve SDGs goal.

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### FAIR COMPENSATION FOR JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Satoshi Ishihara and Ben Elder

**Key Takeaways:** "Value" should be differently captured than "prices" which do not necessarily reflect the values that affected people lose from projects. In particular intangible values that are important to the welfare and wellbeing of affected people. Compensation and benefit sharing should be clearly and differently approached.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Good and meaningful stakeholder engagement is key to ensuring that all "values" important to affected people are captured and adequately compensated.

**Examples/Insights:** A good and participatory social assessment is critical to identify all values important to the welfare and wellbeing of the affected people that are affected by the project.

**Recommendations:** A social impact assessment and valuation complement each other as good SIA allows identifying all losses of which the "value" can be estimated through proper valuation, including

intangible losses. A compressive and thorough SIA is critical and provide a basis so all losses are adequately valuated and fairly compensated or otherwise mitigated.

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### FINANCING A JUST TRANSITION

Session Chair(s): Joana Pedro

**Key Takeaways:** - Impact Assessment can be a powerful tool, but needs to put people at the center, have enough resources.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** - Impact assessment and decision-making time need also to respect affected community time - economic analyses on top of the analyses that are already done in the ESIs could help discussion with other decision making

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### FROM THE TOP DOWN: ARE REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS THE KEY TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY?

Session Chair(s): Cindy Parker

**Key Takeaways:** Due to the competing interests in land use there is an obvious need for regional planning, but its potential is often under realized or it is too late. The main barriers to regional assessment and planning is lack of political will and the discretionary nature of regional assessments.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Assessments at the project level are not working - if we want a just transformation we need to think strategically, long-term and at a regional level.

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### GENDER IN IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Session Chair(s): Dawn Hoogeveen

**Key Takeaways:** 1. There will be surprises in terms of gender in IA data collection and implementation in the future; 2. Integrating gender into IA needs to be done both inside and outside regulatory regimes to facilitate a just transformation; 3. Queer and LGBT2S+ futures need to be taken into account for a just transformation in IA. 4. Gender in IA has come a long way in the last ten years.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Gender is not something to be considered through a check-box approach. Meaningful gender analysis needs to use good qualitative data collection methods that are community based.

**Examples/Insights:** Examples of robust qualitative data collection illustrated how the integration of gendered analyses in IA can lead to positive outcomes for communities. This included examples like performing extensive qualitative surveys with open ended questions in Uganda on artisanal mining practices and implementing community based health and safety mobile monitoring services in Lake Babine First Nation, in northwest Canada. Engaged gendered analysis in IA can lead to positive outcomes and facilitate a just transformation in IA. Challenges include closing the gap between robust research services and regulatory environments that are not fully aligned with best practices in gender in IA.

**Recommendations:** Engage with interdisciplinary discussions and methods to implement practices in IA that account for health equity concerns, including gendered analysis and the integration of the voices of

those who are difficult to reach due to systemic barriers. Public participation and engagement in IA that integrates gendered analyses and data collection that can facilitate sound decision making and mitigation planning can be done at a regional and cumulative effects level. Collecting good data on gender to implement safeguards requires being sensitive and mindful of confidential and challenging information, but remains an underutilized lens for analyzing project impacts and is significant for the future of IA.

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### HOW CAN NATURE-BASED APPROACHES BE PROMOTED BEFORE IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

Session Chair(s): Tamara Hochstrasser and Elsie O'Gorman

**Key Takeaways:** Some developers have started to work closely with the impact assessment (IA) team and are developing their projects in dialogue with the IA team. Community ownership and decision power is important for follow up. The multifunctionality of nature-based solutions is not always apparent to communities. Good process, but not used to its fullest, as restricted too narrowly within a few parameters.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Community engagement, empowerment to allow communities to participate in decision making,

**Examples/Insights:** There maybe some examples, but we have not finished evaluating the session outcomes. Mostly examples mentioned illustrated what is not working at the moment.

**Recommendations:** Don't be fearful and shy about community engagement. If projects can show that they have co-developed the project with communities a flexible approach for desired outcomes should be taken.

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### HOW TO CONSERVE BIODIVERSITY IN CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION PROJECTS (PARTS I AND II)

Session Chair(s): George C. Ledec

**Key Takeaways:** A "just transformation" needs to be biodiversity-friendly (aka nature-safe), not just socially just. Some biodiversity mitigation measures (such as wind turbine shut-downs on demand to protect birds of conservation concern) may be carefully designed but then inconsistently implemented. Accordingly, impact assessment practitioners need to ensure that the incentives and enforcement mechanisms are in place for project operators to follow the required good practices.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Low-carbon does not mean low-impact from a biodiversity standpoint. A wide range of "green" energy projects (including large and small hydropower, wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass) need to be carefully assessed for their (sometimes severe) biodiversity impacts at the earliest stages of project and sectoral planning (including when power purchase agreements are negotiated).

**Examples/Insights:** The ongoing planning of massive "green hydrogen" projects is targeting some of the world's most wild and pristine coastlines (such as in Namibia) for very extensive solar and wind power development, along with large-scale industrial facilities and new human settlements. Conserving biodiversity in this context will require early, up-front impact assessment focused on the biodiversity at risk from such development and the development of large-scale and well-funded conservation offsets, set-asides, and species monitoring. To energy planners, large, sparsely populated areas like coastal

Namibia may seem like good “empty spaces” for locating sprawling new infrastructure, but a closer look shows that there is much globally unique biodiversity.

**Recommendations:** The on-line Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) provides useful first-approximation biodiversity data for a project area, but it needs to be supplemented with project-area field work to ensure that the biodiversity information used for decision-making is adequate and up to date. For policy makers: The world faces an urgent climate change crisis, but it also faces an urgent biodiversity loss crisis that is no less compelling. Accordingly, renewable energy and other climate change mitigation projects need to be planned, built, and operated in ways that help to conserve biodiversity, rather than destroying it.

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### HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Session Chair(s): Gabriela Factor, Tulika Bansal

**Key Takeaways:** - Human rights impact assessment practice is increasing in the just transformation space. - The diversity of issues in the just transition requires different approaches and methodologies, and common all of them is to put rightsholders at the center. - Human rights impact assessment provides a number of benefits to the impact assessment and management processes, including the consideration of a broader scope of people e.g., workers and users. - Digital technologies are applied both in the just transition, and in impact assessment practices, with potential human rights impacts that need to be further explored and considered. - New developments in human rights due diligence regulation and certification are driving more and better human rights assessments in the just transition.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** The human rights lens allows for a strengthening of the companies responsibility to address impacts because of reference to international legal frameworks, and allows discussion on difficult issues like forced labor and gender based violence in the just transformation. There was a call for further integration of human rights in impact assessment.

**Examples/Insights:** The sector wide human rights impact assessment in La Guajira illustrates the potential for addressing the impacts of the wind-sector at the regional level in a context of very vulnerable populations and can help shape policies, strategies, and projects by government and companies, but also the voice of civil society.

**Recommendations:** Prioritize diversity in your team that includes human rights capacity, and make sure that the organization commissioning the impact assessment has a commitment and understanding of human rights. Human Rights in impact assessment has tools for strengthening impact assessment practice and better decision making for the “just” in the transition.

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### IA FOR BETTER POLICY-MAKING: CURRENT TRENDS AND NEW METHODS

Session Chair(s): Zishu Wang

**Key Takeaways:** Complexities lead high uncertainties for IA processes. More efforts should be made to enhance effectiveness for making decisions. IA has been an sufficient tool for policy-making. The new trends of IA including HIA, digital EIA, SIA, institutional impact assessment, and policy effectiveness evaluation, and so on.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** System thinking and digital approaches can be sufficient for IA processes. Health impact assessment, digital EIA, social impact assessment, and policy effectiveness evaluation should be conducted to support better policy-making.

**Examples/Insights:** Based on 9 presentations from 8 different countries, we agreed that more concerns about stakeholders, careful arguments for IA reports can enhance IA effectiveness for a just transformation.

