



Netherlands Commission for  
**Environmental Assessment**

August 2026

# Environmental and Social Assessment a practical approach to plan for **Climate Adaptation**



## Climate robust plans and projects



*Related to these  
and other SDGs*

Climate change is forcing countries and their inhabitants to adapt their societies in many ways. It requires planning and subsequent complex decision-making by governments. Environmental and social impact assessment - especially when applied at strategic level - helps governments with a collaborative process to plan for climate adaptation and support decision-making. A first step is to assess vulnerability to climate change by using climate change projections and scenarios. Based on this information, a vision on future development (economic, social, spatial, and sectoral) can be developed. This then results in a decision-making framework to guide the investments of the government and the private sector.

### About environmental and social assessment

Environmental and social assessment is legally adopted in most countries in the world. It is applied at two levels of decision-making: at strategic level and at project level.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):

Decision-making on plans, policies or programmes, such as a coastal development or river basin plan.

### Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA):

Decision-making on projects, such as a new reservoir dam or coastal defense works.

SEA & ESIA **assess the compatibility** of a proposed project / plan with (inter)national policies and agreements.

**Authority:** "What international agreements and standards need to be considered? What does this mean for transboundary policy and action?"

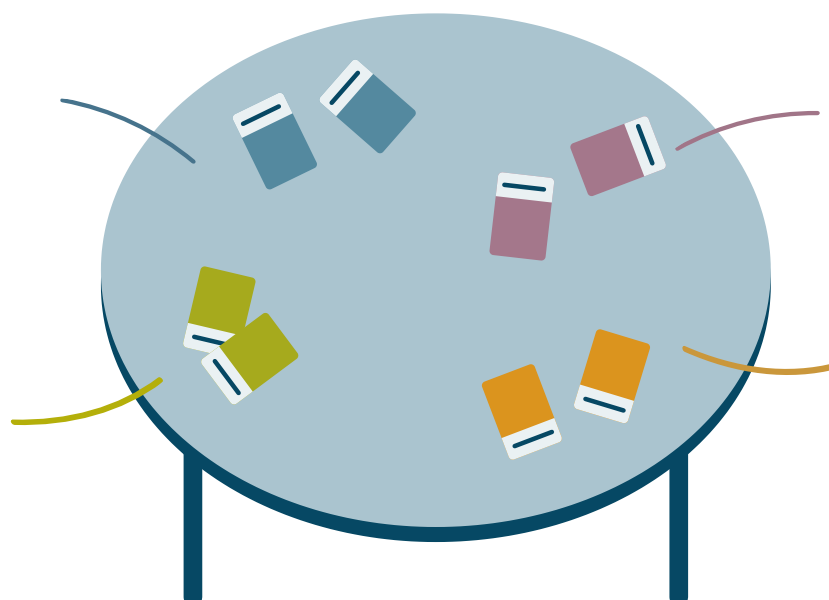
**Investor:** "Is this a climate resilient investment?"

SEA & ESIA contribute to **accountability and transparency** which enhances credibility and trust, and prevents conflict.

SEA & ESIA provide a roadmap for **informing and involving stakeholders**, including specific groups.

**Community member:**  
"How to ensure my community has access to water in the coming decades?"

**Developer:** "How can our proposal serve multiple objectives at the same time?"



SEA & ESIA offer **alternative development pathways**. All alternatives are compared and judged by their effect on environment and society.

# Expertise Independency Transparency

Since 1993, the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment advises and supports governments and institutions around the world to assess environmental and social impacts for well-informed, integrated, and supported decision-making. Activities include independent advice, process support, capacity strengthening, and system analysis. The NCEA follows national legislation and apply international good practice.



## Examples of recent activities of the NCEA related to climate adaptation

**Benin**- Process support of an SEA process and facilitation of a multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss and adopt a vision for Lac Nokoué.

**Jordan** - Series of workshop and seminars about applying ESIA for climate-proof decision-making (in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment).

**The Netherlands** - ESIA review of 'Zuidplaspolder' housing development in a below sea-level location.

**Mali**- Independent advice on the scoping document of an integrated sustainable development plan / SEA for the Sankarini river basin based on inclusive stakeholder involvement.

More information and activities



## What does the NCEA look for in an environmental and social assessment process?

### Quality of information

Does the process deliver all information needed for decision making, such as impacts, alternative options, mitigation measures and impact management measures?

### Dialogue

Does the process engage affected stakeholders in a timely, transparent and inclusive way?

### Influence

Does the process address relevant issues and provide usable information for decision makers? Is this done at the right time? Can decision makers be held accountable for their use of the assessment outcomes?

All NCEA advisory reports are available at [www.eia.nl](http://www.eia.nl)



## Contact us

### Arend Kolhoff

Senior Advisor Environmental and Social Assessment  
Contact person for Climate Adaptation

✉ [akolhoff@eia.nl](mailto:akolhoff@eia.nl)

Netherlands Commission  
for Environmental Assessment

[www.eia.nl](http://www.eia.nl)

