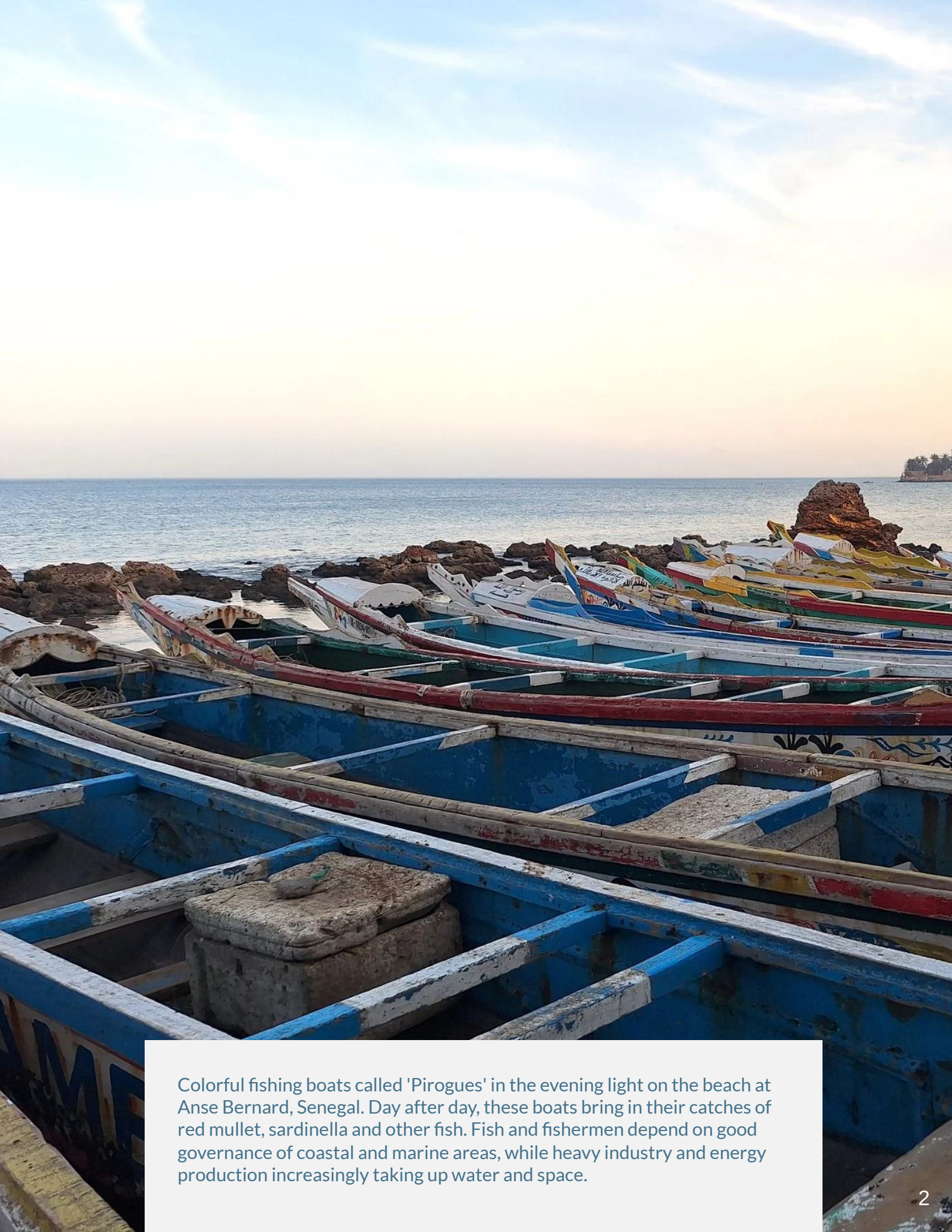




Annual report 2024



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment



Colorful fishing boats called 'Pirogues' in the evening light on the beach at Anse Bernard, Senegal. Day after day, these boats bring in their catches of red mullet, sardinella and other fish. Fish and fishermen depend on good governance of coastal and marine areas, while heavy industry and energy production increasingly taking up water and space.