**Recommendations:** More concerns about stakeholders, careful arguments for IA reports, and more adoptions of digital technologies (e.g., big data, AI, etc.). Policy makers must realize the necessity and complexity of IA processes. System thinking and process-based evaluation are strongly recommended.

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### IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE I & II

Session Chair(s): Guoqing Shi; Chen Chen

**Key Takeaways:** It's a multi-level, multi-regional issue. Different presenters of different countries showed different achievements and efforts to achieve a just transition, and various institutions such as consultant companies and international banks also contribute to the field. In general, EIA has been widely accepted, while SIA and other IA are expected.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** 1. government's attention 2. laws and regulations 3. financial regulation

**Examples/Insights:** In general, the government of many countries mainly focus on the national level or regional level impacts, while lack the concern of a community level or personal level, which results in the neglect of social and institutional issues in the process of achieving SDGs.

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### IMPACTS AND RISKS OF THE REE AND LITHIUM SUPPLY CHAIN

Session Chair(s): Simon Catchpole

**Key Takeaways:** For lithium mining, impact assessment needs to be broadened from the project-based assessment to the basin-wide assessment, and even to a regional, multi-jurisdictional assessment for lithium mining in the Central Andes. Regulatory authorities must validate that actual E&S performance is in line with original E&S approvals. New technologies for mining, processing and manufacturing that are currently in development promise safer lithium and safer battery production, but are untested. Therefore, they must be welcomed, but applied with caution. All stakeholders in the supply chain have a part to play in the just transformation, including regulatory authorities, extractive industry, manufacturing, recycling industry, civil society action groups, and end use purchasers. A life cycle assessment is appropriate for an SEA for REE or Lithium.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Environmental and social science applied to the appropriate scales of evaluation. Education and engagement of affected communities. Empowered regulatory authorities. Commercial and regulatory space for experimentation with new technologies.

**Examples/Insights:** Large scale initiatives require large scale planning. Impact assessment will translate to effective E&S management only if actors in the supply chain are held accountable for their actions.

**Recommendations:** Look at the regional, accumulated effects. For policy makers, do an SEA for lithium production in your producing region. Involve stakeholders in the upstream supply chain. Look for ways to promote recycling of critical materials in your manufacturing or consuming region. Involve stakeholders in the downstream supply chain.

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### INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON A JUST TRANSFORMATION (I-IV)

Session Chair(s): Dr Diana Lewis, Dr Dyanna Jolly

**Key Takeaways:** 1. Development has significantly impacted Indigenous communities and their territories. Impact assessment processes and outcomes have failed to protect Indigenous rights, health, culture, economies and relationships to land and water. 2. Indigenous nations and communities are taking control and developing solutions. They are generating their own IA data, often supported by researchers, scientists and others who are able and willing to work in relational and collaborative ways; in hearts and minds processes. 3. What we heard: The energy transition – IA needs to transform before we can have a just transformation. Otherwise more of the same.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Just transformations for Indigenous Peoples and the protection of their lands, waters and resources requires IA processes that recognise Indigenous sovereignty, jurisdiction, autonomy, rights, knowledges and processes.

**Examples/Insights:** When nations and communities generate their own data, the impact assessment will reflect the reality of impacts, and not a proponent or consultant interpretation or assessment of effects. This is the only way to address the significant and shocking impact of development on Indigenous communities – impacts that IA has failed to address. The challenge is how the information is received by decision-makers. Do they know what to do with Indigenous IA data? Do they have the competency to use the data to make good decisions?

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### INNOVATIVE DATA SHARING AND GOVERNANCE FOR A JUST TRANSFORMATION (1) AND (2)

Session Chair(s): Andy CHUNG, Clara U, Kin-Che LAM

**Key Takeaways:** We need a lot of data for analysis to inform decision-making. Hence, we need innovation in data gathering, analysis and discourse. There is a need for platform to hold the data and for sharing with stakeholders. Data is of pivotal importance to policy making. Impact assessment can help evaluate policies and development options. In addition to data gathering and analysis, it is high time also to consider the use of innovative IT and AI for our tasks.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Data integrity, transparency, sharing, and accessibility to decision-makers, IA professionals and concerned public.

**Examples/Insights:** We heard from 10 presenters about their experience in providing such data for shaping policies and public involvement. All informative and insightful.

**Recommendations:** Use data platforms to provide the needed data and information for decision-making, and for engaging the public. There should be ways to ensure accessibility and data integrity and to maintain such data platform for use. For policymakers: Use data platforms to engage the public, inform them of policies and development options. Be aware that provision of such data can help improve project designs and build trust in the project teams and the government.



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### INNOVATIVE DATA SHARING AND GOVERNANCE FOR A JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Andy Chung, Clara U, Kin Che Lam

**Key Takeaways:** Enhanced Data Accessibility and Transparency - Accessible data platforms can significantly improve the efficiency and fairness of environmental impact assessments (EIAs). By making data readily available, stakeholders gain a better understanding of potential environmental impacts, which facilitates more informed and streamlined decision-making processes. Innovative Use of Technology in Environmental Management - The application of cutting-edge technologies, such as GIS, blockchain, and IoT, when integrated into environmental governance, improves data accuracy and enables real-time monitoring and proactive environmental management. Public Participation and Education - Public access to environmental data is important. Making complex information understandable and accessible enhances community engagement and empowerment, leading to more inclusive and accepted decision-making processes.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Robust Data Governance - Ensure the integrity, accuracy, and security of data through clear protocols and structured management. Use high-quality, reliable data to inform all aspects of impact assessment, ensuring that decisions are based on accurate and current information. Transparency and Accessibility - Make information readily available and understandable to all stakeholders, thus enhancing transparency. Facilitate open access to information so that all stakeholders, including the public, can review and contribute to discussions, ensuring that decisions are made transparently. Use of Advanced Technologies - Leverage technologies like GIS, blockchain, and IoT to improve the accuracy and efficiency of environmental monitoring and impact assessments. Utilize technology to provide detailed and precise environmental assessments, which can aid in making more informed and effective decisions regarding environmental and community impacts.

**Examples/Insights:** The use of comprehensive data systems enhances the EIA process by providing detailed baseline and monitoring data, which streamlines assessments and planning processes. The integration of advanced technologies such as blockchain aids in real-time data management. However, challenges such as balancing data accessibility with the protection of sensitive information were noted, underscoring the importance of robust data governance. Effective governance in data sharing can build trust in impact assessments and improve stakeholder engagement. The need for cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration was emphasized to enhance the exchange of knowledge and experience. It is crucial to continually innovate in impact assessments to effectively address the complexities of environmental challenges. Impact assessments are essential tools for enhancing transparency and informed participation, enabling stakeholders to understand potential environmental impacts.

**Recommendations:** Continual efforts should be made to refine the quality of impact assessments through the use of verified data. Stay flexible, continuously adapting to emerging technologies and methodologies. For Policy Makers - Implement IA at the early stage of the policy development process. For Business Leaders - Adopt IA as a tool to shape corporate strategies. For Technology Providers - Develop and offer tools that facilitate comprehensive and efficient impact assessments.

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### IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS IA: EU TOO PLAY A ROLE

Session Chair(s): Ana Maria Esteves, Francesco Tricoli

**Key Takeaways:** The new pieces of EU legislation have the potential to foster just transformation. CSRD and its comprehensive sustainability reporting requirements are based on materiality assessment of a company's internal and external impacts which is aimed to achieve the objectives of promoting sustainable investments, enhancing corporate ESG performance and ultimately mitigating risks for people and the environment. To make the most of it, it is crucial to overcome challenges, solve methodological questions, seek the right skills, incorporate processes into corporate management systems, and understand how HRIAs and ESHIAs can best contribute to the materiality assessment. Impact materiality assessment is a key step to be taken for effective disclosure on sustainability issues under CSRD and the success of its objectives. It is important to capitalise on the strategic opportunities the Directive presents for pushing the sustainability agenda forward and ultimately, pursuing just transformation. This must be done by viewing CSRD requirements as a meaningful opportunity to promote company-wide sustainability objectives and not a reporting burden.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** - Considering a standardisation of the thresholds associated with assessing the materiality of impacts based on severity and likelihood and category of impacts. - Matching the right skills: business acumen is needed to understand the complexity of value chains, interpersonal skills to conduct meaningful stakeholder engagement, analytical skills to understand and interpret data; expertise in a broad range of sustainability matters including impacts on end-users and consumers. - Integrating impact materiality assessment and sustainability reporting into management systems. It is crucial to have an endorsement by the board; remove silos by engaging cross-functional working groups; clearly define responsibilities and allocate appropriate resource; foster collaboration and engagement with direct and indirect business partners within the value chain; and monitor the effectiveness of these processes. - Understanding the extent to which HRIA and ESHIA can contribute to impact materiality assessment under CSRD. Challenges identified are the scope of sustainability topics to consider (e.g., consideration of impacts on consumers and end-users); coverage of the entire value chain (global vs. project-specific impacts); timeframe of assessment (point-in-time assessment vs. iterative assessment), among others. It is crucial that the impact assessment is structured within clearly defined ToRs.

