



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment



The Coaching of an SEA Process

Is Strategic Environmental Assessment new in your country? Would you like to know where to start, which issues could play a role, how to develop a roadmap, or how to coordinate the process? Then coaching might be an option to improve your SEA process.

Objective of coaching

The objective of our coaching is twofold:

- To assist organisations in performing their role in the ongoing environmental assessment process.
- To support a learning process, so the organisations involved can build capacity to execute their tasks without external support in future SEA processes.



As coach, the NCEA remains independent and impartial with respect to the decisions made on the plan or programme. The NCEA focuses on the process, and not on the agenda of one specific stakeholder in that process.

Approach

- Generally, the emphasis is on providing assistance in the overall process, and less on providing in-depth technical knowledge.
- The coaching is carried out by one of NCEA's technical secretaries. If relevant, we engage an external expert when more in-depth knowledge is needed.
- Coaching takes place mainly during face-to-face meetings and workshops.
- Coaching consists of guidance, questions and answers,

explanations and reflections, both verbally and in writing.

- In consultation with the requesting authority, coaching reports may be published on our website and shared with relevant stakeholders.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the coaching process and interventions are important to optimise the learning process.

SEA for a development plan – Mali

The Sourou area in Mali, sharing the Sourou river with Burkina Faso, has complex challenges of employment, land degradation, climate change, water & land management, conflict and migration. To counter these challenges, local authorities felt the need to develop a sustainable development plan.

In 2017, the NCEA facilitated two introductory SEA workshops in the area. Interested in the added value for sustainable planning, the local authorities put a request to the NCEA in 2018, to support an SEA for the Sourou Sustainable Development Plan (PDIDS).

In the first half of 2018, the NCEA coached the authorities on the setup of the 'organisational phase' i.e. alignment of the SEA with the planning process and on 'who-does-what'. From September onwards, the NCEA coached the SEA scoping phase followed by the assessment phase. To ensure well-informed decision-making, the focus was especially on stakeholder participation and feeding information at the right time into the planning process of the PDIDS. In May the PDIDS and accompanying SEA were approved, followed by the official Ministerial Permit in June 2019. In an evaluation meeting all stakeholders – centralised and local – indicated to be very satisfied with the (locally owned) process and expect it to be instrumental for more stability in the region.



Focus in the SEA process

Our support typically consists of:

- advising on the organisation of the process including the roles and tasks of the actors involved;
- acting as a sounding board on all outputs/products during the SEA process;
- providing targeted (on-the-job) training for specific tasks such as for example scoping and reviewing.

The NCEA recommends starting with the development and publication of a 'roadmap' and 'starting document' describing the *SEA process*. This sets the standard for the quality in the subsequent phases.

Who can request coaching support and what are the costs?

Interested government authorities, who are one of the main stakeholders in the SEA process, can contact the NCEA. Our costs are covered by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If your country is mentioned as a focus country in the current Dutch foreign policy, our services are free of charge. If not, please contact us for more information.

Experiences

The NCEA has supported SEA processes in over 20 different countries for the following types of plans:

- sector plans: oil and gas, hydropower, mining, infrastructure, development, water/irrigation;
- regional spatial or land use plans: urban, local, provincial, river basins or catchments, coastal/deltas;
- national plans; poverty reduction strategies, free trade agreements.

SEA for water management – Rwanda

By law, catchment plans in Rwanda need to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment. The NCEA received a request from the Rwanda Natural Resources Authority, supported by the Dutch Embassy, to help define the scope for SEAs in four demonstration catchment areas, and strengthen capacity for SEA through learning by doing.

Activities started with a national SEA workshop in October 2015, during which different relevant ministries and other partners were introduced to the concept of SEA and utilisation for catchment planning. After that, an SEA roadmap was developed. Throughout 2016, the NCEA acted as facilitator and coach in steps of the scoping process for the four catchment plans/SEA. After scoping was concluded, the NCEA's coaching work ended while RNRA and Dutch consultants started work on the assessment phase itself.

In 2018 the NCEA was asked again to provide observations on the strengthening of SEA elements and process descriptions in the draft versions of the catchment plans. In 2019 the coaching was concluded by carrying out a joint review of the SEA process and contents, together with the plan owners and environment authority REMA.

About the NCEA, what we do:

- give independent advice on the scope of ESIA/SEA early in the decision-making process;
- conduct independent quality review of ESIA/SEA process and content later in decision-making process.
- coach ESIA/SEA processes;
- screen legal ESIA requirements for subsidised Dutch investments in developing countries;
- give advice and develop capacity to strengthen national ESIA/SEA systems, including institutions, processes and legislation;
- provide an online knowledge centre on ESIA/SEA legislation, practice and guidance.

Contact

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