Preface

The year 2024 was marked by an increasing geopolitical competition for (critical) minerals and energy resources. The NCEA witnessed the dilemmas this creates for resource-rich countries and their governments.

In such complex trade-offs, environmental and social assessment can add much value to decision-making and the strengthening of governance. It touches upon almost every complex dilemma we face today, from energy, food and water security to peace and security, and from inclusive socio-economic development to protecting biodiversity to decision-making with future generations in mind.

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment is legally adopted by almost every country in the world. This legal basis allows the NCEA to make valuable contributions through technical assistance with full respect for governments' ownership of their decision-making.

In 2024, the NCEA was active in 23 countries. We received a significant number of requests for support related to mining, water, and renewable energy

(green hydrogen, offshore wind, nuclear, and hydropower), especially related to Strategic Environmental Assessment. We noticed an increased interest and involvement from thematic ministries, civil society organizations, knowledge institutes and media platforms in environmental and social assessment.

At the same time, the potential of ESIA, and SEA, has not yet been fully exploited. Too little attention is paid to the guidance it provides for inclusive project or plan development processes. Making stakeholders aware of this purpose is an important task of the NCEA.

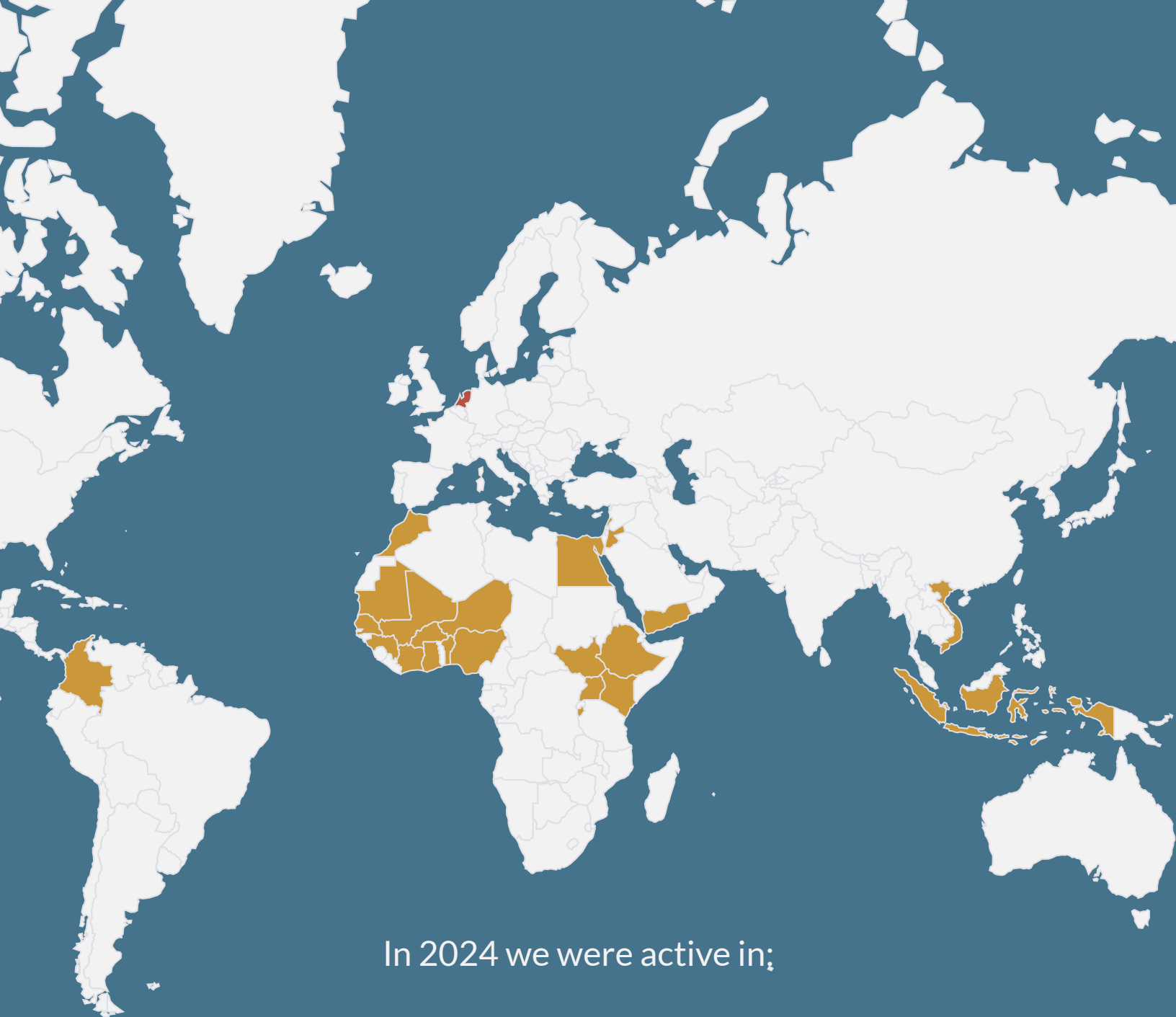
We see that countries continue to struggle with funding for SEA and the capacity needed to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes. To lower this threshold, the NCEA continues to seek cooperation with international financing institutes.



