



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment



The NCEA – our international work

The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) was established by decree in 1987, as an independent advisory body on environmental assessment for The Netherlands. In 1993 the NCEA also started to operate internationally. Most of our international work is carried out with a subsidy from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The core of the NCEA's international work is to support environment and sectoral ministries, environmental assessment professionals and non-governmental organisations to improve their environmental and social assessment practice. We advise on the quality of the process and content of these assessments, both at project level (environmental and social impact assessment or ESIA) and strategic level (strategic environmental assessment or SEA). Please note that the NCEA does not itself write ESIA and SEA reports, nor does it advise on whether or not to approve a project or a plan. Our role is to check if there is a transparent process and solid information basis for public debate and political decision making. All our advisory reports are available to all and published on our website.

What is ESIA and SEA?

ESIA and SEA are transparent, systematic processes that aim to ensure that environmental and social consequences of proposed actions are incorporated into decision making. ESIA is applied in project development and SEA in the development of programmes, plans and policies.

An assessment process involves:

- Organising public participation to discuss proposed projects and plans;
- Analysing the likely effects of proposals;
- Developing and comparing alternatives;
- Documenting the results of the assessment;

Our international work in 4 facts:

- Since 1993, the international department of the NCEA has issued more than one hundred advisory reports on guidelines for and quality of ESIA/SEA reports.
- In addition, more than 200 advisory reports have been issued on issues related to ESIA/SEA, such as legislation.
- The NCEA has worked in more than 60 countries and regions.
- The international department consists of 7 ESIA/SEA specialists, 2 knowledge managers, 4 support staff, a chairman and a director.

- Considering these results in project and plan development and decision making;
- Informing the public about the final decision and how their interests were taken into account.

What does the NCEA do?

The main types of support that the NCEA provides abroad are:

- Advice on Terms of Reference for ESIA/SEA (before the process starts);
- Quality review of ESIA/SEA (during/after the process);
- Coaching of ESIA/SEA processes;
- Screening on legal ESIA requirements for projects by Dutch entrepreneurs in developing countries;
- Advice on strengthening ESIA/SEA systems including institutional setting, processes and legislation;
- ESIA and SEA capacity development;
- Knowledge centre on ESIA/SEA legislation, practice and guidance.

- This support is in most cases requested by environmental and sectoral ministries in Dutch partner countries. However, it can also be requested by Dutch embassies, other donor countries, development banks and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency.

Our principles, approach and expertise

The NCEA's work is founded on three principles: expertise, independence and transparency. It is the combination of these three that allows the NCEA to provide unbiased support and advice.

When the NCEA reviews the quality of a process or report, we assess the following:

- Quality of information: is it sufficient as a basis for sound decision making?
- Relevance of the ESIA/SEA: does its focus and timing optimise its influence on decision making?
- Transparency of the process: is it clear who will be taking decisions and when?
- Participation of stakeholders: are stakeholders and the general public timely and effectively consulted?

Example capacity development: ESIA system strengthening in Pakistan

Between 2009 and 2014, the NCEA was involved in the National Impact Assessment Programme (NIAP) in Pakistan. This programme aimed to improve the existing ESIA system and introduce SEA. The NCEA's involvement has contributed to various aspects of the ESIA system, including the regulatory framework, awareness and commitment, and education and training on environmental assessment.

The evaluation by the NIAP team states:

"The NCEA not only technically supported the Project; it also played the role of a catalyst and helped the Project stay on-track. The NCEA assisted the Project in identifying the international consultants for specific assignments and ensured that the input provided is of the highest quality. It was due to timely and quality guidance of the NCEA that the project managed to deliver on its outputs."

Example NCEA advice: deep sea port Sèmè-Podji, Benin

At the request of the Beninese Environmental Agency (ABE), the NCEA advised twice on the ESIA for a new deep sea port at Sèmè-Podji. The first advice concerned Terms of Reference for the ESIA (2015); the second was a review of the ESIA (2016). In its review, the NCEA discussed a number of shortcomings, such as the underestimation of the project's effects, the lack of mitigation measures to be taken by the public sector, and the omission of an option for coastal protection. An interministerial team that debated the ESIA and project approval has decided to use the NCEA's review as a basis for its response to the project initiators. As a result, 15 recommendations from the NCEA were adopted and play a key role in improving the project.

The NCEA can invoke the expertise of its pool of international experts. This pool covers all relevant environmental and social areas, but also economics, land reclamation and consolidation, energy generation and consumption, etcetera.

"Having had links with Mozambique for years, the NCEA is familiar with the environment and society there. So in the current stormy times it can give flexible and expert advice."

Jan Huesken, Netherlands Embassy Maputo

More information

On our website you can find advisory reports, information on different aspects of our work, and a country database with ESIA/SEA legislation of more than 40 countries, including all Dutch partner countries.

Contact

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