**Examples/Insights:** - The CSRD legally requires numerous European companies to identify and address environmental, social and human rights impacts associated with their operations and supply chain. This holds tremendous opportunities for IA practitioners to support organizations embed standardized processes that will identify, avoid, manage and address impacts associated with business operations in a manner that directly supports just transformation

**Recommendations:** Engage with other practitioners and contribute to an open dialogue on the implications of CSRD/ESRSs on impact assessment and discuss solutions for overcoming identified challenges. Provide guidance on how to implement CSRD/ESRSs with the aim of standardising best practices based on open consultation.

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### JUST TRANSFORMATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (III)

Session Chair(s): Camille Heaton

**Key Takeaways:** Consider including ESMP at the beginning of the ESIA process. Tailings don't need topsoil to have plants growing on them. Solar, wind and Hydropower all have major environmental and social issues that we need to consider and keep working on--how to clean the supply chain.

## IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS *continued*

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Focus more on Management Plan aspects of ESIA's. Management plans are critical. Consider innovative methods for remediation. Keep trying to green the supply chain to reduce impacts from solar, wind and hydropower.

**Examples/Insights:** Impact assessment is only as good as the management plans after--using the management plans as part of the ESIA process can right-size the ESIA. Ensure silica, cobalt and other key inputs to wind and solar are considered--including the use of child and forced labor.

**Recommendations:** We should exert political pressure regarding mining of silica and cobalt.

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### LARGE INFRASTRUCTURES, JUST TRANSITION, AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY (I & II)

Session Chair(s): Francesca Viliani, Mark Divall

**Key Takeaways:** Health and well-being are central dimensions of the just transformation. Systematically identifying and avoiding or eliminating inequities resulting from any differences in health and in overall living conditions that might arise due to the energy transition is necessary to enable a just transition. However, health is still not adequately addressed in Impact Assessment. Health is central to any transformation, more discussion across disciplines and actors is fundamental.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Involvement of health stakeholders in the impact assessment as early as possible is fundamental to generate an informed decision making process. Capacity building of health stakeholders and practitioners is essential to ensure their meaningful contributions in impact assessment. Connections between energy, climate, health, and human rights are under-researched and more needs to be done to provide evidence that can be used in impact assessment and by decision makers. Many impacts from renewable energy projects are (i) not commonly known and (ii) not yet known. This applies especially to the supply chain and the commissioning phase. Impact assessments and impact assessors will be the main persons that have to make sure these are considered in the projects and managed proactively. And health seems to be the least addressed aspect.

**Examples/Insights:** Health and safety processes should be adjusted to ensure they are applicable to new energy technologies. The process of HIA needs to be adapted for just transformation as well: e.g. screening criteria for projects might be different, topics of equity, environmental justice and cumulative impacts need to be better integrated into HIA. Companies are working on this so the dialogue with practitioners, decision makers and council society should be strengthened. Real life public private partnerships with academics, private companies, and public health agencies working together and sharing experience in driving the field of HIA forward. This will allow to combine the evidence based approach from academia and innovation within the private sector HIA is evolving and robust methodologies were presented and should be more widely disseminated to facilitate ongoing improvements. Baseline and monitoring data are central in impact assessment, they might require ad hoc collection approaches. But whenever possible should be done with the goal of strengthening the health system.

**Recommendations:** Call your health buddy and get them to assist in ensuring that health is covered in the impact assessment. More integration in the approach may be needed, silos still exist and are apparent even at IAIA conference when it comes to human rights, environment, social, impact assessments and HIA. More opportunities to collaborate at company, consultancy levels and across IAIA. Consider what makes HIA 'effective', go beyond just good process i.e. following the steps of HIA. For policy makers, lack of requirements for HIA remains a challenge to promote it in all sectors.

### LINKING URBAN HEALTH AND SDGS THROUGH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Session Chair(s): Emanuel Valpacos

**Key Takeaways:** The session highlighted the critical role of impact assessments (IAs) in achieving just and sustainable urban health transformations. Key lessons included the necessity of integrating IAs across sectors to comprehensively address health, environmental, and social determinants; the importance of forward-looking, adaptive policies informed by IAs to anticipate and mitigate future urban health challenges; and the role of IAs in promoting equity by ensuring that health policies comprehensively address the needs of vulnerable populations, thereby reducing health disparities.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** To ensure that impact assessment contributes to a just transformation, several key factors were discussed in the session. Firstly, it is essential to adopt an integrative, contextualized, and equity-oriented approach to urban health that encompasses all stakeholders, raises collective awareness of risks and opportunities, and fosters collaboration toward unified goals. Secondly, impact assessments should be used to identify potential negative impacts of urban development on health and design appropriate mitigation/compensation measures. Thirdly, impact assessments should be instrumental and conceptual, clarifying expected changes in behavior, identifying co-benefits, and raising awareness among stakeholders about the multiple effects of urban health policies. These factors can be applied in decision-making by incorporating impact assessments into urban planning and policy-making processes, engaging stakeholders in the assessment process, and using the findings to inform decision-making.

**Examples/Insights:** The discussion on sanitation highlighted how environmental licensing, informed by IAs, can lead to better decision-making, illustrating the potential for new approaches and the design of fairer mitigation/compensation measures. The study on PM10 concentrations and land use underscored how IAs can guide urban planning and land use decisions, directly influencing public health and environmental quality. The expansion of walking policies through IAs demonstrated how urban planning can enhance health equity and accessibility, showcasing how IAs can be instrumental in linking physical health improvements with broader urban development goals, in supporting the identification of co-benefits and in raising awareness among stakeholders about the multiple effects of such policies. During the session, the challenges faced in implementing IAs, such as the need for adequate resources, technical expertise, and political will, were acknowledged. To overcome these challenges, it was emphasized the importance of engaging stakeholders in the assessment process, building capacity for impact assessment, and fostering a culture of evidence-based decision-making.

**Recommendations:** - Emphasize stakeholder engagement and capacity building to ensure effective and inclusive impact assessments. - Foster a culture of evidence-based decision-making by promoting transparency and data-driven approaches in impact assessment processes. - Address the challenges of resource constraints and political will by collaborating with diverse stakeholders and advocating for the integration of impact assessments in policy and decision-making processes. For policy makers: - Prioritize the integration of impact assessments in policy and decision-making processes to promote just and sustainable urban development. - Foster collaboration and stakeholder engagement to ensure comprehensive and inclusive impact assessments.

