



Netherlands Commission for  
Environmental Assessment



## The NCEA's capacity development approach

### Vision

Since 1993, the NCEA has contributed to the strengthening of ESIA and SEA systems in about 30 low and middle income countries. When designing an approach for ESIA/SEA capacity development (CD), we take the country's own, specific ESIA/SEA system as a starting point. This means that we take all relevant actors and system components into consideration to better understand the system's effectiveness and needs for strengthening. In doing so, we apply the following principles:

- Ownership by the main actor(s) is a condition for successful CD programmes. NCEA involvement is therefore not initiated by the NCEA but always starts with a request by one of those actors;
- Joint needs analysis coupled with joint development of the CD programme strengthens ownership;
- Flexibility is key: priorities may change and changes may lead to new insights in what is needed;
- The NCEA, as a demand-driven organisation, is able to provide this flexibility and adjust to the partner's agenda and political window, also for the longer term;
- Earlier experiences of the partner organisations combined with best practices from elsewhere form the inputs for strengthening capacities;
- The NCEA stimulates coordination between actors to ensure effective use of funds and time;
- Committed and mandated people working from within the requesting party need to be available for daily management;
- Donor coordination is also key and actively sought for by the NCEA and partners.

### The NCEA's system approach to SEA and ESIA

Starting point for this approach is the idea that if we want to understand SEA or ESIA effectiveness, we need to take into consideration the whole SEA/ESIA system. This means that we do not only look at individual SEA/ESIAs or the capacity of organisations with SEA/ESIA responsibilities, but also include the SEA/ESIA regulatory framework, awareness and commitment, education, and compliance and enforcement after permitting. We refer to these as 'functions'. This approach is based on the theory of change we have developed, based upon our practical experience.

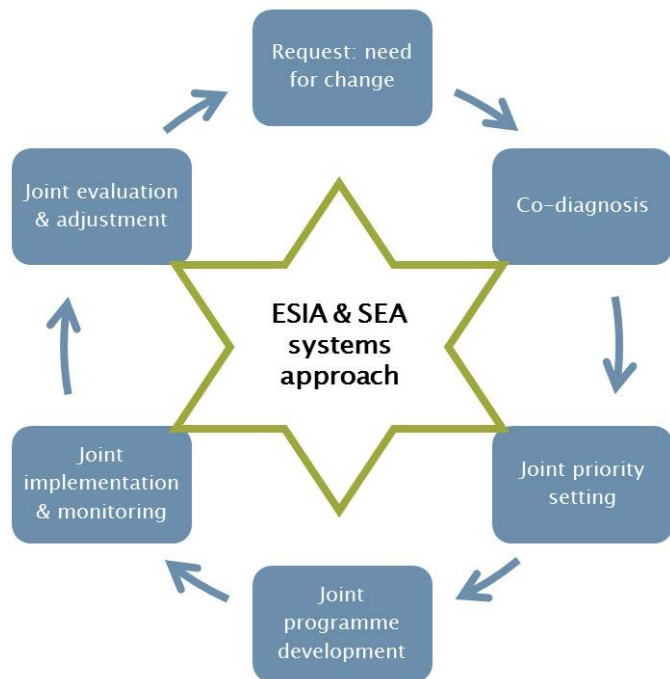
We distinguish three levels in our systems approach:

- At the system level, we look at key functions that should be fulfilled within a system to enable good practice ESIA.
- The organisational level is about the capacities of actors that have a role in the ESIA system. An important component is to develop mechanisms that secure the capacities that have been developed.
- At the process level, we look at how individual ESIA processes are undertaken.

For each level, we have identified key results that should be achieved. Each result is subsequently translated into a set of indicators, including the means of verification that allow assessment of the progress on that result. Whether we actually work on all these levels of the system in a country depends on which actor requests assistance, local priorities and available resources.

## Approach for capacity development

In the CD approach for strengthening of SEA and ESIA systems the NCEA follows an adaptive process jointly with the



requesting partner, see figure 1.

Figure 1: NCEA capacity development cycle

The NCEA has developed activities and tools to support each of the steps, and continues to do so if required by the specific context. For many of the activities and tools listed in Table 1, more information on, and experiences with, their application are provided on our website [www.eia.nl](http://www.eia.nl).

## Relevant publications

The following NCEA publications shed more light on our systems approach and on experiences in practice with CD programmes:

- A systems approach on ESIA effectiveness (2014)
- A systems approach on SEA effectiveness (2014)
- Views & Experiences 2015: two articles on NCEA's experiences with CD in Burundi and Central Africa

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Table 1: Activities and tools used by the NCEA in capacity development of ESIA and SEA systems

Phase	Objective	Activities and tools
Request: need for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the impetus for change and commitment of the main actors</li> <li>• Identify the activities planned and implemented by other actors, including donors</li> <li>• Present NCEA's vision on capacity development and services that can be provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs analysis by making use of ESIA country profile (detailed information on ESIA and SEA legislation and practice in a country)</li> <li>• Information materials to support the vision, approach and services e.g. Key sheets, Views and experiences</li> </ul>
Co-diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint analysis of the performance of the actors and effectiveness of the SEA/ESIA system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWOT analysis:</li> <li>• 'ESIA mapping' analysis/other suitable tools</li> <li>• Assessment of capacities of main stakeholders</li> <li>• Case study analysis</li> <li>• Institutional context analysis</li> </ul>
Joint priority setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the priorities and ambition level of actor(s) as to SEA/ESIA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building block on parts of the SEA/ESIA system, developed by the NCEA, that guide choices and strengthening of these elements, including the financing mechanisms</li> </ul>
Joint programme development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a concrete programme with measurable results and including a strategy for the short and long term on how to achieve the identified ambition levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance indicators at process, individual, organisational and system level</li> </ul>
Joint implementation & monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the program</li> <li>• Monitoring of results and adjustment of the program if required by actual demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailor made training and working sessions, coaching</li> <li>• Evaluation sessions and forms, interviews, mapping and other SWOT methods</li> </ul>
Joint evaluation & adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the process and the program results and identify lessons learned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See tools under 'Co-diagnosis'</li> </ul>