In 2024, the NCEA had discussions with the World Bank and EBRD and started a multi-annual collaboration with the African Development Bank. The NCEA also worked closely together with other partners such as Netherlands embassies, RVO, regional water authorities, and Invest International. With UNESCO and IUCN, we signed an agreement to reinforce ESIA and SEA for World Heritage sites. In collaboration with IGF, we developed a report on SEA and mining, based on country cases. We also continued to work together with WWF.

In the coming years, we hope to strengthen and expand these and other partnerships to thrive balanced and well-informed decision-making in many countries. We thank you for your trust and collaboration!

Dennis van Peppen
Director International



In 2024 we were active in;

Benin
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Colombia
Egypt
Ethiopia

Ghana
Guinea
Indonesia
Ivory Coast
Jordan
Kenya

Lebanon
Mali
Mauritania
Morocco
Niger
Nigeria

Senegal
South Sudan
Uganda
Vietnam
Zambia

Activities in 2024

Number of projects in 2024: 38

15 advisory reports and coaching trajectories

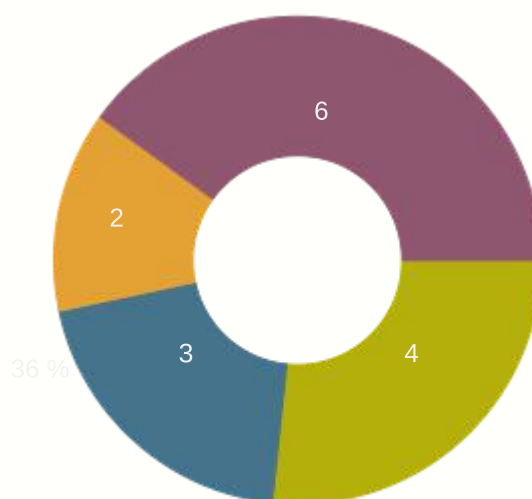
23 capacity development activities

Advisory reports and coaching trajectories per theme (15 in total)



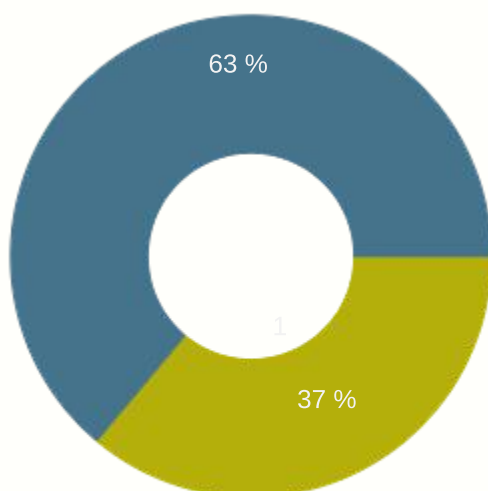
Mining Energy
WASH Landscape

Geographical distribution of independent review and SEA coaching (15)