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### MAKING FOLLOW-UP HAPPEN TO TRANSFORM IA PRACTICE

Session Chair(s): Jos Arts and Angus Morrison-Saunders

**Key Takeaways:** - IAIA's international best practice principles for IA follow-up and the accompanying guidance document are endorsed by the attendants - IA follow-up is needed for a just transition - In cases of development involving land resettlement IA follow-up should also carefully involve with local / resettled communities - Follow-up should have a forward-looking element (feeding in new SEA / EIA cycles)

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** institutional capacity, finance, enable learning, central info repository well accessible for all stakeholders, good baseline monitoring

**Examples/Insights:** IA Follow-up is about commitments (not about 'promised' environmental and social measures) IA follow-up is needed to bridge the auditing and expectation gap. From the presenters' messages, To make follow-up happen, we need: - Cathy Mackay (Canada) - centralised data - Charlene Smith (Malta) – understanding governance processes, arrangements and mechanisms is vital in making IA follow-up happen - Alberto Fonseca (Brazil) – having mandatory follow-up is not enough, we also need guidance - Wout van der Gun (the Netherlands) – Follow-up needs a careful start phase with a plan of action. Followup has more added value if it serves multiple purposes. Check usability of existing data at early stage. Ensure followup is embedded in the organisation. Present follow-up separately from IA. Use the EIA as an instrument for determining what kind of follow-up is needed, instead of focusing too much on checking the EIA. - Anni Karkkainen (Finland) – minimum requirements for follow-up need to be laid down in the EIA/permit legislation - Randeep Singh Saini (India) – [recognise that] regulatory enforcement is different to follow-up - Leyla Ozay (Uganda + Kenya) – have clear roles and responsibilities for compliance monitoring. Translate ESMPs into formal conditions (ie outcomes that are quantified). Informal monitoring is important. Deliberate efforts to improve ESMPs, translate into legal conditions. Dedicated departments with mechanisms for coordination and collaboration are needed. Legal enforcement may not get us there: (i) proponent self regulation and motivation is key, (ii) transparency [is needed, eg so NGOs can take action], (iii) recognise and reinforce the role of civil society". - Cristian Perez (Chile) – There is a need to have some mechanisms to address change in environmental variables arising from the EIA process. Legal instruments and proceedings must be adaptive to evolving situations, particularly considering changing scenarios such as the one imposed by climate change; and also, must take in account what is on stake. In this context structure of the review process and its associated timing have some space for improvement. - Natalia Takahashi Margarido (Brazil) - Accurate description of impacts is essential. Compliance reports do not necessarily seek to determine the magnitude of impacts or evaluate mitigation effectiveness. But when monitoring was targeted at supporting impact mitigation, an integrated approach has proved to be capable of promoting an effective and adaptive management of biodiversity impacts. Adoption of biodiversity targets as an opportunity to deepen the analysis of already available data and transform them into information of interest to a range of stakeholders. - Vitus Tankpa (Ghana) – the active participation of the affected communities [in the case of resettled communities] is key to the successful implementation of the mitigation measures for social and environmental aspects - [Theunis Meyer (South Africa, attending the workshop, having a IA follow-up related presentation earlier at the conference – the auditing gap or expectation gap, i.e. what follow-up is meant to do and what it can actually do are not aligned.]

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### MARINE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS FOR ECOSYSTEM-BASED MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING

Session Chair(s): Donald Maynard

**Key Takeaways:** The five presentations were on the theme of Marine Impact Assessments for Ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning however there were two sub-groups. Three presentations on marine activity/spatial analysis methods (using available data sets) in impact assessment and two presentations in providing a review and analysis of spatial planning conducted on marine projects to identify successes and areas requiring improvement. The activity/spatial analysis methods presentations provided tools to produce project design options however each presenter clearly recognized that stakeholder input was required to successfully conduct an impact assessment with a just transformation. The presentations with review and analysis of spatial planning conducted on marine projects also emphasized the necessity of social/cultural/stakeholder inputs in to the impact assessment process for a just transformation.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** The common and key factor from each of the presentations was the need to have a meaningful input from stakeholders into the results of any impact assessment in order to have credibility with the public. The importance of early engagement with the public and were possible providing project design/component options as part of the engagement. The presentations that reviewed and provided analysis of spatial planning conducted on marine projects also related the importance of adaptive management in the design/construction/operation of the project.

**Examples/Insights:** The session illustrated potential advances in impact assessment methods while at the same time confirming the need for stakeholder/social/cultural inputs in order to achieve a just transformation.

**Recommendations:** Stakeholder input must be conducted and factored into impact assessment. As impact assessment tools/methods evolve there must still be a stakeholder/social/cultural input for the public to have confidence in the impact assessment process and support steps in a just transformation. Policy makers and stakeholders must be willing to engage and provide input into impact assessment processes to realize a just transformation.

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### MEANINGFUL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS THROUGH INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Session Chair(s): James Herbert

**Key Takeaways:** Indigenous frameworks are an important lesson in guiding holistic impact assessment with an emphasis on understanding impacts and decision making through complex relationships.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Understanding the worldview and guiding principles from the knowledge of people who have developed their strategies for stewardship and management is the key to transformation of IA practices.

**Examples/Insights:** Understanding how people interact with impacts on the ground through Indigenous Monitoring programs, and the way of thinking about pathways of effects that flows from Indigenous laws is a much better framework to look at how impact assessments can be more relevant to the communities that development projects affect.

**Recommendations:** There's a need for practitioners to look toward the number of different projects and frameworks developed by Indigenous communities in order to help develop new and target assessment tools. Policy makers need to incorporate specific community developed frameworks and

impact assessment processes into their decision-making. Stakeholders, specifically industry, would benefit from understanding these policies and building applications and proponent information to meet these standards.

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### MEANINGFUL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Session Chair(s): Tanya Burdett and Timothy Peirson-Smith

**Key Takeaways:** Meaningful public participation is critical and comprises 10 essential elements plus contextual elements of 1-indigenous rights, lands and processes; 2-international agreements and goals; and national, regional and local context o Within these there are important lessons for factors such as doing engagement well at scale, considering climate change, emphasising the importance of communications, particularly visual/digital/,

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Key factors discussed and how they can be applied in decision-making – Opportunities for communities making decisions? (in the context of existing IA process); building in early opportunities at pre-project stages (and pre-SEA / strategy conception), consultation fatigue

**Examples/Insights:** o Patricia - Difficulties and practicalities of cross-border (i.e., transboundary, cross-boundary and multi-jurisdictional) assessment to enabling meaningful public participation. o Ana - perceptions and experiences of proponents and members of the public with regards visual communication in EIA, noting pre-conceived notions for visual communication, without considering the needs of their audience, resulting in complex content being delivered inappropriately o unique challenges presented in meaningfully communicating, engaging and fostering public participation with large and diverse audiences, and on mega projects (Tim) o When asked to respond to the 10 essential elements, and suggest one which is viewed as most critical, participants who responded to the menti survey overwhelmingly said access to public hearings and information dispute resolution, opportunity for comment, access to information (all foundational elements in the framework presented in the session), then early and ongoing, open and transparent (both part of 6 essential elements) and indigenous rights, land and processes (one of three contextual elements). o On reflecting on the presentations, participants suggested key aspects of meaningful PP also needs to include transparency, resources, meeting communities where they're at, more thoughtful consideration of context, visuals, follow up consultation, resources and patience

**Recommendations:** o Note the emerging framework that draws on IAIA membership surveys, ~40 contributing authors reviewing components of best practice PP in IA, a thorough review of myriad international frameworks including IAP2, IAIA, lending institutions suggestions for what makes for meaningful PP.

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### METHODS FOR HANDLING COMPLEXITY IN JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Charlotta Faith-Ell and Johanna Gordon

**Key Takeaways:** That many practitioners mistake the IA process for a method of assessing complexity. The only concrete methods for handling complexity in IA was systems analysis and strategic thinking.



**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** In order to move forward with regards to complexity and handling of cumulative effects, a systems approach is needed. Need for inventing the instruments instead of following the conventional pathways. One identified problem was the attitude to pile up data rather than defining problems and finding answers.

**Examples/Insights:** Examples on projects highlighting the social and cultural component as well as circularity.

**Recommendations:** In order to move forward with regards to complexity and handling of cumulative effects, a systems approach is needed. There is a need to develop methods for handling complexity within the IA processes. And training practitioners. For policy makers, there is a need to apply methods for handling complexity within the IA processes.