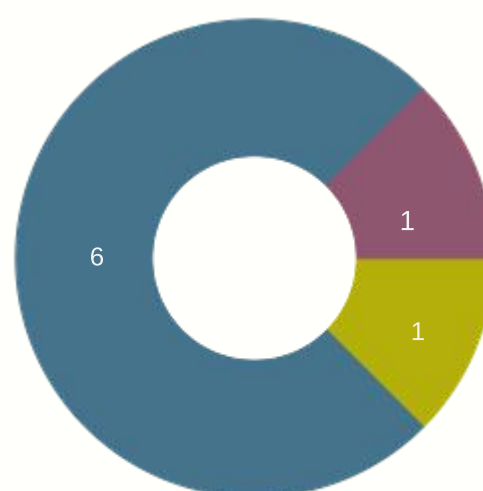
West-Africa East Africa
MENA Other

Focus level (project or strategic level) of activities (28 in total)



Project level (ESIA)
Plan, programme or policy level (SEA)

Type of advisory report (8 in total)



Scoping Review
Process



Story: **Strategic decisions in the global energy challenge**

Developing a national energy strategy demands the utmost in strategic thinking, innovation, and capacity from governments. In a number of countries where the NCEA is active, the demand for energy is rapidly growing for the purposes of domestic consumption as well as for large-scale export. While this presents significant opportunities, it also accelerates the need to weigh critical environmental and social dilemmas.

Over the past year, the NCEA has frequently been called upon to review and advise on projects and plans related to energy production. These include traditional sectors such as hydropower (Nigeria), emerging sectors such as onshore and offshore wind (Colombia), and the rapidly rising sector of green hydrogen production (Mauritania). The NCEA also issued its first international advisory report on nuclear energy: the review of the Strategic Environmental and Social

Assessment (SESA) of the Nuclear Power Programme in Kenya. Cases such as these are inherently sensitive and controversial. It underlines that the NCEA is well-positioned to assist governments in assessing the environmental and socio-economic impacts of planned projects and developed policies.

Mauritania: Green Hydrogen production

Green hydrogen production opens up new development and market opportunities for coastal countries with high solar and wind potential, such as Mauritania. However, it also raises numerous questions and dilemmas. Is green hydrogen a relevant development path for our country? How can highly explosive hydrogen be stored and transported safely? What demands does green hydrogen production place on national electricity grids? Should local fishing communities be concerned about the



environmental impact of brine, the main residual waste product of green hydrogen production with sea water? And how can the development of such a sector transform sustainable local economies while simultaneously contributing to the global energy transition?

In 2023, the Ministry of Environment of Mauritania requested the NCEA to review the Terms of Reference for the ESIA of the AMAN Green Hydrogen Project. This project is planned in the coastal areas surrounding Levrier Bay and the Cap Blanc Peninsula. It includes not only hydrogen production, but also infrastructure for water desalination, ammonia production, and the storage and transport of green hydrogen. Additionally, the project involves the installation of wind turbines and solar panels across an area of 8,500 km², more than three times the size of Luxembourg.

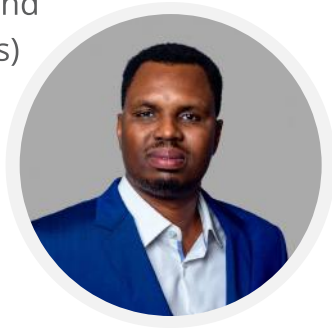
The AMAN Green Hydrogen project involves the installation of wind turbines and solar panels across an area of 8.500 km2.



Taking environmental and social assessment to the next level

Given the project's large scale, its likely interaction with other high-impact activities, and the broader ambitions of the Mauritanian government beyond the AMAN project itself, there is a need to consider on a more strategic level how the government can promote more efficient resource use while ensuring sustainable management of these projects. The Mauritanian Ministries of Energy and Environment recognised this need, and just before the end of 2024, jointly proposed to undertake an SEA for the green hydrogen sector, a decision that directly resulted from the NCEA's advisory report on the ESIA of the AMAN project. This was followed by an official joint request to the NCEA, early 2025, to coach key stakeholders (MEDD, the Ministry of Energy, and possible other actors) in this process.