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### NATURE POSITIVE OUTCOMES THROUGH A JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Amrei von Hase

**Key Takeaways:** 1. Governments need to create a progressive and robust regulatory system, based on best policy and practice in the mitigation hierarchy. This will support ambitions to achieve genuine no net loss/ net gain and nature positive outcomes. The level of ambition needs to change drastically within companies, government and society as a whole. 2. There is a need to use innovative methods to upscale the collection, processing and sharing of biodiversity data and train users in applying this to good decision-making. 3. We are still talking mostly about making incremental changes to policy and practice, but seem far away from what it takes to make transformative change happen.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** - Preparation of sound regulations on NNL/NG of biodiversity in line with international best practice, taking into account direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of all impacting sectors - Good biodiversity data prepared at the national level and shared publicly that is used in IA - Courageous decision-making by regulators regarding impact avoidance - Training and capacity building of stakeholders in IA and beyond to understand and apply Net Gain approaches - Finding effective ways to involve local communities and nature stewards in conservation and compensation delivery

**Examples/Insights:** - Example: Training of IA practitioners (and many others) in best practice in the mitigation hierarchy and NNL/ NG - Challenge: Reaching a critical number of IA practitioners well versed in the approaches and rigorously applying them. - Another challenge: aligning timelines of corporate planning and decision-making and IA

**Recommendations:** - Radically increased awareness of the need to align with practice that helps meet global targets for biodiversity - There is a need fundamentally to shift mindsets from limiting impacts to enabling transformation - Be brave in holding the line for biodiversity - that is our job! - Be ambitious for biodiversity

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### NO LONGER ON MARGINS: TOWARD SOCIAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE IN SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SECTOR

Session Chair(s): Harjot Kaur

**Key Takeaways:** Holistic approaches that integrate Government action, private sector engagement, awareness generation, community participation in decision-making, and respect for the rights of the waste pickers will contribute to climate and social justice to these workers. Efforts towards monitoring and assessment of their work conditions should include a dialogue with waste pickers allowing them to share their intergenerational knowledge for accelerating climate change mitigation and just transformation. The initiatives in solid waste management sector need to assess the overall impacts of these activities on the communities whose livelihood is dependent on this sector. These may include waste pickers, workers in recycling units, those who are working at incinerators etc. The working conditions of these workers also need to be assessed properly and improved to provide them with safer ways of waste picking through provision of PPEs, awareness generation, provision of medical care facilities etc.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** The initiatives supporting improving solid waste management need to ensure that the impacts of such initiatives on the waste pickers working in the sector are properly assessed early on and these workers provided with the opportunities to work of the newer jobs in the sector through their skill training and are linked to other schemes of the Government for alternate livelihood. A meaningful consultation with these workers will help in effective impact mitigation and grievance resolution. Synergizing their traditional skills with efforts to mechanize waste collection will contribute to safeguarding their interests as well environment.

**Examples/Insights:** Several examples were presented in the session for stronger institutional mechanisms for dignity & voice of the waste pickers, greater possibilities for their inclusion into SWM systems & policies, facilitating access to services & entitlements and recognition of women waste pickers' roles and concerns. These included recognizing them as green agents in Argentina, initiatives of REDI, a social enterprise in North Macedonia helping to organize and employ Roma informal waste collectors, while establishing a system for primary waste separation in households and companies and Columbia's pioneering public litigation for recognition of waste pickers, all of them helping to shape policies and strategies.

**Recommendations:** Assess for any child or forced labor concerns; understand safety and other basic needs of the women waste pickers and provide for them with enabling environment such as availability of easily accessible grievance redressal mechanisms, child care centers near the places they work, separate toilet facilities at dumping sites and; availability of alternate livelihood for these workers in the wake of mechanization of their work. For policy makers: • Legal and policy reform to ensure recognition of roles of waste pickers in cleaning our spaces and waste management systems and provision of protective and social protection measures. • Engage integration of waste pickers into municipal SWM systems • Collaborate with private sector for providing alternate and safer work conditions to waste pickers • Dialogue among the different stakeholders for an integrated approach to move the needle for safer and decent work conditions to waste pickers

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### OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION TO GO BEYOND NO-SIGNIFICANT-HARM

Session Chair(s): Juan Palerm, Gunilla Ölund Wingqvist

**Key Takeaways:** In order to contribute to a just transformation, development cooperation must (as must other actors) go beyond do-no-harm. It could be done by complementing project-level IA with more upstream approaches (such as SEA) where there are opportunities for more strategic considerations. Three aspects are important to promote a just green transformation: o Scope – or the magnitude of

change. Sustainability needs to be embedded in everything that we do.

- o Pace – we need to speed up the transformation.
- o Quality of change – the change needs to be both green and just. For transformation to happen, legislation, rules, regulations, etc, are necessary, but not sufficient. They also need to be implemented. Implementation is promoted in various ways, for instance through:
  - o the EU taxonomy, which is a framework to avoid greenwashing, supports clarity and establishes a framework for financing institutions and the greening of finance,.
  - o Access to information, for instance related to identifying and tracking financial flows for biodiversity at country level and matching with national needs for finance.
  - o The importance of genuine local ownership what highlighted for real changes to happen. Efforts to match local researchers with local capacity needs seem to be effective (instead of flying in international experts)
  - o Implementation is also promoted through systematic monitoring and follow-up.
  - o Also other types of support can promote implementation, such tools, methods support, etc. The European Commission are about to launch a “Greening Toolbox” with open access. Even though we must work more upstream, the project level EIA continues to be important. Continued capacity development on impact assessment. Given the increased provision of development cooperation aid in collaboration with financial institutions in the form of blended finance, efforts must be made to bring the IA and sustainable finance communities of practice together (e.g. starting from issues of language which is often a barrier).

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** It would be good with clarity and definitions, for instance in relation to the EU taxonomy: what do we mean with DNH and DNSH (what is significant harm)? Mandatory or voluntary – taxonomy-alignment is voluntary, using the green toolbox as well. It could be good to mix the mandatory aspects (the stick) with different kinds of support (carrots), to reduce implementation gap and the capacity gap.

- Both carrots and sticks should be used:
- o Sticks: for instance: - requirement of reporting of EU taxonomy alignment, □ monitoring and follow up (various levels)
- o Carrots: - support, such as relevant, available and accessible tools and methods support (e.g. the EU greening toolbox) - information, such as tracking finance flows to biodiversity - capacity building support

**Examples/Insights:** Impact Assessment remains a key tool to inform decision-making consistent with a just transformation. However, it traditionally focuses on the ‘do no harm’ side of the equation by addressing potential environmental and social impacts. To some extent IA can be enhanced to inform ‘do more good’ decisions, but more generally IA has to be used in conjunction with other approaches and tools to better address positive contributions. For example, the use of taxonomies for sustainable finance (e.g. EU Taxonomy) and of biodiversity finance (e.g. GLOBE taxonomy of UNDP).

**Recommendations:** Practitioners must always keep in mind that their work must contribute to a green and just transformation. In that sense they must be aware of the decision-making processes that their work will influence to bring further added value. For policy makers, more focus on monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of the assessments (SEA, EIA, etc) would promote implementation and accountability. Continue to work with making the taxonomy easy to understand and utilize, for instance through clarifying what “significant harm” is.

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### PATHWAYS TO BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Session Chair(s): Jo Treweek

**Key Takeaways:** Need for transparent, inclusive and evidence-based approaches for safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems and the benefits they provide to people. Need for committing to enhancement

## IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS *continued*

and shared responsibility for historic losses, restoring ecosystems and contributing to net gain. There has been a welcome shift from damage limitation to outcome oriented approaches and credible, evidence-based methods are needed to support this transition, including landscape-scale approaches.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** IA is important to develop a robust evidence base and provide a framework for making nature positive commitments and obtaining the data needed to deliver them.

**Examples/Insights:** Many people, including future generations, depend on biodiversity or value it highly. There is a debt to repay.... Businesses recognise the need to contribute to biodiversity net gain or nature positive outcomes and are seeking methods and metrics that can support them in their efforts to be accountable. These need to address the needs of species, integrity of ecosystems and their structure and function, as well as the benefits derived and depended on by people.

**Recommendations:** Tailor methods and metrics to your context, building on existing experiences. For policy makers: Clear commitments to BNG/ nature positive are welcomed if requirements and regulations are clear. Spatial policies and prioritisation are needed to ensure that biodiversity gains delivered in relation to individual projects also contribute to wider goals for biodiversity

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### POST-ESIA CONTRACTOR MANAGEMENT AND VALUE CREATION: WHAT DRIVES SUCCESS?

Session Chair(s): Eleanor Gill

**Key Takeaways:** IAs need to be translated into contractor requirements to properly implement mitigation. There is a balance between carrot and stick approach when incentivizing contractors to implement ESIA requirements. Engagement and collaboration with contractors is central to contractor performance.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Enforceability of ESIA conclusions and mitigations. Local procurement, employment, training and capacity building for local communities impacted by projects.

**Examples/Insights:** Use ESIA results to determine E&S bonds that contractors must be up-front to protect against non-compliance. Early planning to ensure ESIA results embedded in contractor procurement processes. Saturation monitoring - over communicate, over monitor, over audit contractors to drive results.

**Recommendations:** Seek to understand how ESIA results will be passed on to contractors, to ensure mitigation identified is implementable. For policy makers, consider jurisdiction-level requirements for codifying ESIA conclusions to drive implementation.

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### PRACTICAL CASES ON CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Session Chair(s): Juan Carlos Páez Zamora

**Key Takeaways:** Cumulative impact assessment and management (CIAM) is a process, not a single-short exercise. CIAM is a must when there are several projects being executed in the same location. Even though renewable energy projects can be labeled as “green”, they may not be so green after factoring in cumulative impacts.

## IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS *continued*

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** While EIA is necessary to conceiving sustainable projects, it is not sufficient. A wider approach that factors-in the effects of other past, ongoing, and future projects must also be performed. The determination of future projects to be considered in the analysis is perhaps the most challenging task while performing CIAM. CIAM needs to be monitored and updated regularly.

**Examples/Insights:** It is always advisable to use several impact identification instruments to better determine the overall effect of projects. There is no single way to undertake a sound impact identification and evaluation process.

**Recommendations:** Some instruments need to be “tropicalized” to adjust to specific in-country situations. Always use a combination of instruments and methodologies to predict future environmental and social conditions and to assess their overall effects. Even though CIAM can be undertaken from a single project perspective, the implementation of its mitigation plan always requires the coordination (and the muscle) of the relevant authorities.

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### PRINCIPLES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Session Chair(s): Sara Bice and Emerson Sanchez

**Key Takeaways:** 1. Many vulnerable communities will unequally bear the trade-offs necessary for the transformation. 2. We must co-design the transformation with them, using principles of fairness and inclusion, engaging as early as possible and with a willingness to hear and work through opposition. 3. Participatory, unbiased, fair, safe and context-specific impact assessment has a critical role to play in fostering social inclusion through the transformation.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** The Session built on case studies from Australia, Argentina, Nigeria and Canada to rapidly draft Basic and Operating Principles for Social Inclusion for Impact Assessment. These draft principles will be presented to IAIA as an opportunity to support IAIA members' best practice in recognising and fostering social inclusion through their professional practice.

**Examples/Insights:** The session demonstrated clearly that the transformation--whether it is related to major infrastructure, agriculture and food security or energy--will be possible only if vulnerable, indigenous and rural/regional communities are involved as equal partners in the decision-making processes required to achieve the transformation in the necessary timeframe.

**Recommendations:** Impact assessment can play a key role in supporting social inclusion--the opportunity for all individuals and groups of a society to participate equally in their local society and economy. To do so, basic principles and operating principles can be followed to guide best practice. Be aware that your work can directly inform social inclusion. Engage early. Engage fairly. Leverage the impact assessment process to achieve broader societal improvements. For policy makers, require attention to social inclusion in policy and legislative requirements guiding IA in your jurisdiction.

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### PSYCHO-SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Session Chair(s): Sergio Moreira & Will Rifkin

**Key Takeaways:** There seems to be increasing recognition that PSIA captures the human experience of change in ways that reflect perceptions of justice, providing insight that other forms of IA do not typically

## IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS *continued*

capture. PSIA sounds a lot like what good SIA already does, some way. Others disagree. PSIA digs deeper than typical SIA to identify what is really bothering people, sorting through interconnections among other evident impacts, such as on livelihoods.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Openness to undertaking PSIA and development of the ability to respond to psycho-social impacts seems important to pursuing justice - in processes and outcomes - during transformation.

**Examples/Insights:** The rationale and role for PSIA in addressing the large-scale changes needed is yet to be clearly articulated in a way that supports its more widespread use.

**Recommendations:** Find a way to balance the time needed for in-depth understanding (giving voice and building trust) with commercial imperatives - timeline for a review process and timeline for construction of a project. For policy makers, experiment with including elements of PSIA in current impact assessment efforts.

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### REFLECTING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR A JUST TRANSFORMATION IN IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Session Chair(s): Valerie Masterman

**Key Takeaways:** We, as IA practitioners, need to continue to educate ourselves about Indigenous Values to align our impact assessments and projects to reflect these. We can't rush into the green energy transition at the expense of meaningful engagement. Independent Indigenous-Led Assessments are necessary to inform the assessment process and results.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Define Valued Components with Indigenous Peoples and take a holistic view instead of only considering the traditional biophysical and social factors. Consider the temporal impacts in a project and the effect this can have on cultural values, including the transmission of information across generations. Try to do better... that's the first step.

**Examples/Insights:** Impact Assessments can be a tool to meaningfully define what is being studied in a way that reflects Indigenous Values. Where the proponent falls short the Independent Indigenous-Led Assessments and Assessment tools should be used to better reflect concerns and impacts. Indigenous Assessments need to be considered in the decision making process.

**Recommendations:** Educate yourselves in the values, history and concerns of Indigenous People, meaningfully define what should be assessed and enable Independent Indigenous-Led Assessments to be considered in the decision-making process. Governments need to do a better job of meeting Indigenous People on an equal footing and allowing for Indigenous Knowledge to inform the decision-making process when reviewing Impact Assessments.

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### REMEMBER THE SPIRITUAL VALUE AND THE INTANGIBLES

Session Chair(s): Ahmed Sanda

**Key Takeaways:** 1- Trust building in the process 2- Wider consultation and communication 3- Transparency and Education

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Factors: providing direction and continued engagement (deliberate and where necessary tailored) It can be applied to decision making by anticipating the direction as well as creating the direction towards over all goal/ big picture.

**Examples/Insights:** The data acquisition and analytical capabilities of Impact Assessment manifestly positions it to lead the transformation or assist in leading the transformation. Not enough charismatic and or witty Impact Assessment folks rise to strategic positions to effectuate policies, strategies and projects, generally.

**Recommendations:** They need to volunteer more in order to make meaningful impact for their own personal growth and prosperity. Policy makers need to shorten the distance between them and 'the second layer of the management cohort.'

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### STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Session Chair(s): Thomas Fischer and Ainhua Gonzalez Del Campo

**Key Takeaways:** SEA needs to be applied at all strategic decision tiers. Its application is particularly important at the highest levels. Presentations show that this is possible. SEA is now applied in various forms throughout the world with many excellent examples

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Transparency, champions, application at all decision tiers

**Examples/Insights:** Voluntary SEAs (eg by Target Malaria for West Africa); conflict resolution from Korea; national renewable energy planning in South Africa.

**Recommendations:** SEA needs to consider what is relevant. This often goes beyond traditional environmental factors to include eg health, social aspects, heritage... We need champions.

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### STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR A JUST TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Greg Radford, Joyce Kortlandt

**Key Takeaways:** Demands for energy transition minerals will be rising steeply. This offers opportunities but also major challenges for the mining sector that cannot be addressed at the level of individual projects alone. Plans, policies, and programmes for mining should be informed by strategic environmental assessments that balance mining interests with wider economic, environmental, and social interests, consider cumulative impacts of mining and other projects, and look into challenges related to artisanal and small-scale mining. Participants noted many advantages of SEA for mining but while SEAs are mandatory in many countries all over the world, the amount of countries that apply SEA in the mining sector is rather limited. SEAs enhance green and climate smart mining activities at the project level by providing the necessary frameworks. They identify policy gaps, assess what institutional and legal changes are needed and clarify roles and responsibilities of individual actors in relation to responsible mining.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** ESIA's at project level need to be complemented by SEA at strategic level. However, knowledge about the added value of SEA for responsible mining is limited. There is a need to build awareness and strengthen capacities about the benefits of SEA for responsible



mining. SEA for mining is not only relevant for governments and for civil society but also for the private sector, because they consider medium- and long-term infrastructure planning needs. They also reduce costs for mining companies to carry out ESIA's because much of the data needed is already included in the SEA.