Landry Fanou, one of NCEA's senior advisors on environmental and social assessment, comments: "With great opportunities come great responsibilities! Carrying out an SEA for the green hydrogen sector gives the opportunity for the Mauritanian government and its population to genuinely assess different alternative



pathways of development of the sector and integrate sustainability into their strategies. I am glad that the government of Mauritania has trusted the NCEA to think along on such an important and sensitive process. If successful, such a process will enable an integrated and sustainable development of the sector, which is owned by the Mauritanian government and accepted by its population."

Kenya: exploring possibilities to start up nuclear power

Kenya is facing a major decision: should the country invest in nuclear energy to meet its growing energy needs? The construction of Kenya's first ever nuclear plant with a capacity of 1,000MW is set to begin in 2027. Supporters see nuclear power as a stable and clean energy source for the future. But nuclear power development is complex and raises many questions. A Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) was prepared to evaluate the potential impacts of a nuclear power plant. Several actors were involved in preparing the SESA, including Kenya's environmental authority NEMA, the Nuclear Power and Energy Agency (NuPEA), and international consultants. The NCEA was requested to review the report.





Meeting between the NCEA working group and the team of the Watamu Marine National Park during the project visit in Kenya for the review of the SESA on the Nuclear Power Programme.

Emmy Dortant, one of NCEA's environmental and social assessment advisors involved, reflects on the process: "If there's one thing we've learned over the past year, it is just how many layers and complexities are involved in a strategic decision about nuclear energy. One of the first challenges we encountered was assembling the working group. Neutral expertise on nuclear energy is scarce and often bound to professional confidentiality. It took us more effort than usual to put together a strong working group, but we managed! During our working group visit to Kenya, we met with government officials, civil society, community members, and private sector actors. It became clear to me how deeply complex and sensitive this issue is. From site selection and safety concerns to public trust and long-term waste management—every aspect demands careful consideration."



"It takes courage when governments decide to be open to honest and transparent review—especially in the case of sensitive decisions like those concerning nuclear energy in Kenya," says NCEA senior advisor Arend Kolhoff, who was also involved in the review of the SESA. "By inviting us, NEMA showed



that they want to check the quality of the SESA project against international standards and good practice."

Despite the considerable amount of good work that has been done in the SESA, the NCEA concluded that too much essential information was missing and that the report therefore did not meet these quality standards. Arend: "The working group concluded that the SESA report needs key revisions on a number of elements such as communication and stakeholder engagement, siting and technological considerations, and the justification of nuclear energy in the broader sense."

Since its publication, the NCEA's review report has already been cited several times by Kenyan media. "Kenya's nuclear power programme is not yet ready to address the significant challenges and risks it presents," states kenyans.co.ke, reporting about the decision of members of Kenya's Parliament Committee on Environment, Forestry, and Mining to first conducting an extensive stakeholders' engagement before starting up construction. It underlines that this decision is not just technical; it is also a deep societal and political debate. Arend: "Of course we continue to follow the developments to see if and how our recommendations are being followed up. But in the end, that is up to the Kenyan authorities."

In 2024, the NCEA published the following advisory reports:



- Guinea - Advice on the Scoping report for mining on Mont Nimba [download](#)
- Guinea - Advice on the Resettlement Action Plan for Mont Simandou iron mine [download](#)
- Guinea - Review ESIA for Mont Nimba buffer zone iron mine project [download](#)
- Mauritania - Advice on the SEA for mining [download](#)
- Mali - Advice on the ESIA for waste rehabilitation and reconstruction [download](#)
- Lebanon - Advice on the SEA for solid waste [download](#)
- Review of the SEA for Kenya's nuclear power programme [download](#)

Reinforcing ESIA and SEA for World Heritage Sites

2024 is the first year of the five-year agreement between the NCEA, UNESCO and IUCN in the field of independent reviews, advice and coaching on E(S)IA and SEA for World Heritage Sites (WHS).

The first activity selected under this collaboration was to coach the SEA process for Kao-Yai Forest Complex WHS in Thailand. The recommendations of the coaching were completely adopted and the government of Thailand has assigned funding to conduct the SEA and the Environmental management plan in the period 2025-2026.