**Examples/Insights:** SEAs are often funded by international institutions and sometimes developed as stand-alone studies. It is key that they are connected to programs, plans, and policies. If SEAs are carried out in isolation, there is a risk that they will not be implemented. Implementation requires ownership of the relevant government departments and other key stakeholders from the start. This includes involvement of traditional authorities and bottom-up participation.

**Recommendations:** Impact assessment practitioners should make sure that SEAs for mining in which they are involved are part of broader strategic planning that includes policies, plans, and programs relevant to the objectives the government has set for its development of natural resource extraction. In addition, they should ensure that public engagement is carried out from start to finish, and that there is transparency throughout the consultation and information processes. For policy makers: It is important to hold sector agencies accountable for the development of SEAs and to clarify responsibilities of all actors involved in SEA development and implementation. The role of the EIA agency is not to develop SEAs but to validate them. NGOs and other stakeholders should encourage governments to make more use of SEA for mining. This is extremely relevant for energy transition minerals whose demands are rising very rapidly. The development of new programs, plans and policies for critical minerals should happen in parallel with and informed by SEAs for mining.

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### STREAMLINING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS TO ENABLE TRANSFORMATION

Session Chair(s): Celesa Horvath

**Key Takeaways:** 1. Streamlining (or regulatory efficiency) is NOT (just) about doing IA faster; it's about doing IA BETTER. 2. Streamlining (or regulatory efficiency), even for "clean growth projects," cannot come at the expense of local communities or environmental protection. 3. Efforts to streamline IA are more likely to succeed if there has been consultation with IA participants and stakeholders.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** 1. Greater reliance on the existing body of knowledge with respect to effects and proven effective mitigation and management measures can and should be applied to streamline IA, to enable IA to focus on the unknown, higher risk issues. 2. The full spectrum of IA tools - strategic IA, regional IA, class IA, project-specific IA - as well as complementary mechanisms (e.g., land use planning) should be deployed to address issues at the right level of policy-and decision-making.

**Examples/Insights:** 1. Industry attitudes towards streamlining are not necessarily as expected - evidence was shared that some industry stakeholders see value in IA for building public confidence and social licence, and are concerned that this may be lost if streamlining efforts exclude clean growth projects from IA. 2. Similarly, IA participants (e.g., civil society, NGOs, the public) want to retain a voice in (streamlined) IA but are keen to see IA focused on key issues (not thousands of pages of duplicative information).

**Recommendations:** A natural resistance to change, even when change is for the better, poses a significant barrier for any effort to improve IA; streamlining efforts must be aware of and find ways to overcome this resistance. Seek to build trust-based relationships with IA participants. For IA process

administrators and decision-makers: more is not necessarily better; sometimes it's just more - develop the capacity and competency to know when the information in hand is sufficient to proceed, rely on experience, focus on key issues, and be prepared to make decisions in the face of uncertainty. There are tools to manage risk.

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### SUSTAINABLE FINANCE AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN THE EU

Session Chair(s): Adina Relicovschi

**Key Takeaways:** EU Taxonomy as part of Sustainable Finance Agenda is a completely new classification system to label environmentally sustainable activities where social aspects are integrated (in the form of minimum safeguards) but more insights should be provided as part of implementation. Advocate for a Social Taxonomy (similar to environment) is key.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** While the EU Taxonomy is a new voluntary classification system that is growing very fast, the well-established impact assessments and environmental permitting systems should be used to support implementation. Therefore the Substantial Contribution and Do No Significant Harm principles (including their detailed defined criteria) should become integral part of these systems and consequently of decision-making processes.

**Examples/Insights:** Fully integration of minimum social safeguards into the impact assessment process and due-diligence performed by the financial sector.

**Recommendations:** Set up guidance on linkages between EU Taxonomy and EIA/ESIA processes. Use the technical screening criteria for SC and DNSH as defined in the EU Taxonomy when preparing EIA/ESIA reports. For policy makers: Develop a EU Social Taxonomy similar to the existing one for the 6 environmental objectives, which has to define what does it mean to substantially contribute to one social objectives and do not harm other social objectives.

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### THE FUTURE OF THE IA PROFESSION: TRANSITION OR TRANSFORMATION? (PART 1 AND 2 COMBINED)

Session Chair(s): Rufus Howard

**Key Takeaways:** 1. We need better partnerships across and between organisations to build E&S and IA capacity across government, financial institutions, consultancies, developers, academia, NGOs and communities. 2. We need greater emphasis on the importance of ethical practice as individuals and organisations. 3. The voice and role of communities and affected people needs to be strengthened in decision making.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** 1. We need capacity building across all organisations and sectors (including communities) to provide better training, coaching, education, recruitment and retention of IA professionals. 2. We need to make better use of technology to enhance and improve IA and assist in generating positive environmental and social outcomes on the ground. 3. The role of ethics, governance and environmental and social values needs to be strengthened in all decision making processes and should include the free prior and informed consent of communities and affected people.

**Examples/Insights:** We had multiple examples from across public and private sectors; incl. E&S Policy at EBRD, E&S training and learning at IFC, the use of AI to assist E&S professionals at the World Bank, the evolution of IA education at Universities, the role and contribution of multidisciplinary E&S consultants,

the evolving role of digital impact assessment and databases, capacity building of local government and planners in Northern Ireland, the role of IA leads and design influencers. Taken together the session highlighted multiple insights into the future direction of travel for the IA profession. These insights will be captured in a forthcoming report on the 'Future of Impact Assessment'.

**Recommendations:** We need to think big, and act systematically across all organisations, internationally, to build local competence, capacity and governance to fulfil the potential of impact assessment and environmental and social management in supporting a rapid and just transformation to a low carbon, ecologically thriving, healthy, fair, equitable and sustainable world. Share your knowledge and experience with colleagues, and through and across wider forums and institutions to contribute to the urgent need for capacity building. We need to work in partnership across and between public, private and NGO organisations, and collectively commit to putting communities and affected people at the centre of decision making.

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### THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

Session Chair(s): Susana Rosa

**Key Takeaways:** An efficient communication among all stakeholders is very important for a successful impact assessment. Communication is essential for a just transformation.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Only an inclusive and adequate communication among all stakeholders can contribute for an informed decision making

**Examples/Insights:** The environmental risk perception by an indigenous community was considered jointly with the risk assessment as traditionally assessed by the IA team.

**Recommendations:** Digital tools may contribute for inclusion within IA communication, however, visual literacy of stakeholders has to be adequately addressed. Assure an efficient communication among all stakeholders, adequate to their variable level of experience and cultural environment

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### THE ROLE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN PROTECTING AND ENHANCING HERITAGE

Session Chair(s): Dr Urmila Jha Thakur

**Key Takeaways:** A lot of work is required in the field to see how best 'values' can be framed for heritage sites and explore HIA along with other forms of Impact Assessments to see how best heritage protection can go hand in hand in delivering sustainability.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** Heritage Impact Assessment has recently been evolving but this is the predominant type of IA being used in heritage sites and not always proactively. There is potential to engage HIA with other forms of IA, to ensure environmental values along with social values are captured better in heritage sites.

**Examples/Insights:** Heritage Impact Assessment is picking up but other forms of IA will also need to be explored in protecting and enhancing heritage. There is need of more pro-active approach in heritage sites to engage widely in establishing environmental, social and economical value of heritage sites.

**Recommendations:** Re-thinking innovatively what form of IA can be used on the heritage sites rather than being reactive to PPPs developments and their impacts on the heritage site. HIA experts need to

work with other types of IA experts in order to think creatively in delivering heritage protection along with sustainability. IUCN and ICOMOS may need to work more integratedly in looking at cultural and natural values and IA can be used innovatively to assist in evaluating holistic impacts of heritage sites.

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### THE SEA DIRECTIVE IN EU, 20 YEARS ON: IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

Session Chair(s): Andy Fanning and Tadhg O'Mahony

**Key Takeaways:** The effectiveness of SEA is in the mitigations that it leads to. Effectiveness assessment is therefore key to improving practice and impact of SEA. This assessment should consider both self-assessment by practitioners to develop reflexive practice and external objective assessment.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** SEA is effective but could be more effective and there is continuing need to increase awareness of it as a key element of impact assessment and mitigation.

**Recommendations:** 1. SEA is providing a benefit but there is need to develop more capacity for its practice via training and information sharing including guidance on good practice as appears to be available in some countries. Sharing experience between nations with common traits is also a very positive way to increase capability. 2. Within SEA, the session participants stressed the importance of extensive scoping and early engagement in SEA to make it effective. 3. Practitioners should seek to self audit their assessments and consider how they can get perspectives to provide them with an external assessment of their assessments to support continual improvement in practice. 4. For policy makers: As the scope of SEA in Europe is defined by EU legislation, there is need to look again at its coverage to ensure that impactful development is better captured as some very large-scale developments are not captured currently within the scope of SEA.

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### TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION FOR BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS

Session Chair(s): Greg Sharam

**Key Takeaways:** Presentations were in three categories – theory of offsets, linking nature positive to offsets and examples of offsets.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Two key factors were discussed repeatedly: 1) the necessity in including Indigenous voices and partnerships to offsetting planning and implementation, 2) as well as the need for real data to make decisions on, since many attempts at offsetting don't seem to adequately include background data or don't adequately monitor themselves and show that they are successful. Both of these are required for a just transition.

**Examples/Insights:** The main insights on the role of impact assessment in shaping a just transformation as well as policies were: 1) We have to have really good, inclusive, systems-integrated theory behind any attempt at impact assessment and offsets for them to be rooted in a just transformation. 2) Once we have that theory, it must be translated into policies and strategies. 3) And then those policies and strategies must be taken for a test drive in a draft form, all the while remembering the theory upon which they were developed so that they can be judged for whether they are effective. 4) Those test cases must then be studied for whether they work and accomplish both the theoretical goals and policy goals. 5) These connections from top to bottom need to be made otherwise, it's easy to get lost in high level theory or the low level policy implications.

### TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE OF NEPA

Session Chair(s): Michael D. Smith

**Key Takeaways:** That page and time limits are likely not the most effective way of accelerating environmental review and permitting, and that there are many concerns about the diminishment in the quality of environmental review through these and other streamlining factors.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** Practitioners need to ensure that despite new streamlining measures being put in place, they need to find ways to still prepare compliant and meaningful environmental reviews. And to go a step beyond and make sure that the reviews are understandable and useful for decision makers, so that they will make meaningful contributions to making decisions.

**Examples/Insights:** Proposed changes in the implementing regulations for NEPA would strengthen the analysis of environmental justice impacts and increase substantively the engagement of those communities in the environmental impact analysis and project development process.

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### TRANSITIONING TO NET GAIN: EFFECTIVELY ACHIEVING AND MEASURING BIODIVERSITY

Session Chair(s): Corin Simmonds, Nicola Faulks

**Key Takeaways:** That for success an offset needs to be designed with consultation and involvement of local communities. Also the devising of an offset strategy needs some form of evaluation metric so that success can be measured. Devising a way to evaluate nature and apply this to offset requirements is difficult and not straight forward. The UK has pushed ahead with BNG, and the local nature recovery strategy, but there is still a long way to go to prove it.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** One talk was very interesting in that based on social feed back, people who were losing land to a project are generally against it. Those who's lives will be made better by it are pro the project. Further away, out of the AOI, there are groups of objectors, and no matter how good you make the net gain (in this case for biodiversity), they will still object. General discussion was could more people be involved in designing net gain, if they were would it make a difference. Also, how could this be effectively done?

**Examples/Insights:** Most of the talks especially the TANAP (Turkey) talk, demonstrated that net gain requires consultation and social input. That you can't just expect to create a net gain on someone else's land. That ecosystem services really do have to be taken in to account.

**Recommendations:** Bespoke measurements for biodiversity value may be a strategy for overseas projects, but key is also good up front, transparent consultation about the project with local communities. For policy makers, collate examples of offsetting, learn lessons. The hardest thing has been trying to find projects that have successfully implemented offsetting and achieved a net gain. Even if they haven't, there should still be areas that we as practitioners can learn from.

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## IAIA24 SESSION CHAIR REPORTS *continued*

### UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE: DEVELOPING APPROACHES AND IMPROVING DATA

Session Chair(s): Amanda Evans

**Key Takeaways:** A just transformation includes assessment of intangible underwater heritage, requiring stakeholder engagement to identify multiple areas of "significance". Submerged paleolandscapes can be identified, but "significant" spaces on those landscapes may not be apparent from typical IA data. Our need for stakeholder engagement must not create an undue burden on Traditional Owners or Tribal Nations. Meaningful engagement will require capacity building.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Developers or proponents may need to provide assistance to stakeholders so that they may engage. Projects already consider tangible heritage in the IA process, but stakeholders are also expressing concern over impacts to the intangible heritage.

**Examples/Insights:** Examples included modeling of submerged landscapes, and lessons learned from stakeholder engagement.

**Recommendations:** Engagement is a long process of relationship building and developing trust. It cannot be rushed to meet project deadlines. It must start early. Communicate your results in accessible language to support meaningful engagement with and comment from stakeholders. Begin engagement early. For policy makers, begin engagement before the project starts.

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### USING SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AS A POLICY TOOL TO GUIDE JUST TRANSITION

Session Chair(s): Neelanjana Gupta

**Key Takeaways:** 1. The closure of economically unviable and old coal mines and old power plans is a first step towards a just transition, with investments in economic diversification being at the very core of just transition plans and investments. 2. India's just transition Journey is very new/recent; it is in the 'engagement stage', not having planned or implemented any JT policies yet. 3. Strong baseline labor and social welfare policies are critical for worker transition.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation?** Continuing to build evidence to support policy-making.

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### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTITIONERS TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO BOARDS?

Session Chair(s): Liz Wall and Amy Sexton

**Key Takeaways:** Improved social and environmental governance is fundamental to achieve a just transition. Guidance is required to articulate the role and responsibility of both directors and practitioners in delivering a just transition and the Social Practice Forum is a lead contributor in this space. Questioning the extent to which boards are engaged in impact assessment processes and/or outcomes.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Our discussion focused on how to improve the consideration and board engagement on social and environmental issues in their decision-making. This included board actions (e.g. ensuring boards are trained, informed and receive the right information) and practitioner actions (e.g. practitioners appreciation of and engagement with director's duties and

responsibilities, practitioners taking on directoral duties themselves, provision of frank and fearless advice).

**Recommendations:** Ensuring the language and summary of impact assessments speak to board level processes in language and framing that is compelling to that audience. For policy makers, board level knowledge of impact assessments often appears limited which raises further questions on how well social and environmental considerations are informing board-level decisions

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### WHAT ROLE DOES IA PLAY IN A RESPONSIBLE EXIT FROM THE FOSSIL FUEL SECTOR?

Session Chair(s): Janet Blackadar

**Key Takeaways:** There has to be a lot of planning ahead of time, in terms of community input, logistics, siting, etc. The size of many proposed "green" projects in terms of footprint are very large and there is a sense that this is not clear to communities. The regulators are not ready to undertake these reviews.

**How can IA contribute to a just transformation:** Regulatory agencies need to learn about the proposed technologies so that reviews can be focused. Post project implementation and follow up must be done.

**Examples/Insights:** We repeatedly heard that planning is so important. There need to be strategic level assessments to help to identify areas appropriate for different development types. Not all "green" projects are actually green so these impacts need to be well understood and well explained to communities.

**Recommendations:** Engage, engage, engage! Constraint mapping is really important to do to help with siting. For policy makers, take some time to plan development areas/zones and do strategic and regional assessments.

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