Update from the Sustainability Analysis (SusAn) programme

The [Sustainability Analysis programme](#) published its first analysis report: [Improving governmental capacity to address sustainability dilemmas in global value chains](#). It provides a method to determine where inclusive decision-making about specific value chains needs to be strengthened.

This method can be applied on specific global value chains, such as critical minerals production or green hydrogen production.



"Time and again, our conversations make me realize how important it is to take all views and issues onboard before taking any decision."

Every time a country requests our independent advice, we put together a working group with experienced and relevant experts. Whenever possible, we plan a field visit to gather an in-depth understanding of the broader landscape, the population, and the interaction with a potential project.

The many conversations we have with representatives of the government at all levels, with civil society, knowledge and educational institutions, and not to forget affected communities, make me realize time and again how important it is to take all views and issues onboard before taking any decision. During one of our two visits to Guinea in 2024 that we undertook on invitation of the Guinean Government, we traveled 1100 kilometers to Mont Nimba in the East, an area designated as UNESCO World Heritage site. Because of its mineral resources, Mont Nimba has also attracted the attention of

mining companies: substantial iron ore mining in different locations is under consideration. I spoke to many people, including a group of women who told me how they envision the development of the area for agricultural and forestry purposes and how in their view this could create jobs and better income.

Allowing critical review of the plans for Mont Nimba and other (mining) developments testifies to the courage and vision of the Guinean Government.

Through these and other conversations, it became clear to me how hard it can be for some groups to understand and oversee the consequences of such impactful land use decisions.

It also made us realize that alternative land use options should be considered as well. In view of Guinea's policies, which focus on strict protection of valuable nature reserves, one of our recommendations was to



elaborate a non-project option, an alternative to mining, and to develop a broader vision for the region.

Allowing critical review of the plans for Mont Nimba and other (mining) developments testifies to the courage and vision of the Guinean Government.

It is and remains a privilege to support governments, through environmental and social impact assessment, in making balanced decisions for people, nature, and the economy.

Simone Filippini
Chair International



Story: **Strengthening mining governance in West-Africa through ESIA and SEA**

Over the past years, the NCEA has observed a growing interest in environmental and social assessment within the mining sector. This is partly due to the rapidly growing demand for (rare) minerals for the international energy transition. However, the extraction of more traditional mineral resources such as iron and gold also raises numerous challenges, such as recurring conflicts, resettlement, and pollution of environment and water resources.

In most of our focus countries in West-Africa, ESIA for mining is well established and remains important at project level to ensure that environmental and social aspects are properly taken into account when developing or expanding a mine. Compared to ESIA, conducting SEA for mining is less applied, although some countries are starting to take a closer look at SEA. This is an important development since making a connection between the individual mining

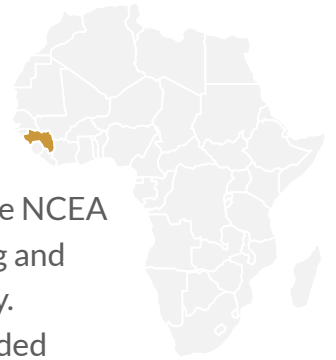
project and the wider landscape, including its inhabitants and its environment is of paramount importance. Not only can SEA provide support to better oversee and manage cumulative impacts, but it can also facilitate improved integration of mining into national and regional development plans, and better alignment with existing policies. International best practices in addition show us that countries can use SEA to develop scenarios and thus be better prepared for mineral “rushes”. That is why in the coming years, together with partners such as UNESCO, and IGF, the NCEA wants to raise more awareness about the potential of Strategic Environmental Assessment for mining.

Alongside the various projects, last year the NCEA started a Sustainability Analysis on mineral resources governance in the global energy transition. The outcome of that analysis has been presented in May 2025. Mining and critical minerals are good examples of sectors where NCEA's SusAn programme and social and

environmental assessment can cross-pollinate each other.

Guinea: Mining in the shadow of Mount Nimba

In Guinea, the work of the NCEA focused mainly on mining and safeguarding biodiversity. In 2024, the NCEA provided two independent reviews on the scoping and terms of reference for ESIA's of iron ore mining projects, located in or near Mount Nimba, a UNESCO World Heritage site shared by Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Liberia. It is home to unique species and critical habitats. The reviews, among other things, emphasized the need to include critical habitat assessments, pay attention to cumulative impacts, and take a closer look at improving stakeholder engagement including local communities among which indigenous communities. The NCEA also marked the importance of proactive involvement of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and IUCN to avoid further endangerment of the site's World Heritage status.





Based on the two reviews, the Guinean Agency for Environmental Assessment (AGEE) and the NCEA facilitated a training to share lessons learned for future ESIA processes for mining projects in areas with high biodiversity values.



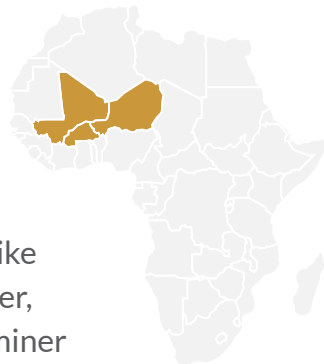
[Watch the video](#)

Guinea also requested the NCEA to support on updating the country's SEA for the mining sector. It is considered important to include biodiversity and land use planning at the strategic level of mining development programmes, plans and policies. The current status of this SEA, however, is at the time of writing not clear yet.

The NCEAs work on these sectoral mining initiatives follows on its long involvement in spatial planning work related to mining in the Bafing Falémé area in the north of the country.

Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger: Environmental assessment for conflict prevention

In resource-rich countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, clashes between artisanal miner groups and foreign mining companies



are a recurring issue. Taking the views and perspectives of artisanal miners and other affected stakeholders into account is therefore key to regulate and secure the country's mining sector. The mining ministries in these countries want to learn more about how environmental assessment can help them achieve this goal. Based on their request, the NCEA is planning to develop a study on ESIA for conflict prevention and apply this on the cases of the mentioned countries. Until recently, the potential of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the mining sector was underdeveloped in many countries. But over the past few years this is beginning to change. In 2023, Burkina Faso already made a start with updating its SEA for the mining sector. The first step was to develop a Terms of Reference which was reviewed by the NCEA in the same year. The review contained important recommendations such

as the need to link SEAs to specific programmes, plans and policies. Burkina Faso took that recommendation by heart. The publication of the actual SEA is planned for 2025 and lays the foundation for a second step in the process: developing an action plan for the rehabilitation of empty mines, that will on its turn be subject to an SEA. Step by step, Burkina Faso is building its long term vision for the mining sector with the support of SEA.

A key focus of the strategic partnership between the NCEA and the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals, and Sustainable Development (IGF) is to help more countries to prepare and implement SEA for mining. To this aim, the NCEA and IGF published the joint report '[Strategic Environmental Assessment for the mining sector: Lessons from country case studies](#)' and presented it on multiple platforms and events last year. Carlos Ortega, Environmental Advisor at IGF and one of the co-writers of the paper:



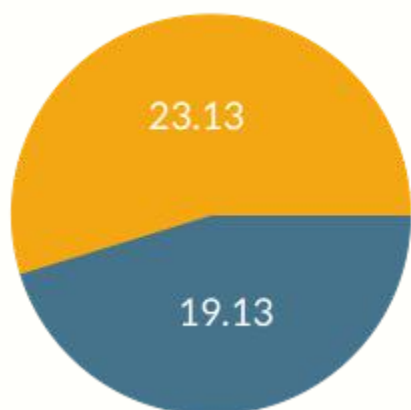
“My personal takeaway from this cooperation is that Strategic Environmental Assessment is a key tool for mining, allowing governments to prepare well ahead of time. For example, SEA identifies what key ecosystems are present before mining projects even arise. It helps decision-makers understand if, where, and how their territories can support mining activities. But also mining companies will have this information to conduct their ESIA at the project level. So, it can surely help them as well.”

Inspired by these insights, Carlos is planning to undertake the development of another paper, one focused on mining and biodiversity and the added value of SEA. Carlos: “The main purpose of this study will be to understand how biodiversity is integrated into the regulatory frameworks of different countries. We hope to collect good practice cases in various countries. Although we are still in the outline stage right now, there is a good chance that one of the NCEA's partner countries in West Africa will be among these cases.”

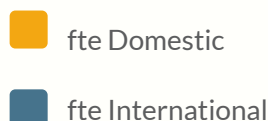
Launch of the paper and panel discussion about SEA for mining at the IAIA24 Conference.



Expertise & capacity



By 31 December 2024, the Netherlands Commission of Environmental Assessment had 54 employees.



Each review requires specific expertise, depending on the project or plan being assessed. Therefore, we compose a tailor-made working group for each review. The members of the working group together cover the relevant fields of expertise for the project in question. For this purpose, the NCEA has access to a large pool of international experts. Experts selected have no stake in the project concerned.



External experts who participated in NCEA's working groups in 2024

- Mr. M.A. Ladouceur B.Sc., M.Sc.
- Mme. P. Piot
- Mr. P.O. Odhengo
- Mr. Dr. Ir. L. Boerboom
- Mme. A.V. de Vreede MSc
- Mr. LTR Trebaol PhD
- Mr. A.E. Ercin PhD
- Mr. A. Wya PhD
- Mme. S.F. Brownlie
- Mr. Tibaldeschi
- Mr. ir. H. Zigterman
- Mr. dr. H. Pflästerer PhD
- Mr. D. Bitondo PhD
- Mr. A.C. Lowe
- Mme. K.B. Broche Derradji MSc
- Mme. Dr. ir. A.I. Van Heek
- Mr. R.J.M. Konings
- Mr. prof. dr. P. Hoekstra
- Mme. Ms D.G.F. Gonçalves Ferreira Dias
- Mme. B.M. Brainch
- Mme. dr. H.R. van Vlaenderen PhD
- Mr. ing. C. Coenrady
- Mr. ir. A. J. F. Brinkmann
- S. Ghanimeh PhD
- Mr. M.R. Nader PhD
- Mr. Madzous
- Mr. J.M. Miles Scott-Brown
- Mr. O. Barry
- Mme. ir. S.R. Kloff
- Mr. Dr. G.O. Omondi Opinde

Communication & knowledge

28,000

website
visitors

1,120

e-newsletter
subscribers

1,390

followers
on LinkedIn

23

presentations

6

publications

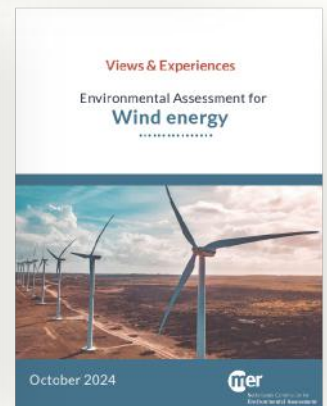
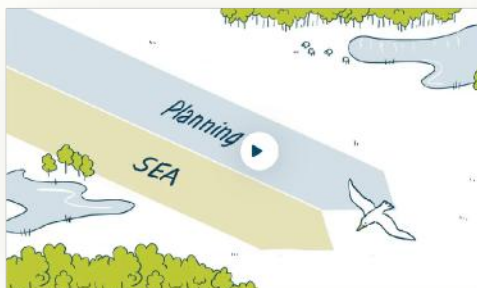
1

animation video

Communication updates

To mark its 30th anniversary, the NCEA developed a special magazine with the title 'Strategic Environmental Assessment; Past, Practice, Prospects', offering a rich collection of SEA cases, views and experiences, drawn from or linked to the work of the NCEA over the past three decades.

After the successful release of the six ESIA animation videos, the NCEA launched the first animation video about SEA. From September 2024, NCEA's CEL-team started developing a new website (official launch January 2025). The main drivers for the website renewal were improving the accessibility of information according to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, expanding our communication in French, improved presentation of audiovisual communication, and putting more focus on sectoral activities, and collaboration with partners.



Balanced and well-informed decisions, allowing nature, people, and economies to thrive, now and in the future.

Since 1993, the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment advises and supports governments, organisations, and institutes around the world to consider potential future impact on nature and people in major decision-making. And to allow access to information and meaningful participation of stakeholders in each phase of the process.

[Learn more about environmental assessment](#)

www.eia.nl



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment