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Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment

Rural scene near Muramvya, Burundi. Integrated and future-oriented spatial planning is of great importance in a densely populated country such as Burundi, where opportunities for industry, transport, and food production must be accommodated within the same limited space, whilst major challenges such as internal displacement and multiple natural risks related to climate variability must be addressed.

Picture: ©Landry Fanou/NCEA, 2025



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Preface

2025 was a year of major changes in the global political and development cooperation landscape. This manifested itself in international relations becoming more unpredictable, significant ODA funding cuts, major budget cuts in low- and middle-income countries, and growing tensions strongly linked to the competition for critical minerals and energy supplies. This dynamic created new opportunities as well as major challenges for the NCEA's partner countries.



The governments of these countries face the huge task in balancing emerging opportunities for economic development with good care for natural resources, nature, and people. Promising sectors for economic development, such as mining, energy production, or agriculture, often entail significant environmental and social impacts, such as pollution, biodiversity loss, water resources depletion, and resettlement.

Proactive and integrated planning

This demands good collaboration between various involved ministries, long-term and holistic planning, and a clear overview of data and perspectives that serve as input for decision-making. Impact assessment, specifically impact assessment at strategic level, is well-suited to facilitate this joint fact-finding.

The NCEA observes that in its partner countries governments are increasingly using impact assessment in a proactive way: instead of being an ex-post check on the sustainability and inclusiveness of planned projects and plans, impact assessment tools such as ESIA and SEA are used to prompt and facilitate strategic and integrated decision-making.

In 2025, in a number of countries, the NCEA was involved in the initial phase of plan-making, where it is requested to facilitate collaborative governance for sustainable development. See for example our report about our work in Mozambique, Guinea, Burundi, Morocco, and Indonesia.

Acting in this 'space in between' creates good opportunities to go beyond the mitigation of negative environmental impacts. This kind of process support is highly relevant according to our

partners, however not always easy to capture in quantitative progress indicators.

Strong partnerships

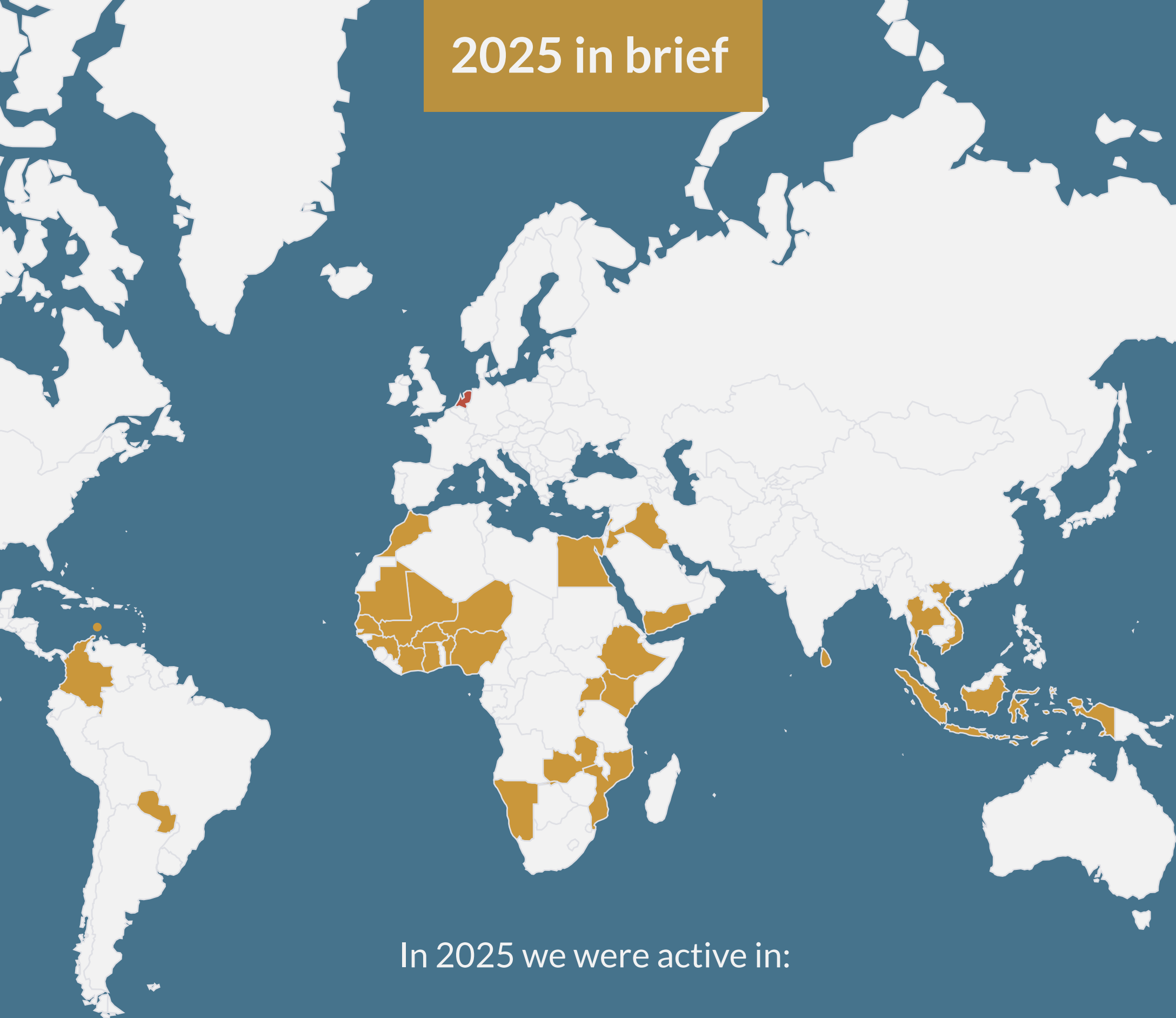
The NCEA would not be able to do its work without strong partnerships with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, governments in low- and middle-income countries, IFI's and other organisations. Through these partnerships, the NCEA was able to support countries with context and sector-specific knowledge and guidance, including in the fields of mining, hydropower and coastal protection.

Once again, thank you for your trust and our good cooperation in 2025!

Dennis van Peppen

Director International

2025 in brief



In 2025 we were active in:

Aruba
Benin
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Colombia
Côte d'Ivoire
Egypt
Ethiopia

Ghana
Guinea
Indonesia
Iraq
Jordan
Kenya
Lebanon
Mali

Mauritania
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Paraguay
Senegal

Sri Lanka
Thailand
Uganda
Vietnam
Yemen
Zambia

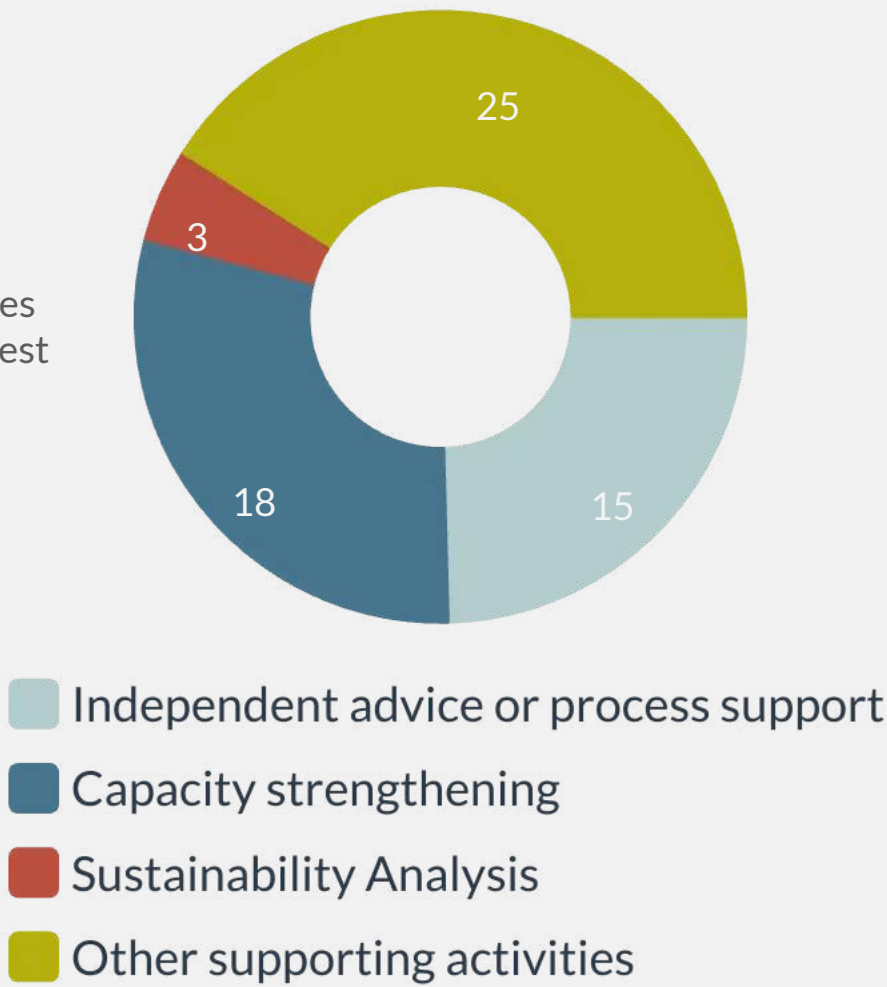
Regions: Central Africa Region, TRIDOM

Activities

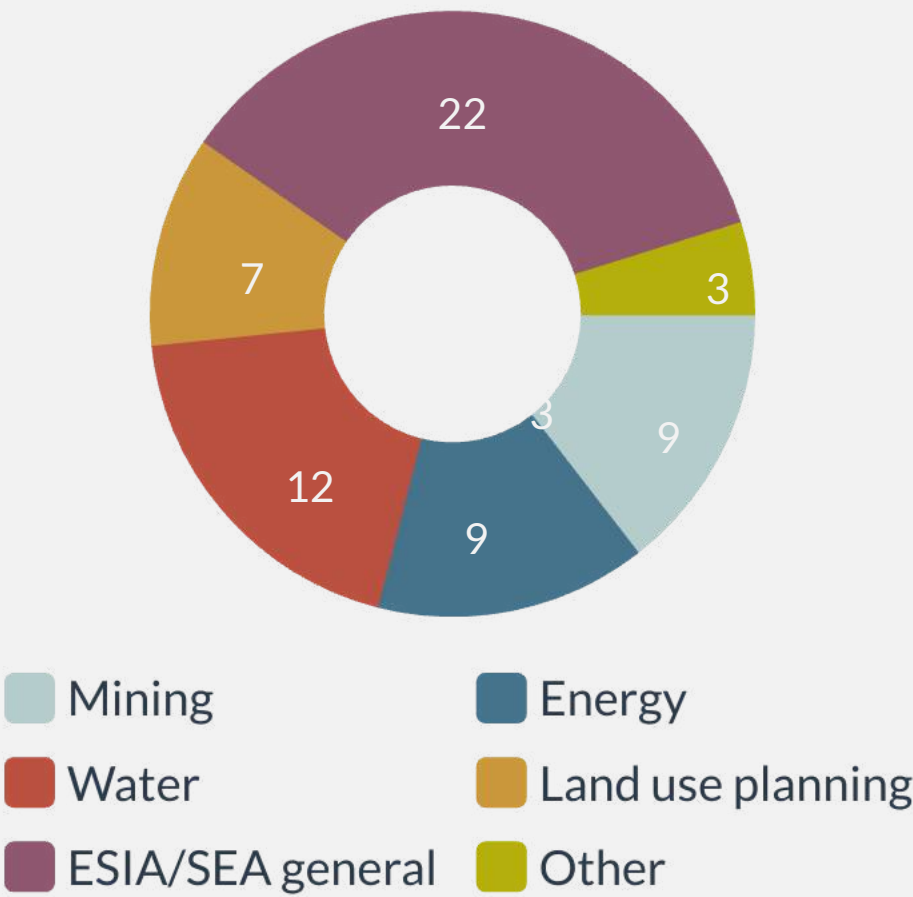
Total number of support trajectories and activities in 2025

61

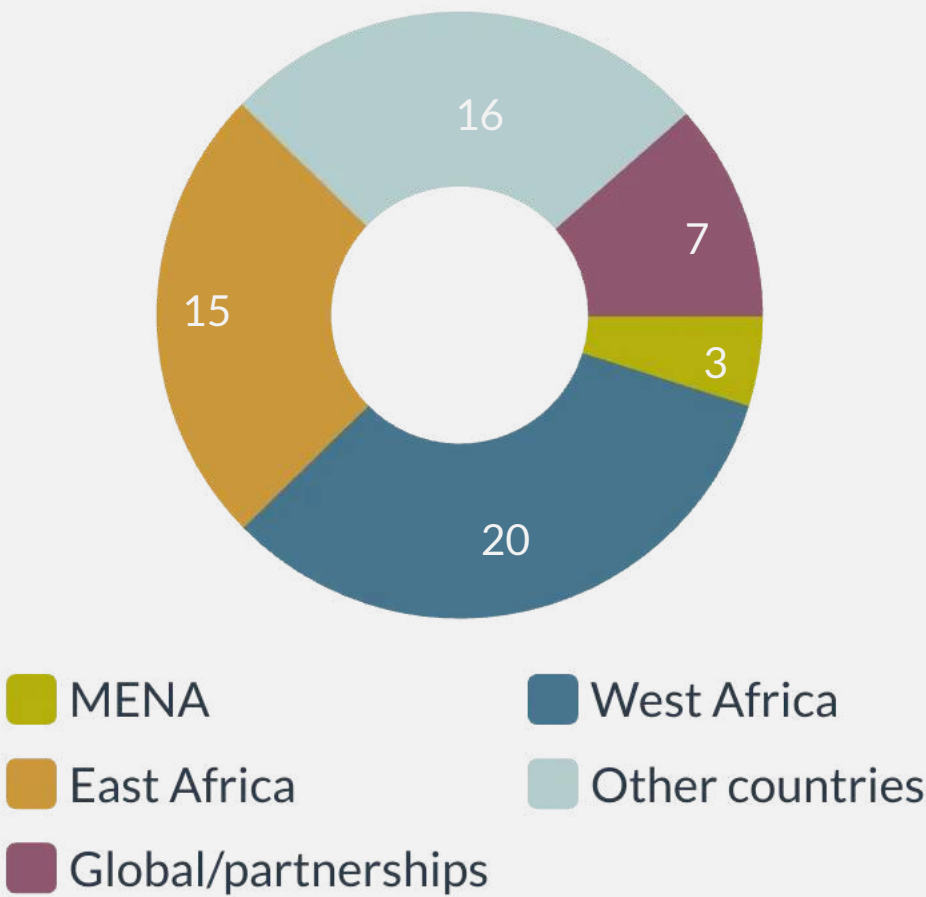
Activities and trajectories per type of support request



Activities and trajectories per sector/theme



Activities and trajectories per region



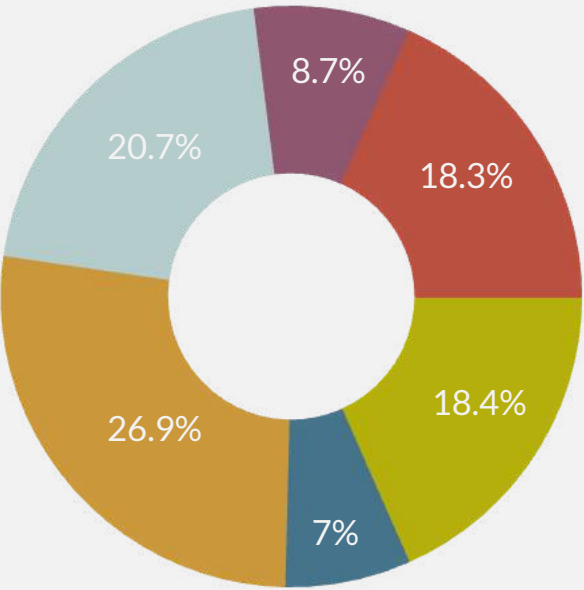
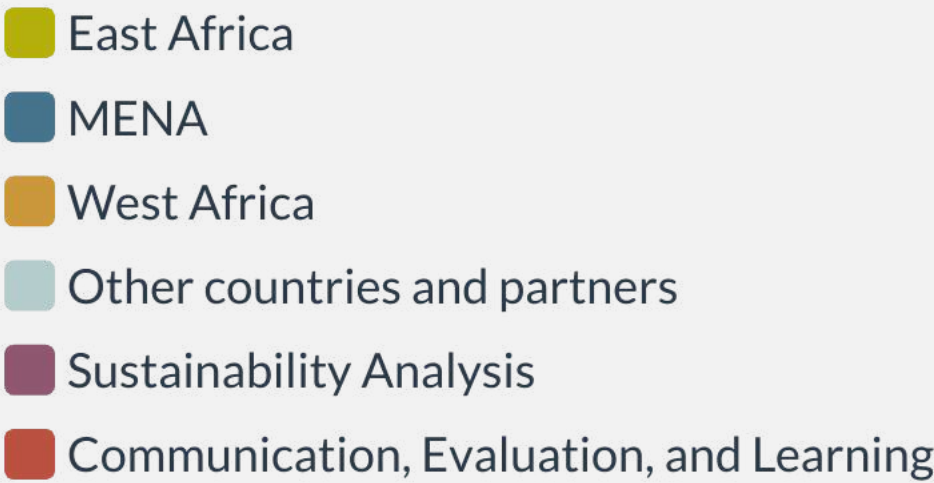
Expenditures

Expenditures on programmes and activities

€ 3,963,845,-

Programme	Expenditures
East Africa	€ 728,862
MENA	€ 277,378
West Africa	€ 1,065,485
Other countries and partners	€ 818,810
Sustainability Analysis programme	€ 346,905
Communication, Evaluation, and Learning	€ 726,406
TOTAL	€ 3,963,845

Expenditures per programme
(%) of total expenditures





Looking back on 2025

Lessons learnt

2025 was an instructive year for the NCEA. Our contacts and activities offered many opportunities to reflect as a team on our approach and effectiveness.

As NCEA staff all have specific country focusses and travel schemes, the team sometimes misses the opportunity to deeply reflect and exchange on its experiences. Over the past year, the NCEA team has consciously set aside time for learning

through a 'Mastercircle' approach, where individual advisors presented ongoing cases and invited colleagues to reflect and share critical insights. The approach set a number of things in motion. For instance, it inspired the team to develop a new format

for our partner conference in Senegal, placing greater emphasis on peer learning and exchange. The master circle also resulted in an internal learning and performance agenda, which the team intends to roll out over the coming years.

Besides ongoing country activities and the mentioned partner conference, the Sustainability Analysis (SusAn) programme provided useful pointers for further learning. The [second analysis](#), about critical minerals governance in the global energy transition, triggered a [peer learning exchange](#) between various organisations active in making the mining sector more sustainable, and the NCEA. The subject of the learning is how these organisations, individually as well as jointly, can improve their process support for resource-rich low-and-middle-income countries in making their mining sectors more responsible. A few key lessons learnt:

1. The value of 'strategic patience'

'Strategic patience' has been a key notion over the past year. In 2025, the NCEA became again more active in Mozambique and Indonesia. It strengthened and increased its cooperation in Burundi, Colombia, Mauritania, and Guinea. In many cases, these collaborations were built on

earlier efforts that in some instances date back as far as eight to ten years. It teaches us once again that having staying power and patience, combined with a continued search for good entry points and momentum, is a key formula for our work. The same applies for a context like Uganda, where the NCEA has a longstanding collaboration with the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA). After years of providing support in the building of the national impact assessment system, NEMA is increasingly taking the lead, and the NCEA is taking a step back. This gradual shift in roles is another example of strategic patience – something the NCEA can practice solely because of the unique partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The need for strategic patience also has implications for how the NCEA's work can be monitored and evaluated. It is difficult to capture steady but protracted and non-linear progress through quantitative and annual-based indicators. Therefore, we are looking for simple but effective ways to document key processes, outcomes, and learnings on top of these indicators. And to capture more qualitative changes such as improved coordination and shifting ways of strategic thinking.



2. Trust building and the role of embassies

Experience over the reporting period has also underlined the importance of building trust and relationships as the very foundation of NCEA's work. Progress is often incremental and non-linear, and success depends on understanding political, cultural, and organisational dynamics. The identification of the right national counterparts and taking time to understand where and how the NCEA's ambitions align are essential in maintaining momentum and navigating complex governance dilemmas. Early involvement and practical application and integration of ESIA and SEA in the planning process are key to support well-informed and inclusive decision-making. Experiences in 2025 underscored that Netherlands Embassies' proactive diplomacy can give the NCEA a flying start in developing strategic relationships in new countries or new ministries. The NCEA therefore wishes to continue strengthening its ties with Embassies, keeping them informed about the nature and results of its work.

3. Language makes a difference

The more the team works with line ministries, the more SEA and ESIA terminology can become an obstacle. ESIA and SEA can easily be perceived by the outside world as 'tools of the Ministry of Environment' or as the hoop that must be jumped through in order to secure funding or a license. Perceived ownership of ESIA and SEA by the ministry of Environment may even get in the way of the ownership of other authorities who are better positioned to influence the sectoral development.

In that case, it is sometimes better to refer to 'making planning processes more evidence-based and more inclusive' to make it fit into the context of these authorities.

Also words such as 'water management', 'climate change', or 'vulnerable groups' often carry connotations that remain implicit (also see the editorial on page 12). Unnoticed, however, these can create obstacles for constructive and inclusive dialogue. Language and wording counts in sensitive policy and planning processes. The NCEA aims to be even more aware of this. This is done by taking more time for context analysis and through intensified internal collaboration: together we know more and we can draw each other's attention to potential blind spots.

4. Peer exchange and on-the-job learning

The NCEA aims for nothing less than system change for sustainable development in our partner countries. System change is a big word, and it has many dependencies. The year 2025 reminded us once again that individual champions in countries or in organisations are the cornerstones of that ambition. These champions are formal or informal leaders. What makes them stand out is their ambition level, combined with a touch of 'bureaucratic nonconformity' and courage to maneuver. Individuals who know how to navigate their national or regional context and how to leverage tools like ESIA and SEA to open doors and involve others in the decision-making process. The NCEA doesn't need to provide them with additional knowledge or training, as they already have plenty of that.

This means, on the one hand, that workshops and conferences require well-defined expectations, good preparation, and stronger guidance to ensure meaningful participation and to avoid superficial engagement. On the other hand: the real challenge lies in engaging the right people at the right moment in time. And in helping to create a platform that allows these people to engage in dialogue with one another. With other words: facilitate peer exchange and on-the-job learning.

The West Africa regional conference in Senegal as well as the outcomes of the Sustainability Analysis programme underlined this need for peer learning and exchange. Both internally and in consultation with various other organisations, the NCEA is exploring how to respond even more effectively to this need. Meanwhile, the organisation stays on the lookout to identify these champions in the various contexts.

At the same time, the NCEA is looking for opportunities to help partners organise structured learning-by-doing on how to make their decisions more evidence-based and more inclusive, with environmental impact assessment as vehicle. There are limits however: in low-income countries the need always exists to find synergies with donors who pay expenses for our partners. Often the limited number of qualified personnel and their poor payment urge to set priorities. The NCEA is still forced to fall back to situations where our partners can only let donor-paid consultants do the real work, where we can only help partners to be better clients of these consultants. Part of peer learning and on-the-job-coaching is to consider this reality and reflect upon it.



One of the participants of the partner conference in Saly noting down key learnings and recommendations from the case exchanges. Peer-to-peer exchange provided participants with practical insights for their current projects, while it gave the NCEA an understanding of how partners operate, what knowledge is and is not available, and what support partners need.



Editorial: **Water is everywhere**

How does environmental impact assessment help to adopt a holistic approach?

In 2025, the NCEA was involved in a wide spectrum of water-related planning processes: from hydropower to river delta planning and coastal protection.

But also, in other sectors such as mining or renewable energy, water issues are of key concern: be it the impact of activities on water availability or about water pollution, water is often the key natural resource, a common denominator in all projects or spatial planning processes.

Water challenges are inherently cross-sectoral and transboundary, taking many forms – agriculture, energy, irrigation, mining - linking food production, energy systems, mining, urban development, river basin management, flood risk reduction, and coastal protection. Decisions in one sector or country can significantly affect water availability and quality elsewhere, while fragmented mandates and power asymmetries complicate cooperation. Therefore, naming and framing of a project makes a crucial difference in resource allocation as well as accountability structure.

In this context, Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) provides a framework for coordinated planning across sectors and administrative boundaries, balancing allocation trade-offs and combining structural and nature-based approaches to enhance resilience. Governance challenges remain central: sectoral silos, centralised decision-making, and limited participation of communities and vulnerable groups can lead to contested outcomes and unsustainable resource use. SEA can support IWRM for addressing these challenges by integrating more strategic upstream cross-sectoral perspectives, assessing strategic and alternative options to determine overarching objectives across sectors, allowing for long-term and cumulative analysis and improved transboundary coordination. ESIA also contributes at the project level by identifying water-related risks, fostering stakeholder engagement, and improving mitigation, design and monitoring measures. When embedded within broader water governance and planning processes, these instruments can help align development objectives with social equity, environmental sustainability and climate resilience.



[Resources page](#)
Find more resources
about IWRM and SEA
on this web page.

Morocco - Addressing water scarcity

Morocco experiences severe water scarcity, drought, and climate-related extreme weather events, which put pressure on agriculture and rural livelihoods. In December, the NCEA moderated a session of a workshop on ESIA in the water sector, as part of the Dutch-Moroccan Water Days, jointly organised by the Netherlands Embassy, the

Ministry of Equipment and Water and the National Office of Electricity and Drinking Water (ONEE). The session aimed at opening constructive dialogues on strengthening SEA and ESIA practices in the water sector, particularly regarding desalination projects. The discussions confirmed that SEA could help to clarify which institutions and stakeholders need to be involved in decisions with cross-sectoral implications. By providing a structured, evidence-based framework, it enables ministries to recognise shared risks and trade-offs and facilitates more collaborative decision-making. The need to strengthen inter-institutional collaboration was also highlighted at an [ESY-map workshop](#) held in Rabat in March, organised by the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of Morocco, the Netherlands Embassy, and the NCEA.

SEA can also potentially help to reframe complex policy discussions by grounding dialogue in transparent analysis and stakeholder engagement, shifting the focus from institutional positions towards longer-term public interest outcomes and integrated solutions.

Burkina Faso - Supporting transboundary river basin management

The Mouhoun Province in Burkina Faso faces multiple challenges on water and the broader environment. In 2025, the NCEA supported the Water Agency of Mouhoun (AEM) in Burkina Faso in developing an SEA for the IWRM plan for the Samendéni-Sourou sub-basins. The SEA is of complementary value to the IWRM plan in various ways: through the SEA, various developmental and intervention alternatives (scenarios) are considered, based on the environmental and social impacts of each alternative. SEA also adds issues beyond water, such as land and deforestation into consideration. In this particular case, the SEA also notably added wider stakeholder participation (both in Burkina as well as with Mali).



Participants of the ESY-map workshop in Rabat, Morocco, in March 2025. The ESY-map is a diagnostic tool for assessing the quality of a national Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) system. It was developed by the NCEA in collaboration with the Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment.



[Watch the video](#)
Participants looking back on the ESY-map workshop in Rabat

The IWRM plan follows the guide that was developed within the framework of the Blue Deal, with the NCEA's support. Earlier in the year, the Blue Deal and the NCEA conducted a workshop with 13 participants including Burkinabè water boards and the Burkinabè ESIA agency ANEVE to discuss the development of IWRM plans. Subsequently, the NCEA conducted an SEA capacity development training for the Water Agency of Mouhoun. The NCEA's process support for the draft SEA report included observations relating to stakeholders not only in Burkina Faso, but also in a transboundary context, as water management in Burkina Faso has a major impact on water availability in the Malian part of the Sourou basin.

The NCEA facilitated the incorporation of the SEA for the integrated development plan for Mali's part of the Sourou basin, [which had been previously supported by the NCEA](#), into the SEA for the IWRM plan in Burkina Faso.

This has led to the initiative of the User organisations coordination of the Volta Basin Authority to organise a transboundary conference call for concerted action planning for the sustainable development and use of natural resources including water resources. The conference is planned for 2026 and will be convening a wide range of stakeholders from both countries, including sub-national, national and regional actors, user organisations, and NGOs.



Editorial: **Beyond compliance**

Advancing collaborative approaches through SEA and ESIA

Fragmentation in inter-ministerial and multilevel governance coordination remains a persistent constraint to achieving development objectives in many countries. Overlapping mandates, diverging interests, misaligned objectives and sector-driven planning processes often result in policy incoherence, delayed decision-making and sub-optimal development outcomes.

While SEA and ESIA are traditionally applied as regulatory tools to assess compliance with standards, their potential to serve beyond compliance - as platforms for equal-footing dialogue, alignment and joint problem-solving - remains underutilised. By broadening the understanding of impact assessment processes as convening mechanisms for collaborative governance, they can help bridge institutional silos, support more integrated policy responses and enable countries to pursue development pathways that are both effective and locally owned.

Experiences from our partner countries have demonstrated that the first crucial steps toward inclusive and sustainable decision-making are often taken well before SEA or ESIA formally come into play. This early, informal phase is frequently shaped by practical and human constraints: limited time, entrenched power-interest dynamics, a compliance culture, a lack of formal incentives, or simply the absence of small amounts of seed funding to initiate cooperation beyond a single ministry. Yet it is precisely in this start-up phase that informal leadership within national and regional administration can make a decisive difference. Civil servants who are willing to reach out across institutional boundaries – often without formal mandates – play a key role in creating the conditions for collaboration and trust.

In this context, independent third parties such as the NCEA can provide significant added value. Thanks to its neutral position, process-oriented approach and long-term, patient engagement, the NCEA is well placed to support informal and formal leaders in navigating early hurdles, bringing ministries, agencies and civil society together, and gradually building shared ownership. This support helps shift mindsets from compliance with regard to SEA toward a more integrated and open-minded contribution to policy processes. Over time, these early investments pay off through strong coordination, greater mutual trust and more coherent policies.

In 2025, the NCEA worked in several countries at the interface between institutions, sectors and stakeholders, bringing parties together, helping them facilitate multi-stakeholder consultation and engage in peer exchange through SEA and ESIA processes. These experiences not only reinforced our partners' appreciation of the NCEA's role, but also sharpened our own understanding of impact assessment as a catalyst for collaborative governance – one that starts long before formal procedures begin and continues throughout the policy cycle.

Senegal – NCEA Partner conference for ten French-speaking African countries

In October, the NCEA organised a peer-to-peer learning meeting in Senegal with its government partners from ten French-Speaking African countries (also see the regional trend section for West Africa). Among them were partners from the ministries of the environment, mining, energy, sustainable development, and River Basin Organizations. The meeting offered opportunities to present sustainability challenges and strategic decision-making trajectories, supported by SEA. Participants were divided into small groups to share their personal challenges and discuss practical recommendations. A wealth of information was exchanged on how the various ministries and agencies in different countries in the region jointly plan, assess and manage high-impact plans and programmes. SEA was described as one of the few instruments supporting collaborative governance in West Africa, playing an important role in promoting inclusive decision making, participatory processes, and holistic approaches to policy development.

Mozambique - Integrating River Basin Management with SEA and territorial planning

In late November, the NCEA contributed to the MozWater workshop organised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Maputo, with and for the national water management authorities, where NCEA presented options for integrating SEA and territorial planning in river basin planning. MozWater is an integrated water management programme financed by the Dutch government, implemented by IUCN, aiming at strengthening multi-level and multisector collaboration to achieve effective river basin water management. The situation in Manica Province is an example of challenges. Artisanal gold mining has contributed to, among other issues, severe mercury pollution and social impacts affecting local communities, urban water security and critical



A delegation of the Vallée du Niger steering committee (CTAP) visiting RVO and the NCEA in the Netherlands (2026).

energy infrastructure – thus underscoring the urgency of coordinated action across sectors. By using SEA as both an analytical instrument and a convening process, the initiative seeks to reduce institutional fragmentation, build coalitions of change agents and enable more coherent territorial and river basin planning. By applying SEA, other stakeholding institutional actors such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, and the Ministry of Energy and Mining will become more involved in the field of water management. A follow-up working session with the NCEA is planned for May 2026 to embed the integrated approach into the national river basin planning process.

Niger - Process Support for the SEA for Vallée du Niger programme (PROVANI)

The NCEA was requested to provide process support of [SEA application for the Vallée du Niger programme](#) until the end of 2027. The programme aims to improve livelihoods in the Niger River Basin by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources in the Dosso, Tillabéri and Niamey regions.

RVO, commissioned by the Netherlands Embassy in Niamey, in collaboration with the NCEA, supports the Government of Niger through the local steering committee le Comité Technique d'Appui au Programme (CTAP). The CTAP is responsible for developing a vision and strategic plan, supported by SEA, for the sustainable management of natural resources in the programme area. By applying SEA, this process fosters interdepartmental cooperation, transparency on the implementation and strong consultative processes. The NCEA works with the CTAP to ensure that these SEA principles are put into practice. The NCEA provided support in various ways, such as advising on the institutional framework for the programme, providing critical reflections on products such as a road map and communication plan, and by strengthening capacity of CTAP members through trainings. It is encouraging to see how the CTAP takes its role as platform for institutional coordination seriously, and how they are actively engaging with stakeholders in the regions to listen to the local stakeholders' points of view.



Mauritania, meeting with women from a traditional pearl making manufacture.

Editorial: **Inclusive impact assessment**

Addressing weaknesses in stakeholder involvement through SEA and ESIA

Stakeholder engagement and participation are core principles of environmental and social assessment. An inherent part of NCEA's work is stimulating that all relevant voices and perspectives are taken on board in the decision-making process.

This is not limited to a certain target group or single focus, such as women or young people, but takes a comprehensive view of the context of the plan or project.

This may include vulnerable age groups (youth or elderly), vulnerable wealth groups (poor or landless), and vulnerable status groups (migrants and indigenous groups). The NCEA also strives to ensure inclusivity of less influential institutions that have high stakes or could make stronger contributions to the design of strategies or plans.

The NCEA highlights two examples of its work in 2025 on stakeholder engagement and participation through its advisory review work in Colombia and Mauritania.

Colombia: Flagging impacts to vulnerable groups in water resilience and climate change adaptation interventions in Cartagena

'Water as Leverage Cartagena (WaL)' is a partnership between the City of Cartagena in Colombia and the Government of the Netherlands. It focuses on the development of infrastructural interventions for water resilience and climate change adaptation in Cartagena. For these interventions, ESIA scoping reports were prepared, which were [reviewed by the NCEA](#). One of NCEA's various observations was about the socio-economic conditions and impacts:

- Community proposals focused on ecotourism projects, but lacked sufficient assessment of local needs and capacities to ensure feasibility and viability, and to identify alternative development or income generating options.
- It remained unclear to what extent resettlement or temporary income loss would occur, and whether the city had the capacity to provide adequate resettlement and livelihood support.
- There was no clear evidence showing how concerns raised during the numerous stakeholder engagement events were addressed or integrated into the ESIA scoping report and the project designs.

Based on these observations, the NCEA recommended to:

- Ensure that proposed community activities are both relevant and feasible, taking into account local capacities and capabilities to support long-term sustainability of the proposed projects.
- Define specific neighbourhoods or city sectors as the areas of influence of the WaL projects, particularly where economic and physical resettlement may occur.

- Complement summaries of stakeholder consultations with detailed minutes, clearly indicating how concerns and feedback have been addressed in project development.

The full ESIA is expected in mid-2026, which will again be independently reviewed by the NCEA. It will then be checked whether and to what extent the above recommendations were followed up.

Mauritania – Bringing to light vulnerable groups and their stakes in the development of a large uranium mine project in Tiris Zemmour

In 2025, the NCEA conducted an independent review of the updated ESIA and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) of a large-scale uranium mine in Tiris Zemmour in Mauritania. During its review, the NCEA observed major shortcomings in addressing social impacts and participation in the design of this project:

- No clear definition of the social influence area of the project was given;
- No primary socio-economic data was collected during the ESIA updating process, which relied solely on outdated secondary data, in spite of recent and publicly available data like census or new local development plan documents;
- Weak stakeholder engagements, and no disaggregation on participation based on for instance age or gender;
- The chapters on social impacts were generic and not fit for local contexts;
- No differentiation was made per gender, while this is considered good practice by for instance the AfDB and IFC;
- Commitments made to guarantee local employment and women's participation were weak.

Consequently, the NCEA concluded that key vulnerable groups potentially affected by the project were not sufficiently consulted, and their stakes not sufficiently addressed by the project.



Traditional pearl makers in Tiris Zemmour, Mauritania.

This included, for instance, small scale artisanal gold miners, herders, nomadic populations and women in general. The NCEA also noted the possible positive impacts from the project and mitigation measures, for instance the measures to reduce gender-based violence and to improve maternal health. Recommendations to strengthen these initiatives were made as well.

While the NCEA made several recommendations to address these issues in its [review report](#) to the national environmental and social assessment department, coming up with these observations was not a given from the start. In fact, the mining site was not accessible to the NCEA due to security challenges due to the location close to the Western Sahara and Northern Mali. Instead, the NCEA was able to organise a site visit for its working group members in Zouerate, the city closest to the mine site, and safe enough for such a visit.

The NCEA review team engaged with artisanal miners as they were likely to be impacted by the project. These miners were not adequately represented in the ESIA process. The NCEA was able to meet them by first establishing trust and making its impartial role noted and understood. Representatives of the artisanal miners agreed to meet and engaged in a long and interesting discussion. During these exchanges, they explained that they systematically record GPS locations of their mining sites and access tracks and were willing to share this information with the NCEA.

Using this exclusive data (absent from the ESIA report under review), the NCEA produced a map of artisanal mining activities. This allowed to clearly visualise overlaps with the proposed uranium mine project footprint.

It also allowed the NCEA to provide actionable recommendations on integrating artisanal miners as a key vulnerable group to engage with during the ESIA process to better assess potential impacts on their livelihoods and identify corresponding safeguard measures.

The same course of action was taken with pastoralists who, the NCEA discovered through this site visit, were vulnerable to the impacts from the development of the mine. Future follow up on this advice will reveal how these recommendations were taken up by the competent authorities and the mine proponent.

While these two highlights from Colombia and Mauritania showcase how the NCEA can share observations and recommendations, the ultimate outcomes for improved stakeholder engagement and interests of vulnerable groups. It depends entirely on the willingness of the requesting competent authorities and proponents to act upon the NCEA's recommendations. The contribution of the NCEA, through its sustained engagement, well-founded argumentation, and efforts to build, is to promote the participation of these vulnerable groups in the decision-making process through specific recommendations while at the same time increasing the awareness and self-confidence of these groups.





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East Africa

Regional activities

The East African region is highly diverse in terms of contexts and opportunities for working in the field of SEA and ESIA in various countries. Amongst this diversity, there are also common themes and patterns that define the NCEA's relations and activities.

The year 2025 was marked by episodes of political unrest across several countries. In Kenya, student led protests reflected societal tensions and Uganda and Mozambique experienced post-election turmoil. Burundi was affected by instability in the Great Lakes Region and conflicts in DRC. Despite these challenges, the overall context in these countries remained sufficiently stable to allow the NCEA to engage.

Kenya and Uganda continued to function as key economic drivers in the region, with significant investments in infrastructure, renewable energy, and industrial development. In both countries, the NCEA sustained its partnerships, with an emphasis on strengthening capacities at decentralised levels.

After a period of limited engagement, Mozambique and Burundi offered opportunities to reconnect and resume activities.

Ethiopia remained a more challenging context, where the post-civil war tensions and limited institutional capacity limited the NCEA's presence.

In terms of sustainability challenges, climate change impacts such as shifting rainfall patterns, droughts and floods were also evident in 2025, as shown by repeated floodings around Lake Victoria and Tanganyika. Climate change, alongside land use pressures and environmental degradation, underline the importance of effective planning. These challenges informed the NCEA's key areas of work including land use planning in Kenya and Burundi, and river basin management in Mozambique.

Pollution from industries, agriculture, and mining continues to pose a major concern, particularly as it affects vital transboundary water resources that support millions of people. This is the reason why NCEA focuses on ESIA follow up phase, because effective implementation of mitigation measures identified in ESIAs can play a critical role in reducing pollution of essential water bodies.

The growing interest in digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence represents a new area of engagement for the NCEA, with efforts underway to build internal expertise, while facilitating professional exchange among countries and partners to share experiences and lessons learned.

In terms of planned regional activities, the NCEA initially intended to organise a regional conference focusing on transboundary issues in the Lake Victoria Basin.

Preparatory work included background studies and exchanges with partners to define the scope and focus of the event. These discussions, however, revealed that a locally organised conference would be too ambitious given time and capacity constraints. It was therefore decided to postpone this approach and instead organise an NCEA-led partners meeting in 2026, building on lessons learned and best practices from the Western Africa regional meeting held in 2025.

Although the planned regional meeting did not take place, the topic of ESIA implementation remained prominent in the OPEC/AfDB ESG conference of 2025. As a follow-up, the NCEA has been invited to organise a dedicated session on ESIA follow up during the 2026 edition of the OPEC/AfDB conference (see chapter on AfDB partnership for more details, p. 76). In addition, the NCEA guided a Master's student through her thesis and internship focusing on stakeholder participation in the ESIA follow up phase which has delivered cases and insights that NCEA can use for developing knowledge materials and future activities.

Another planned activity was the development of a partnership with the media network Water Journalists Africa (WJA). The NCEA aimed to support a fellowship programme to be implemented by WJA, providing technical input on SEA and ESIA. However, WJA was unable to secure the necessary funding for this fellowship programme, and parallel efforts to connect with existing initiatives such as IHE's Water Development Partnership Programme (supporting media organisations and other) did therefore not yet result in concrete collaboration.

Finally, the NCEA also established contact with the organisation Both Ends and provided a crash course on SEA and ESIA. This contributed to strengthening their understanding of these instruments and their potential application in public decision-making processes. Based on these exchanges, the NCEA identified several civil society organisations in the region with interest in capacity building in SEA and ESIA. Initial interactions were initiated in countries such as Uganda and Mozambique, and these engagements will be further developed in 2026.

Key themes

#Disaster risk reduction and ESIA
#Spatial planning and SEA

Key partners

- IOM
- National Platform for the Prevention of Risks and the Management of Catastrophes
- Bureau for Strategic Evaluation and Development
- Netherlands Embassy
- RVO DRRS programme



Burundi



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Following contacts in 2024 with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) in the context of the Dutch Risk Reduction & Surge Support (DRRS) programme implemented by the RVO, the NCEA conducted a reconnaissance visit in January 2025.



Discussions with IOM and the National Platform for the Prevention of Risks and the Management of Catastrophes (PN-PRGC) explored the potential role of ESIA in addressing disaster risk reduction (DRR) challenges.

Beyond integrating DRR in ESIA and vice versa, discussions quickly highlighted the need for more strategic land use planning to guide investments, addressing at the same time disaster risk reduction as well as social and environmental considerations. This is driven by the country's exposure to recurring disasters caused by strong winds, droughts, torrential rains and flooding as well as lake level rise. And also by pressures related to refugees and internally displaced people for whom the country needs to provide shelter and care and, on the longer run, livelihoods. This strongly felt need resulted in further meetings and shaped discussions on key sustainability challenges for development and land use planning in Burundi and on further cooperation activities.

In March 2025, the NCEA organised a workshop for the PN-PRGC on ESIA and DRR, in collaboration with IOM and the environmental agency OBPE. This provided an opportunity to further discuss the role of SEA with a view to DRR, particularly in relation to Burundi's Vision 2040-2060 and its land use planning.

At the suggestion by key stakeholders, the NCEA prepared a memo to the Government of Burundi on the need for strategic land use planning and the potential contribution of SEA in achieving the objectives of Burundi's Vision 2040-2060. The memo was also shared with the Embassy of Burundi to the Netherlands, who visited the NCEA in April 2025. The memo received attention from the Bureau for Strategic Evaluation and Development (BESD) within the Presidency. Subsequent exchanges, including meetings with the

Embassy of Burundi to the Netherlands, led to a formal request for collaboration in. Going forward, the NCEA will support the BESD in the process of strategic land use planning both from a technical SEA perspective as well as for process support for collaborative governance.

Meanwhile, possibilities for more structural collaboration with the OBPE remained limited, as OBPE did not have the means to initiate concrete activities. They are now involved as executing partners in the activities above, which benefits their position in the environmental governance system. Both the OBPE and the BESD were invited to participate in the conference in Saly in Senegal (see p. 46) to discuss SEA challenges with peers, although unfortunately the BESD was not able to participate.



Key themes

#River basin management

Key partners

- IHE Delft
- BRIGHT PROJECT – NL Embassy in Ethiopia



Ethiopia



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In 2025, the NCEA continued its engagement in Ethiopia through targeted capacity strengthening activities.



In January 2025, the NCEA supported a three-day capacity strengthening programme for the Environmental Protection Consultants Association (EPCA), in collaboration with local partners from Hawassa University, the Water and Land Resource Center (WLRC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The programme focused on strengthening ESIA practice, including national legislation, and international standards, analytical skills, and stakeholder engagement. It also introduced digital tools for data collection and highlighted the importance of high quality environmental and social management plans (ESMPs). This request was made within a broader effort to strengthen the ESIA system in the country.

In addition, the NCEA contributed once again to the BRIGHT (Basin Management Support for Resilient, Inclusive Growth and Harmonized Transformation) project through a one-day training session for 25 Ethiopian Master's students from IHE Delft, based in the Netherlands. These students, attending a one-year programme representing the five river basins in Ethiopia, received a full day course on ESIA and SEA in basin management.

The NCEA was also approached by the Center for Environmental Science at Addis Ababa University and had useful exchanges on respective work and expertise. These discussions did not yet lead to additional activities. Nonetheless, the NCEA will remain open to explore potential future collaboration.



Key themes

#Land use planning
#Integrated development planning
#Water and climate adaptation

Key partners

- National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)
- Treasury, Council of Governors, Lands Commission
- RVO – Water as Leverage programme



Kenya



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In 2012, the process of institutional decentralisation started delegating mandate and funds to the 47 counties. Each county prepared a five-year County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), 10-year County Spatial Planning (CSP), as well as town plans and a Climate Action Plan. The alignment of these plans is an important point of attention, where SEA can contribute.



Workshop Water as Leverage, June 2025, Nakuru.

Building on earlier collaboration with a national taskforce consisting of representatives of the Treasury, the Council of Governors, the Lands Commission and the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), the NCEA aimed in 2025 to support the application of SEA to county spatial planning processes. The objective was to identify pilot counties to experiment with SEA for the County Spatial Plans and explore opportunities for this programme. However, progress slowed during the year as priorities shifted among the Kenyan counterparts and challenges related to timing and resource mobilisation.

In parallel, the NCEA supported the Dutch-funded Water as Leverage (WaL) programme in Kenya, which aims for the city of Nakuru to become a climate resilient (sponge) city. The NCEA contributed by providing expertise on environmental and social risks, such as land ownership and land-use issues, and by promoting more integrated decision-making through the involvement of relevant actors.

Key themes

#River basin planning
#Territorial and land use planning
#Mining and energy

Key partners

- MAAP (Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries), various directorates
- IUCN/Netherlands Embassy (MozWater programme)



Mozambique



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The NCEA re-established its cooperation with Mozambique at the request of the government, building on earlier collaboration between 2011 and 2020. A reconnaissance visit in July 2025 enabled discussions with high-level authorities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, in close coordination with the Netherlands Embassy.



The visit resulted in the development and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries (MAAP), aimed at long-term cooperation on SEA, ESIA and related strategic issues. This MoU was signed in the presence of the Netherlands' Ambassador, Elsbeth Akkerman, and DGIS Pascale Grotenhuis during her visit to Mozambique in November 2025. The collaboration focuses on addressing key challenges such as water and soil pollution from mining activities, strengthening land-use planning, digitalising environmental licensing and reinforcing SEA as a legal instrument.

In December 2025, the NCEA participated in a series of high-level meetings and workshops in Mozambique, reinforcing its commitment to support the Mozambican authorities in strengthening environmental governance.

A highlight of the visit was the MozWater workshop organized by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Maputo, where the NCEA presented options for integrating SEA and territorial planning in river basin planning. MozWater is an integrated water management programme funded by the Netherlands' government, implemented by IUCN.

This concept was well received by stakeholders, prompting a follow-up working session planned for May 2026 to embed the approach into national river basin planning processes.

The visit also explored opportunities for SEA-driven development planning in the Beira corridor. In addition, the NCEA engaged with civil society organisations to support training on SEA and ESIA implementation, through for instance ESMP follow-up.

Field visits highlighted urgent challenges, such as mining-related water pollution in Manica province, underscoring the need for coordinated action across sectors.

In addition, the NCEA facilitated an [international exchange](#) between the coastal cities of Beira (Mozambique) and Recife (Brazil), focusing on bridging the gap between ESIA planning and implementation. Twenty-two participants from seven institutions, mostly municipal staff, shared experiences about what it takes to translate ESIA commitments into resilient, community-supported infrastructure.



Key themes

#Mining, renewable energy and hydropower
#Road infrastructure and hydropower

Key partners

- NEMA
- MEMD
- AfDB
- Norwegian Energy for Development Programme



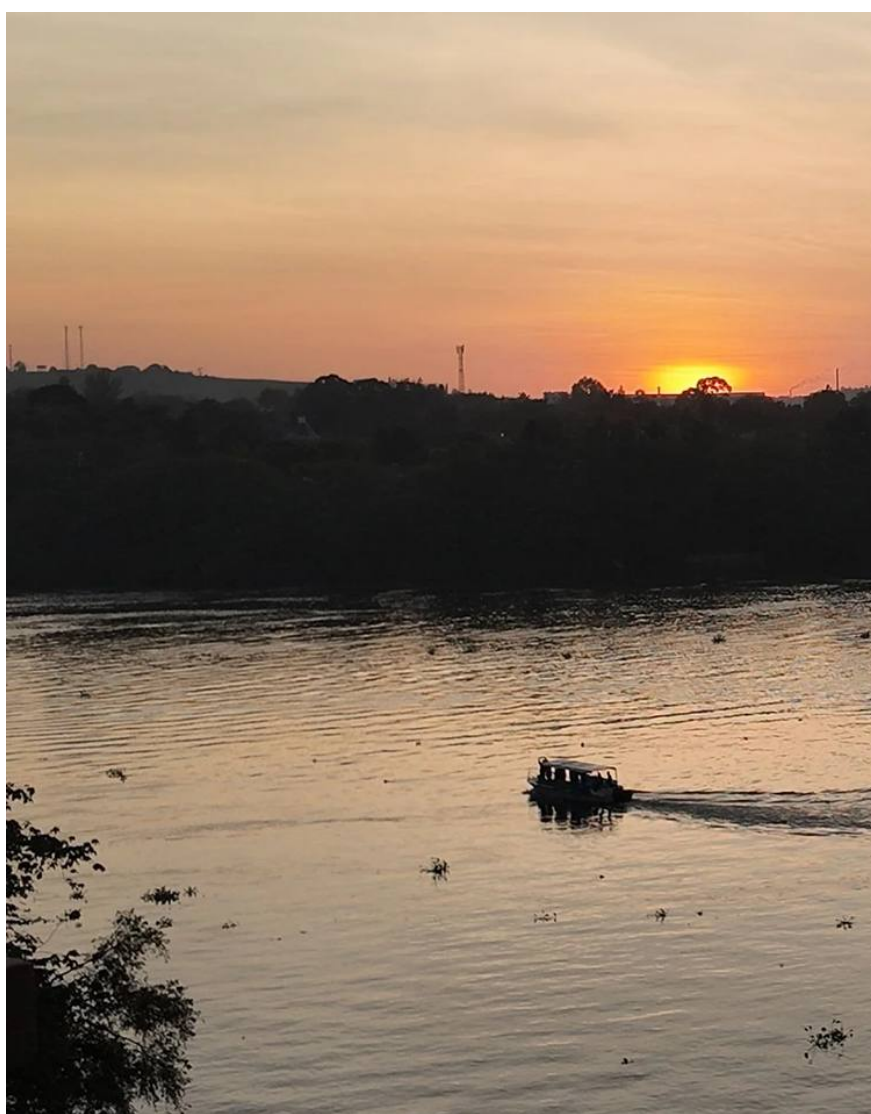
Uganda



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In Uganda, the NCEA continued its long-standing collaboration with the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), focusing on strengthening ESIA and SEA systems and fostering an enabling environment for sustainable decision-making. In 2025, this collaboration intensified through capacity development activities and joint exploration of new areas of cooperation.



Both at the start and at the end of the year, the NCEA delivered training sessions for new and decentralised NEMA staff. These trainings were aimed at strengthening ESIA review skills and enhancing understanding of SEA processes, including NEMA's advisory role in multi-sectoral SEA committees.

A key priority for NEMA is the improvement of ESIA follow-up, particularly monitoring and enforcement. To support this agenda, the NCEA organised workshops with NEMA to strengthen internal coordination between its departments, identifying key moments for improved information exchange.



More information
Watch the video: 25 years of partnership NEMA Uganda-NCEA

NEMA is now implementing these actions and shared an intention to undertake a similar workshop with other ministries and departments to discuss inter-institutional coordination. Our previous activities informed the NCEA's advice on updating ESIA guidelines, with attention to institutional coordination and the potential role of digitalisation in ESIA monitoring. Additionally, the NCEA collaborated with a young expert to explore the use of digital tools and artificial intelligence in ESIA monitoring, providing insights that will inform future activities

While awareness of SEA has increased since the adoption of SEA regulations in 2020, its practical application remains limited, partly due to funding constraints.

Engagement with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) on a hydropower-related SEA is

ongoing, with expectations that this process will take shape in 2026. The Norwegian Energy for Development Programme agreed to provide funding support for the SEA on hydropower planning. Once the scope of the SEA is defined, the NCEA will initiate its process support.

In parallel, discussions were initiated with the African Development Bank (AfDB) on aligning support to local institutions in Uganda. This exchange is still ongoing. One of these areas of alignments is potentially a training-of-trainers programme on ESIA review and monitoring.

Overall, the NCEA's work in Uganda continues to focus on gradual but sustained strengthening of systems and capacities, with particular emphasis on improving implementation and institutional coordination.





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Middle-East & North Africa (MENA)

Regional activities

Across the MENA region, a shared pattern is emerging. Despite persistent political and security instability, some countries are undergoing a gradual transition toward recovery and stabilisation, while other countries remain affected by ongoing volatility. Donor engagement continues in parts of the region, creating selected opportunities to strengthen environmental and social governance systems. In this context, Northern Africa's increasing inclusion within UNECE's neighbourhood engagement may offer additional entry points for regional cooperation.

Beyond bilateral engagement with individual countries, the [Shiraka Programme](#) offers a collective platform for the NCEA's regional involvement, supporting broader societal transition and sustainable development. Complementing this high-level engagement, there is growing interest in better linking strategic planning processes with community-level perspectives. This underscores a key regional challenge: strengthening the connection between policy-level environmental assessment and local, grassroots priorities.

In parallel, the NCEA is increasingly exploring the role and added value of media and journalists within impact assessment systems, both overall and at specific stages of the impact assessment process.

For example, the NCEA organised an online exchange with the senior staff of the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) about the ESIA process steps and leverage points for investigative journalism. The exchange was well received and underlined that more knowledge of ESIA can help investigative journalists to do proper fact checking when working on environmental files. This kind of exchanges helped to get a better understanding of complementarity and options for future collaboration with media and investigative journalism platforms.

Engagement across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen in 2025 revealed a consistent pattern: strong interest in environmental assessment at the policy level contrasted with uneven institutional uptake and limited follow-through. In several countries, SEA is increasingly recognised as a valuable strategic instrument, even where legal frameworks are absent or still evolving, as evidenced by voluntary engagement in Egypt and exploration in Morocco in relation to green hydrogen. It remains a challenge to translate this recognition into concrete application, due to procedural delays, limited mandates, competing sectoral priorities, or reliance on implementing partners that ultimately did not integrate SEA into planning processes.

A second overarching trend is the critical importance of political stability, institutional continuity and effective cross-ministerial coordination. Where these enabling conditions were present, engagement progressed beyond awareness-raising towards longer-term system strengthening, as demonstrated in Morocco's inter-institutional dialogue on SEA and ESIA.

In other countries, frequent leadership changes, reduced responsiveness and broader political or security pressures constrained progress. Across the region, priority sectors such as water management, coastal planning and green hydrogen consistently exposed the limitations of project-level ESIA and reinforced the need for SEA to address cumulative, cross-sectoral and long-term impacts.

Against this backdrop, the NCEA's activities in 2025 focused primarily on building foundations for more robust environmental assessment systems rather than delivering standalone SEAs. In Iraq, sustained preparatory work and a high-level mission to the Kurdistan Region generated political momentum for longer-term cooperation on environmental and social governance, with a clear ambition to gradually align regional and federal approaches.

Complementary exploratory engagement with UNESCO and IUCN on the southern Iraqi Marshes extended this system-oriented approach to ecologically sensitive and internationally significant landscapes.

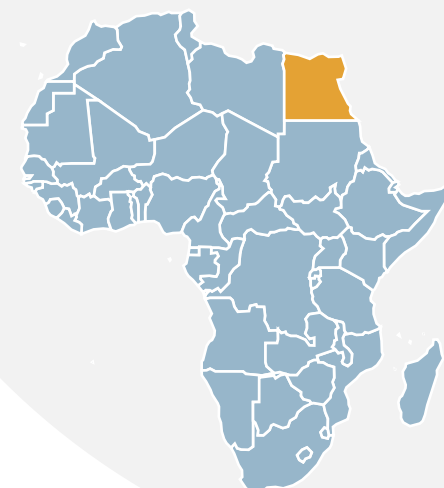
Where conditions were more conducive, our engagement combined diagnostic assessments, capacity development, and sector-specific interventions. Morocco exemplified this approach through ESY-map workshops assessing ESIA system performance, followed by targeted SEA discussions in strategically significant sectors such as green hydrogen and water. These activities intentionally brought together institutions that rarely collaborate, helping to identify coordination gaps while linking SEA to concrete development agendas. In more constrained contexts engagement was necessarily limited. Nevertheless, sustained dialogue with key institutions, embassies and international partners helped preserve entry points for future engagement, positioning SEA and ESIA as relevant governance tools once political and institutional conditions improve.

Key themes

#Coastal management planning
#National water strategy

Key partners

- Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI)



Egypt



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The NCEA's engagement in 2025 remained limited in Egypt. The Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI), NCEA's main partner, has expressed interest in applying SEA on a voluntary basis, as no formal SEA legislation is currently in place.



In this context, two activities had been planned: the review of an SEA for a coastal management plan and support for the preparation of an SEA for the national water strategy.

However, progress on the coastal management plan is delayed – now extending beyond three years - which made it impossible for the NCEA to carry out the planned review. In addition, no request for support was received from the MoWI regarding the SEA for the National Water Strategy. As a result, no NCEA activities took place in 2025.

Key themes

#Water
#Spatial and urban planning

Key partners

- Prime Minister's office
- Ministry of planning
- Board for environmental protection
- UNESCO -IUCN world heritage site
- NL Embassy and Consulate General



Iraq



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In October 2025, the NCEA undertook a five-day reconnaissance visit to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The visit, led by the Chair of the NCEA's international unit, in close cooperation with the Netherlands Embassy in Baghdad and the Dutch Consulate General in Erbil, included meetings with a broad range of governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders.



Discussions focused on the need to strengthen and further develop a coherent environmental and social governance framework in the region. High-level exchanges with the Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Foreign Relations helped to outline initial opportunities for longer term cooperation aimed at strengthening environmental assessment systems. The overarching ambition is to support the Kurdistan Regional Government in developing a resilient and well-governed system for environmental and social management, capable of balancing economic development with environmental protection, climate resilience, and social inclusion.



The visit also served as a preparatory step for potential engagement at federal level. In coordination with the Embassy, a follow-up visit to Baghdad is envisaged, with the aim of contributing over time to a more harmonised approach to environmental assessment practices across regional and national levels.

In parallel, the NCEA initiated exploratory discussions with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and IUCN on potential collaboration for the conservation of the southern Iraqi Marshes. This engagement supports the protection of globally significant ecosystems and complements the NCEA’s broader long-term ambitions to contribute to supporting environmental governance in ecologically sensitive and fragile contexts.



Key partners

- GIZ
- Netherlands Embassy
- RVO - Shiraka programme



Jordan



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The NCEA's activities in Jordan came to a standstill in 2025. This was primarily due to a shift in national priorities and conditions.



During the year, the NCEA maintained light engagement through interactions with partners such as GIZ, the Netherlands Embassy and programmes including Shiraka and private sector development (PSD) coaching trajectories, exploring potential entry points for collaboration. Since the timing for travel to Jordan was not the most opportune in 2025, a country visit to explore and re-establish contacts will be planned on a later moment.

Key partners

- Minister of Environment



Lebanon



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In Lebanon, the NCEA maintained limited engagement in 2025. Building on earlier contacts, the NCEA established communication with the newly appointed Minister of Environment, who expressed interest in the NCEA's support for the development of criteria and a ministerial decision on the accreditation of private consultancies for impact assessment.



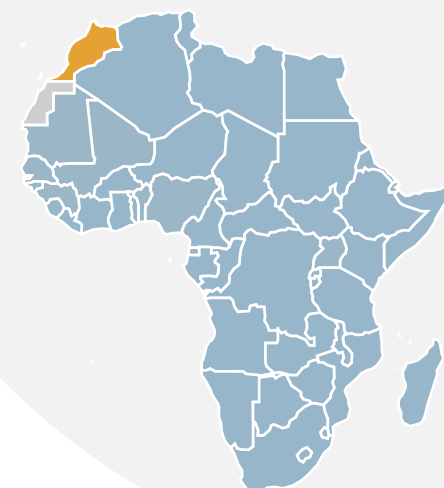
Initial discussions took place during the reporting period, but these did not progress further due to shifting priorities linked to the prevailing political and security situation. As a result, no concrete activities were implemented in 2025.

Nevertheless, the exchange allowed the NCEA to maintain its position and visibility with key stakeholders, providing a basis for engagement when conditions for collaboration improve.

Key themes

#ESIA system
#SEA and green hydrogen
#Water

- Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development
- Ministry of Water
- Netherlands embassy



Morocco



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After a year of preparation with the Netherlands Embassy in Morocco and the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development (MTEDD), the NCEA held its first activity in the country in 2025. This engagement formally began with an **ESY-map workshop** organised in early 2025, in cooperation with the Netherlands Embassy in Morocco and the MTEDD.



The workshop aimed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the national ESIA system and brought together a diverse group of stakeholders who do not often interact. Participants identified several priority areas for improvement, including ESIA follow-up, the integration of social aspects, financing mechanisms and inter-institutional coordination. The results of the ESY-mapping are published on the [NCEA website](#).

Building on this initial focus on project-level ESIA, a second workshop in mid-2025 addressed the application of SEA at the strategic level. The objective was to introduce the added value of SEA, stimulate dialogue, and explore potential next steps in the contexts of Morocco's rapidly developing green hydrogen sector. As the country is investing significantly in this sector and has developed a national strategy and a roadmap, there is increasing recognition that environmental and social impacts extend beyond individual projects and require a more strategic approach.

The workshop also provided an opportunity to test the application of the emerging SEA directives to a specific sector. It was followed by a working session with the energy transition department (DTE) and the sustainable development department (DDD) of the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development (MTEDD) and with the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy S. A., (MASEN) to discuss next steps. A key next step would be to identify forthcoming decisions related to the development of green hydrogen production that could benefit from the application of SEA. At the same time, the potential involvement of the NCEA will need to be carefully considered, particularly in light of sensitivities related to projects located in or linked to contested territories in the south.

In addition to the energy sector, the NCEA contributed to activities in the water sector. At the invitation of the Netherlands Embassy, the NCEA co-organised one day at the Dutch-Moroccan water days, to explore sustainability issues and the potential role of ESIA and SEA in addressing issues such as desalinisation (ESIA) and water scarcity (SEA). The Embassy invited the Ministry of Equipment and Water and the NCEA invited MTEDD; both presented their approaches and their dialogues led to concrete action proposals. The full report of this day can be found (in French) on the [NCEA website](#).

Finally, two representatives of the MTEDD participated in the NCEA regional workshop on environmental assessment and inter-institutional collaboration held in Saly, Senegal, contributing peer exchange and regional learning.



Key themes

Key partners

- FAO
- Ministry of Water and Environment

Yemen



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The NCEA planned to continue its engagement in the Wadi Hajer pilot programme, supported by the Netherlands and implemented by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).



Since 2022, the NCEA has been involved in this programme with the aim of integrating SEA into the broader river basin planning approach and had previously provided SEA training to staff of the Ministry of Water and Environment. However, in 2025 FAO, as the implementing agency, decided not to include SEA in the development of the strategic plan for Wadi Hajer. As a result, the planned engagement did not materialise, and no NCEA activities were carried out in 2025.



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Expenditures regional activities

2025	€ 403.022
Cumulative	€ 750.074

West Africa

Regional activities

The West African region is experiencing significant economic growth, spurred by population growth, and given national strategies for the development of its sectors. In several of the countries where the NCEA intervenes, the mining and energy sectors are in full development in response to the rising global demand for critical minerals, alongside traditional mining operations for the energy transition (Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania). In countries such as Guinea and Mauritania, the NCEA also observes a growing national focus on increasing local value added by expanding domestic processing capacity in the mining sector.

In several countries where the NCEA is active, population growth, urbanisation, and increasing population density present environmental, social and security challenges. In response, the NCEA sees growing interests among its partners in developing public policies and initiatives for more sustainable land-use planning and mobility, particularly in countries like Senegal, Benin, and Niger.

At the same time, the ODA space in West Africa is rapidly shrinking and is increasingly tied to stringent preconditions. Meanwhile, civic space is narrowing across the region, which is increasingly marked by geopolitical tensions coastal and Sahel countries.

In addition, extreme violence and terrorism continue to undermine security in large parts of the region.

One of the NCEA major achievements in 2025 was the successful organisation of the West Africa regional conference with partner countries, which facilitated regional learning, peer-to-peer exchange, and planning of (regional) activities for the NCEA. This regional conference was held in Saly, Senegal, from 27th to 29th October 2025. The objective was to facilitate deep learning among government actors on how to make SEA more effective in informing sustainable policy development. The conference served also as an effective platform for the NCEA to engage with its partners, both bilaterally and across countries. Valuable insights and lessons were learned from this experience. The participants expressed strong interest in continuing peer-to-peer learning and on-the-job-coaching, particularly for cross-sectoral and cross-country exchange on strategic planning, SEA, and collaborative governance for sustainable development.



[Read the report](#)
Saly conference -
observations and
lessons learnt

Through the evaluation of the NCEA's cooperation with partners countries and this peer- to-peer learning conference, the NCEA identified the following key areas for future cooperation:

- facilitating cooperation between different (sectoral) authorities (reinforcing collaborative governance);
- supporting in reaching out to funding opportunities;
- continuing to strengthen SEA (and ESIA) systems with a particular focus on monitoring/follow-up and inspection once ESIA is completed.

The NCEA is now taking this feedback into consideration and used it as input for programme adaptation where possible.

At the country level, the NCEA has made some important progress. It received and offered independent advice for a large-scale uranium mine in Mauritania and a bauxite refinery plant in Guinea. Also, it started supporting an urban planning trajectory in Benin and initiated its collaboration with Agence Nationale des Affaires Maritimes (ANAM) on maritime navigation and security in Senegal. The NCEA also continues its process support to the integrated Hydropower Masterplan and SESA in Nigeria. The progress reflects well the trend in the mining, energy, spatial planning, and mobility sectors. The NCEA has also started its technical cooperation in Ivory Coast and made important contributions to the development of SEA and ESIA in Mauritania. Finally, as a testament to its long-standing involvement in the mining sector, the NCEA has been invited to facilitate the West African Mining Week (SAMAOW 2025), an annual mining conference in Burkina Faso.

The NCEA continues to face challenges in establishing inroad with regional organisations and regional river-based organisations, despite the potential support that the NCEA could provide to these organisations. While the intention of collaborating with the NCEA of these organisations is there, it is difficult to jointly organise activities. An important reason is lack of capacity from our partner side.

Against expectation, the NCEA did not get the opportunity to carry out an advisory report on a regional ESIA or SEA, such as the Praia-Dakar connection for ECOWAS, or a coastal project in a West Africa Coastal Areas (WACA) country. NCEA's work in the context of WAEMU's multi-annual capacity development plan PRCEE (Plan de Renforcement des Capacités en Evaluation Environnementale) did not pick up as expected. Initiating cooperation toward strengthening the resilience of targeted communities in coastal areas did not materialise through the Resilience Investment Project (ResIP), established under the WACA.

Key factors that have limited progress in this region relate to the lack of formal requests from these regional organisations, the cancellation of regional workshops that would have been the platform for interventions, and the fact that the NCEA only provides in-kind technical assistance.

Through the West Africa regional conference in Saly, the NCEA was able to reconnect with most of these regional bodies and river-basin organisations. This may enable a restart of cooperation in 2026. Engagement with Togo did not materialise, as the expected request for independent advice was not received, and the authorities' expectations focused on training activities that could not be accommodated in a non-focus context.

Key themes

#Water resources management and spatial planning
#Urban transport and spatial planning

Key partners

- Invest International
- ABE



Benin



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The NCEA's programme in Benin went through a transition in 2025. The preceding years, the NCEA supported the SEA for the Lac Nokoué programme, but after its completion the focus has been on an SEA for urban transport.



After this plan was completed, the NCEA was requested to support Benin's development agency, ADELAC, in updating the governance structure for the programme. Unfortunately, despite follow-up efforts and a budget made available by Invest International, the initiative was not followed-through. This was mainly because the composition of the steering committee lacked influence and effectiveness. In mid-2025, the NCEA received a request for a new process support trajectory from the Benin environmental assessment agency, ABE. ABE aims to develop an SEA for the development of Sustainable Urban Transport Plan in order to find new solutions to the increasing pressure on urban mobility. This SEA is not donor-driven but initiated by the Beninese authorities. As it is only the second SEA to be conducted in Benin, the ABE requested NCEA support in its development. In November, the ABE and the NCEA organised an inception meeting with key stakeholders on the terms of reference. During this meeting, participants discussed principles regarding the governance of the programme and the NCEA provided technical input on the ToR. Work on this SEA will be the main focus of the NCEA's efforts in Benin in 2026.

Key themes

#Water
#Mining
#Environmental and Social Impact
Assessment System

Key partners

- Mouhoun water agency and other water agencies in Burkina Faso
- Blue Deal programme
- Ministry of mining
- Netherlands Embassy
- ONG AGED
- ANEVE



Burkina Faso



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In early 2025, the NCEA had a meeting with the Blue Deal programme and water agencies in Burkina Faso to discuss the IWRM plan for the Sourou-Samendeni watershed, a subbasin of the Volta River. A key result in relation to impact assessment was the decision to carry out an SEA in parallel with the development of the IWRM plan. This was a major step forward compared to the initial idea of doing an SEA after completion of the IWRM plan.



Two months after the meeting, the NCEA organised a workshop for the water agency of the Mouhoun (AEM) – the agency responsible for the Samedeni-Sourou which is an effluent and affluent to the Mouhoun stretch of the Volta River - to strengthen their capacities for carrying out such an SEA. The AEM used its own resources to finance the consultant who carried out the SEA, the Blue Deal funded the SEA workshop.

The NCEA organised the workshop together with a Malian water expert who, several years before, had been part of the team that developed the SEA for the Integrated Development Plan of the Malian part of the Sourou.

The workshop was followed by a process support trajectory including not only the Malian water expert but also a Burkinabè sociologist to strengthen the social aspects of the SEA. The support and the training helped to strengthen both the transboundary aspects of the SEA and ensure a more inclusive participation of stakeholders.

The NCEA facilitated a meeting with the Netherlands Embassy where the water agency presented the draft IWRM plan and its SEA. The Netherlands Embassy expressed interest to fund transboundary projects that would be developed in relation to the plan.

In mid-2025, the Ministry of Mining, Energy and Quarries invited the NCEA to participate in the Semaine des Activités Minières en Afrique de l'Ouest (SAMAQ) and to moderate a panel on the role of actors in closure and rehabilitation of mines. The panel underlined the need for gender, transparency, inclusion, and collaboration when developing plans for closure and rehabilitation.

Conflict is a recurrent issue in the mining sector. How can ESIA help to prevent and manage such violent conflict? The NCEA contracted an expert to carry out a study on

the role of mining ESIAs in preventing and managing conflict in the mining sector. Together with the Ministry of Mining and the Environmental Protection Agency ANEVE, it was decided to focus the study on the Houndé mine in the west of the country.

The NCEA discussed the study plan in more detail with ANEVE who supported the study by providing access to documents and introducing the expert to stakeholders in Burkina Faso.

In late 2025, the NCEA finalised the MoU with ANEVE. The objective of the MoU is to strengthen the environmental assessment system in Burkina Faso and to build the capacity of its stakeholders to better integrate environmental and social considerations into the implementation of development policies, plans, programmes, and projects.

Both the AEM and the Ministry of Mining, Energy and Quarries were invited, together with ANEVE, to participate in the West Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal to discuss SEA challenges with peers.



Key themes

#Land use planning
#Environmental and social governance

Key partners

- World Bank
- ANDE
- DG Planning
- Netherlands Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire



Côte d'Ivoire



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In 2024, the NCEA reviewed the African Development Bank (AfDB) environmental and social safeguard country system assessment for Côte d'Ivoire. This review showed that Côte d'Ivoire has a relatively stronger environmental and social assessment system in comparison to other West African francophone countries.



The review highlighted several strengths as well as some weaknesses in the country system, which the AfDB, in cooperation with the World Bank, are addressing. Most importantly, this assessment showed that there were significant opportunities for cooperation between the NCEA and the National Environmental Protection Agency ANDE.

Efforts were therefore undertaken in 2025 on the NCEA's side to get involved in the World Bank overall capacity building programme to strengthen ANDE's capacity in selected areas, including SEA, ESIA review, and resettlement action plan. The contact person at ANDE for the World Bank programme was invited to participate in the West Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal, to discuss SEA challenges in the agricultural sector with peers.

The NCEA is, therefore, pleased to report that a tri-partite technical cooperation agreement between ANDE, the World Bank and the NCEA has been discussed, drafted in 2025 and awaits final approval in 2026. This technical cooperation will allow the NCEA to provide technical assistance to ANDE in drafting internal working manuals, guidelines on ESIA and SEA processes, and improve the review capacity of ANDE.

In addition, the NCEA has conducted an exploratory visit to Côte d'Ivoire to identify the opportunity of carrying out a Sustainability Analysis (SusAn) programme on rural

land use planning in the context of the international agricultural value chain.

Initial results of this exploratory phase show a clear opportunity in working on this subject with the Ministry in charge of planning, and will be further pursued in 2026. The Netherlands Embassy in Cote d'Ivoire was of great help in facilitating the NCEA's initial contact with local authorities and international stakeholders. The Embassy has expressed its willingness to remain involved in this trajectory as it relates to its strategic priorities.



Key themes

#Coastal Protection
#Land use planning and Mining

Key partners

- Multiple ministries
- Water Resources Commission (WRC)
- Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA)
- Environmental Protection Auth.
- Minerals Commission



Ghana



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Having been upgraded to an Authority in early 2025, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is now Ghana's principal institution for guiding ministerial departments on environmental legislation and safeguarding environmental and social considerations in decision-making. To support the EPA in fulfilling its expanded cross-sectoral mandate, the NCEA prepared a Framework of Collaboration to map out pathways for organisational change.



Sea-level rise challenging traditional coastal defence structures at Ghana's eastern coast.

The Framework outlines the skill sets needed within the EPA, options for targeted support, including the introduction of the ESY-Map tool to reassess the national environmental system, capacity-building for new staff, a light process support trajectory, independent review and advice on ESIA, SEA, and related legislation. Priorities identified by the EPA include coastal protection and artisanal and small-scale mining.

Progress on the coastal protection has slowed due to challenges with securing international financing and domestic budget limitations. In contrast, the EPA's immediate priority has shifted toward addressing uncontrolled artisanal and illegal alluvial gold-mining activities, which place severe pressure on natural ecosystems, disrupt social structures in river basins, and pose significant public-health risks due to mercury contamination in agricultural products. In this context, the EPA has asked the NCEA to provide SEA support for integrated land-use planning.

Key themes

#Mining
#Biodiversity
#SEA technical capacity

Key partners

- AGEE
- MEDD
- UNESCO



Guinea



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Guinea is called the water tower of West Africa. At the same time, Guinea is rich in natural resources, such as iron and bauxite and major mining activities are taking place in the country. After a busy year 2024, in which the NCEA delivered five independent advices upon request of the national EPA Agence Guinéenne d'Évaluation Environnementale (AGEE), 2025 started off somewhat more quietly.



The NCEA used this as an opportunity to create additional learning moments and initiate an evaluation of the collaboration with its partners in Guinea over the past three years, in order to adjust its efforts where necessary.

For the International Francophone Secretariat for Environmental Evaluation (SIFEE) conference that took place in early 2025, the NCEA invited the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development to attend and share his experiences with and views on SEA. The SG focused on the SEA for the “Plan de Cohabitation” for the Bafing Faléme landscape, of which a key result was the withdrawal of a mining permit in the buffer zone of the Parc National du Moyen Bafing and the subsequent exclusion of the mining concession from the mining cadastre.

As the year 2025 progressed, it became increasingly clear how Guinea intends to follow up on the findings of the various reviews in 2024. At the SIFEE conference, the NCEA and the SG discussed several of these evolving plans.

One of these plans is the establishment of a network of protected areas throughout the country. Guinea has a wide range of protected areas with different statuses. To better manage and safeguard these areas, Guinea is bringing together a network of protected areas. This network will also include the Bafing Falémé landscape. The development of the plan, with an SEA integrated, is expected to start in 2026 and will be supported by the World Bank. This network will also include the zone of the Mount Nimba World Heritage Site for which a management plan and SEA had been demanded, again, in 2024 by UNESCO/IUCN following the NCEA's reviews of the ToRs for the ESIA's for two mining projects. Other plans for 2025 discussed during the SIFEE conference included general capacity strengthening on SEA and support for updating the SEA for the mining sector. These plans did not yet result in concrete activities in 2025 but will be elaborated in 2026.

Guinea also participated in the West Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal in October 2025, to discuss SEA challenges with peers. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development was invited, together with the Director General of the National Office for the Protection of Natural Resources (OGPNRF) and the Technical Director ESIA/SEA of the AGEE.

Mr. Karim Samoura, Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Guinea, speaking at the West Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal.

The occasion was seized to follow-up on earlier activities and discussions, while also addressing major developments in Guinea, the role of SEA and the ministry's and agency's support needs from the NCEA. The Director General of the OGPNNRF expressed interest in the NCEA's support for supervising the consultant who will carry out the SEA for the network of protected areas. Such support would then be based on lessons learned during the SEA for the Bafing Falémé landscape management plan.

In late 2024, the Programme Simandou 2040 was launched by the Guinean government to facilitate the reinvestment of mining revenues in priority sectors. The programme thus serves as the country's framework for economic and social development for the next 15 years. The integration of sustainability considerations is based on the use of environmental assessments of sectoral programmes and integrated projects. The Secretary General indicated that he would appreciate support from the NCEA for this programme. Other project opportunities for which AGEE expressed interest in the NCEA support, discussed in Saly, included the ESIA's for the iron ore mining project in the Mont Nimba enclave and for aluminium refinery projects. In late 2025, AGEE requested the reviews of two ESIA reports.



The first ESIA report concerned the envisaged iron ore mine in the Mont Nimba enclave UNESCO World Heritage site. This is one of the two mining projects for which the NCEA provided an independent advice on the ToR for the ESIA in 2024. The project was discussed at the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in Paris 6-16 July 2025. The committee called for revision of the ToR and the scoping report to incorporate the project in its entirety, including all phases of the life cycle, to comprehensively assess specific and cumulative impacts and not to grant any new mining exploration or exploitation permits around the property without carrying out an SEA of these projects.

These points reflect the advice that the NCEA provided earlier and that were shared with UNESCO and IUCN. The NCEA finished the independent advice for the full ESIA report early 2026.

The second ESIA report related to an alumina refinery. Advice for an aluminium refinery was considered strategic given the new obligation of mining companies to process bauxite locally, and expected impacts of processing. Due to limited NCEA capacities at the time of request, it was decided together with AGEE to prioritise the first request for the mining project on Mont Nimba. AGEE expected to receive an ESIA report for another aluminium refinery shortly, for which the NCEA would be solicited to provide an independent advice. This indeed happened early 2026.

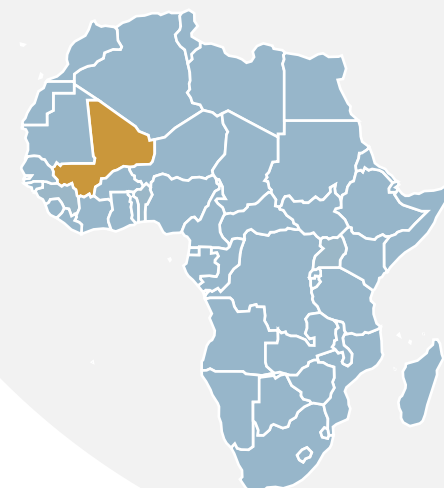


Key themes

#Mining
#Integrated planning, IWRM

Key partners

- MEADD
- Volta basin user organisations coordination



Mali



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Mali is facing major security challenges; the whole country is classified as a red no travel zone by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regularly also including the capital Bamako. Therefore, not one mission to Mali took place in 2025.



This made it difficult to plan any activities that include a visit to the country nor envisage any activity outside Bamako, or even with partners outside Bamako. At distance, the NCEA mainly maintained contacts and acted as a sparring partner.

The NCEA invited one person from the Cabinet of the Ministry of Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development and one person from the Environment and Development Agency to the West Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal. They both presented a case for peer discussions on challenges with planning, execution, and implementation of SEA, including the development plan and SEA for the Sourou watershed.

In Burkina Faso, the water agency of the Mouhoun, a part of the Volta basin, has carried out an SEA linked to the development of a water management scheme for the Sourou-Samendeni watershed, a sub-basin adjacent to the Sourou in Mali. The NCEA was requested to provide process support. A few years ago, similar work was done in the Sourou in Mali, in parallel to an integrated development plan with SEA for which the NCEA provided process support.

The process support of the Mouhoun Water Agency offered the possibility to connect to the earlier work in Mali, in two ways:

- Directly, through the process support of the SEA for the water management plan of the Sourou-Samendeni watershed in Burkina Faso. This was done by sharing the relevant documents and contact persons and by insisting that transboundary consultation at different levels be included in the stakeholder consultation. At the local level, these are the intercollectivité of the Sourou - a formal collaborative body, affected municipalities, and CSO's. At the government level these are the regional bodies and the Ministry of Water responsible for IWRM.
- Indirectly, through sparring with the newly established natural resources user organisation coordination under the Volta Basin Authority and its formal counterpart in Mali at the Ministry of Water.

The intercollectivité of the Sourou, the individual municipalities and the individual producer-user organisations such as fishermen organisations, farmer cooperations, and women- and youth professional organisations have become registered members of this Volta user organisation coordination.

In October, the NCEA met with staff from the Ministry of Mining of Mali at a conference in Burkina Faso. They indicated a need for training on ESIA for their staff, as a large part of submitted ESIA reports require further quality improvements. However, they also indicated that they are currently too occupied to undertake the work on specific ESIA guidelines that was envisaged jointly with the Ministry in charge of Environment and IGF. This matter warrants further exploration during a country visit in 2026.

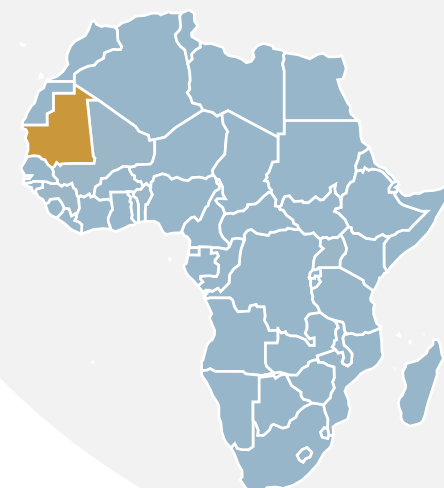


Key themes

#Mining
#Energy

Key partners

- African Development Bank
- Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development - DECE



Mauritania



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The NCEA has been working in Mauritania on and off for several years, but its work in the country has become more intensive in the past two years due to a well-defined request for support. It commenced in 2018 through NCEA's review of the ESIA of the offshore oil and gas project of BP Grand Tortue located in Senegal and Mauritania.



Fast forward, the NCEA has conducted, upon the request of environmental agency DECE, three independent advice trajectories on complex and sensitive investments and plans. This includes a review of: (1) ESIA scoping report and ToR of the AMAN green hydrogen project in 2023; (2) advice for the ToR for an SEA for the national mining sector strategy, including a short introduction to SEA in 2024 and (3) an independent review of an ESIA and ESMP for the Uranium Mine Project in Tiris Zemmour in 2025.

These reviews have helped the competent authority, DECE, to draft its formal feedback to proponents of the various investments. It is unclear at this time whether these reviews have led to significant changes in the investments under review. An outcome of the NCEA's advisory trajectory on SEA for the national mining strategy was the realisation of the DECE of the need to foster inter-institutional collaboration for better integration of environmental and social information.

These review processes have helped the NCEA to co-identify with DECE and the Ministry of Energy key challenges for the national environmental and social assessment system. These challenges serve as the basis for identifying opportunities for technical cooperation in Mauritania. As a result, the NCEA engaged since 2025 in the process support of an SEA for the development of the green hydrogen sector. The NCEA has responded favourably to a request of DECE containing cooperation on technical assistance for improving the governance of the national environmental and social assessment system and developing internal organisational processes and guidelines for the day-to-day operation of the agency.

Throughout the process support trajectory, the NCEA facilitated in 2025 the development of the draft ToR for the SEA of the green hydrogen sector. This has helped to establish an ad-hoc framework of collaboration between the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Environment. Both ministries were invited to participate in the West

Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal to discuss SEA challenges – in general and specifically related to green hydrogen development - with peers.

The NCEA discussed with its partners to give support for key internal strategic processes of the DECE. These in the form of desk-based secretariat advice on the new Environmental and Social Assessment Decree, on the institutional set-up of the DECE, and on the environmental and social inspection system. There are no apparent outcomes of these processes as of now, and they will remain the focus of the NCEA's programme in 2026. In Mauritania, the NCEA was able to jointly develop, together with the Ministry in charge of Environment and the Ministry of Energy, the ToR for the SEA of the green hydrogen sector. Progress has since stalled, as the NCEA awaited feedback from GIZ, the funder of the strategic planning and SEA process, until the end of the year. We expect, however, to receive GIZ feedback in early 2026.



Key themes

#Agriculture
#Land use planning
#Mining
#Water

Key partners

- CTAP and BNEE
- RVO
- Netherlands Embassy in Niger



Niger



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In 2025 the NCEA's work on process support for the SEA for the Vallée du Niger programme (PROVANI), funded by the Netherlands Embassy through RVO, intensified. In the two preceding years, work was relatively limited due to the political situation following the 2023 coup d'état. The programme was restarted and accelerated in order to complete it before its deadline in 2027.

The NCEA played an active role in supporting the Nigerien authorities in the steering committee (*The Comité Technique d'Appui au Programme*, CTAP) and the Nigerien agency for EA (*Bureau Nigerien pour l'Evaluation Environnementale*, BNEE). The NCEA supported the CTAP and RVO to ensure SEA best practice principles are applied in the programme; for example, by advising on the new institutional framework for the programme, by advising on the selection criteria for the consortium to ensure that participation, interdepartmental cooperation and inclusivity are integrated into the work package, by promoting transparency through the development of a communication plan, and by advising on the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework. In all cases, the NCEA provided written and oral advice, facilitated meetings between stakeholders and served as a sounding board for staff at the BNEE. The NCEA's longterm involvement since 2018 helped build trust and assure continuity. Most of the NCEA's cooperation with the BNEE was through the PROVANI programme. However, the NCEA also explored how to broaden its work on SEA in Niger.

Together with BNEE, contacts were established with other line ministries such as the Ministry of Mining and the Ministry of Energy. During the West Africa regional conference in Saly, four participants from Niger joined (three from the Ministry of Environment and one from the Ministry of Mining) to present case studies of SEA in Niger.



Key themes

#Hydropower sector in a river basin context.
#Environmental governance.

Key partners

- Ministry of Water, Ministry of Power and Ministry of Environment.
- World Bank
- Netherlands Embassy in Nigeria



Nigeria



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The NCEA continues its cooperation with Nigeria, particularly with the Federal Ministry of Power based on their request. In 2024, the NCEA contributed to SEA awareness raising and supported the drafting of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for an integrated SEA to inform the development of a national hydropower plan. The ToR was finalised in 2025. This work is part of the Sustainable Power and Irrigation for Nigeria (SPIN) project funded by the World Bank.



In preparation for the integrated SEA Hydropower Master plan, scheduled to begin in 2026, the NCEA developed a training programme for the Nigerian task force that will guide the consultants in implementing the integrated SEA Hydropower. The training programme is being developed jointly with IHE Delft, which will host the task force members in 2026.

In 2024, the NCEA also established contacts with the Environmental Assessment Department of the Federal Ministry of Environment and exchanged some ideas about possible support options.

The NCEA has begun cooperation with the AfDB Nigeria country office and is planning to support the review of their country system analysis, aiming at contributing to strengthening and harmonising the ESIA and SEA systems in Nigeria.

Key themes

#Maritime, ports
#Mining
#Coastal management/NBS

Key partners

- Maritime Authority (ANAM)
- Mining Ministry: DCSOM
- Environment Ministry: Direction de l'Environnement et des Établissements Classés (DIREC) / (DGL)
- Netherlands Embassy in Senegal



Senegal



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In 2025, the NCEA strengthened its cooperation with key Senegalese institutions involved in environmental governance, with a particular focus on maritime planning and mining sector oversight. Building on the relationships initiated in 2024 with the Maritime Authority (ANAM) and the Directorate for Control and Surveillance of Mining Operations (DCSOM), the NCEA formalised collaboration through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with ANAM and continued implementation of the existing MoU with DCSOM.



A bauxite mine in Senegal.

For ANAM, activities focused on preparing the development of a structured SEA process support trajectory to support Senegal's emerging national maritime strategic planning agenda. This initiative gained traction during the West Africa regional conference in Saly, with ultimate implementation starting in the first trimester of 2026. This work is directly linked to major national infrastructure priorities, that can improve safe mobility and interconnection across the country.

While operating strictly in support of ANAM, the NCEA maintained regular coordination with Invest International, which is also active in Senegal and engages with ANAM in parallel, to ensure efficient information sharing and coherence in support across projects. A similar coordination approach is applied with RVO in relation to coastal zone initiatives, fostering complementarity in these interventions.

In the mining sector, the NCEA's collaboration with DCSOM moved to a practical phase. In 2025, the NCEA co-developed a first version of environmental monitoring guidelines for mining operations, including guidance for analysing ESIA/ESMP documentation and conducting site visit. The work aims to address gaps in the consistency and effectiveness of environmental monitoring and built on earlier workshops (2023–2024). The draft guide was iteratively tested and refined during its development through its application in field contexts, ensuring its practical relevance. It will now be further reviewed and formalised by DCSOM and external experts ahead of its planned finalisation in early 2026.

The NCEA also explored opportunities for a sector-wide SEA for mining in discussions with the Direction des Mines.

Representatives of the Direction de la Réglementation Environnementale et du Contrôle (DIREC), the Division de la Gestion du Littoral (DGL), and the Direction des Mines participated in the West Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal. It contributed to improved alignment between those relevant institutions regarding roles, procedures and coordination mechanisms for SEA follow-up and sectoral governance.





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Key themes

#Aquaculture

Key partners

Ministry of Economic Affairs,
Communications and Sustainable
Development



Aruba



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At the request of Commissie mer, which focuses on environmental impact assessments in the Netherlands, the NCEA contributed to the advisory report (in Dutch) for an aquaculture project at Aruba.



The project includes a fish farm, a processing plant, and fish cages at sea. A combined working group was composed with two technical secretaries: one from our Dutch department (Commissie mer) and one from the international department.

Among other things, the Commission recommended providing more information about Aruba’s marine ecosystem which is highly vulnerable. The working group also advised to assess the impact of the fish farm on the coral reef, based on an annual production of 2,000 tonnes of fish, and planning a thorough interim evaluation for this purpose.



More information
Watch the short
explanation video
from the Chair of the
working group



Key themes

#Marine Spatial Planning
#Offshore wind energy, just energy transition
#Water resilience and climate adaptation
#Onshore hydrocarbon development

Key partners

- Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS)
- Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MME)
- National Environmental Licensing Authority (ANLA)
- Netherlands Embassy in Colombia and the RVO



Colombia



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In 2025, the NCEA had an intensive cooperation programme in Colombia, consisting of 4 main activities.



At the request of the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS) the NCEA provided advice on the update of the Generic Terms of Reference (ToR) for ESIA for onshore hydrocarbon exploitation projects. This update was undergoing a joint review with the Colombian National Environmental Licensing Agency (ANLA) after which it would also be discussed with the Hydrocarbons Sector and the Colombian Ministry of Energy and Mining. MADS indicated eight specific topics on which they wished to receive contributions and guidance. The NCEA produced an advisory report with the support of an external expert, which was further discussed in an online meeting with the Colombian counterparts in February 2025.

In March 2025, the NCEA continued its support to 'Water as Leverage Cartagena' (WaL). WaL Cartagena is a partnership between the City of Cartagena and the Government of the Netherlands, implemented through the RVO. The partnership focuses on the development of infrastructural interventions for water resilience- and climate change adaptation in Cartagena.

Following the NCEA's earlier advice on ESIA aspects of the WaL projects under development, RVO, endorsed by the WaL Advisory committee, requested the NCEA to provide advice on the quality of five ESIA scoping reports that had been produced by two multidisciplinary teams. An NCEA site visit with a working group of experts took place in Cartagena and resulted in an advisory report with its findings in English and Spanish.

Building on earlier capacity development activities for MADS in 2024, the NCEA contributed to a workshop on ESIA and SEA for offshore wind in 2024. Key participants were ANLA, MADS and the Ministry of mining and energy (MME). Subsequently, ANLA, MADS and MME expressed interest to join forces in drawing up a Marine Spatial Plan (of which offshore wind is an important part) and aligning this plan with an SEA. On suggestion of the NCEA, capacity development was linked to a pilot application of SEA to the Marine Spatial Plan in a three-day workshop, facilitated by the NCEA, which took place in July 2025 with follow-up activities foreseen for 2026.

In parallel, discussions continued on a tripartite MoU between the NCEA, MADS and ANLA, expected to be finalised and signed in 2026 following legal review. In October 2025, the NCEA participated in two major environmental events in Santa Marta, organised in collaboration with Colombia's Pro Tempore Presidency of REDLASEIA (Latin American Network of Environmental Impact Assessment Systems) and supported by the Inter-American Development Bank. The discussions focused on topics such as transparency and trust in the context of the just energy transition. The NCEA contributed to an international panel on the role of SEA in long-term planning and inclusive development. The events brought together environmental authorities from across Latin America, Colombian regional representatives, students, and civil society organisations. The NCEA visit also included meetings in Bogotá with ANLA, MADS, MME, and the Netherlands Embassy. These conversations helped shape the 2026 cooperation agenda, with a continued focus on marine spatial planning and the just energy transition.

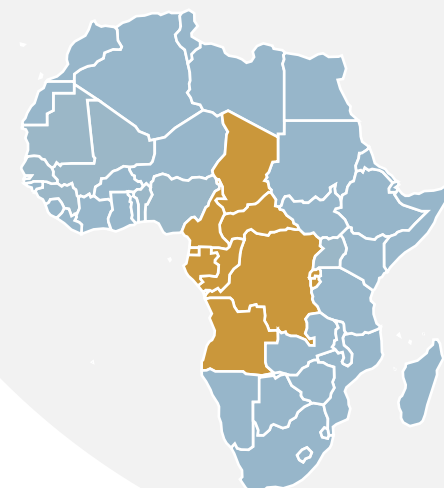


Key themes

#Mining
#Forestry

Key partners

- SEEAC
- Netherlands Embassy in DRC



Central Africa Region



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The NCEA maintained its engagement in 2025 through its cooperation with the regional environmental association SEEAC, within the framework of a multi-annual MoU. The NCEA participated in SEEAC's annual conference, which serves as a key platform for regional professional exchange on environmental assessment.



The 2025 conference focused on SEA, a topic that remains relatively unfamiliar in the Central Africa region. As part of the programme, the NCEA contributed to a two-day training on SEA and presented case studies to support capacity development and knowledge exchange among participating countries. SEEAC continues to play an important role in mobilising a broad range of stakeholders and facilitating dialogue across national boundaries, and the NCEA values this partnership as a key entry point for regional engagement.

In addition, the NCEA initiated reconnaissance of potential cooperation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Through SEEAC and the Netherlands Embassy in Kinshasa, initial contacts were established with the Environmental Assessment Agency (ACE) of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Mining. Discussions focused on possible areas of collaboration, including SEA for the mining sector in the Katanga region and capacity development.

Key themes

#Coastal protection
#Food Security and Lowland Development
#Renewable Energy and Circular Economy

- Coordinating Ministry for Basic Infrastructure (Kemenko IPK)
- BOPPJ
- Ministries of PU, Bappenas, KLH, and EMR
- Netherlands Embassy in Indonesia



Indonesia



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In 2025, the potential opportunities for the NCEA's engagement in Indonesia that had emerged over the previous year became more concrete through direct follow-up discussions with the Netherlands Embassy and several sectoral ministries. As a result, the NCEA has started collaboration with the Indonesian government in support of the President's designation of increased flooding along Java's northern coast as a top national priority, given its implications for livelihoods and food security.



Sea-level rise and human activities are challenging the coastal protection of Northern Java.

The NCEA proposed a process support arrangement to Kemenko IPK, the coordinating ministry responsible for developing an SEA-inclusive Masterplan for the protection of Java's northern coast. This support is part of Working Group 4 within the bilateral cooperation between the Netherlands and Indonesia.

A first key first step in this arrangement is the establishment of an Expert Panel of international specialists, aimed at providing evidence-based guidance to both the Ministry and the newly established authority responsible for the development and implementation of the Masterplan.

Additionally, at a regional level, the NCEA has provided input to pre-feasibility studies conducted for Invest International's coastal-protection programmes, as well as studies initiated by the RVO under the Partners for Water programme, focusing on flood management interventions in the Semarang region.

Through this approach, the NCEA aims to support a more integrated and collaborative planning process, including facilitating an inter-ministerial collaborative governance process. The NCEA will support a Steering Committee of over 18 ministries and support the integration of environmental awareness and social inclusion into planning from the outset, while strengthening transparency and effective governance, and clarifying roles and responsibilities across institutions.

In addition to contributing to project-level reviews under the Masterplan, the NCEA is exploring opportunities to support the application of SEA to guide long-term Indonesia vision for coastal protection. This includes translating local and regional insights into national-level recommendations and supporting more coherent and inclusive governance processes.

Beyond the water sector, the NCEA is exploring activities related to energy, waste, and food security.

Under Working Group 2 of the bilateral collaboration between the Netherlands and Indonesia, the focus is on lowland development and irrigation.

Integrating environmental and social considerations into land use planning is essential for lowland development and new and exciting food estate areas.

With the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the NCEA is discussing opportunities for providing support on renewable energy planning and circular-economy initiatives. With the Ministry of Environment, initiatives are explored on capacity development and effective ESIA implementation. In all its activities, the NCEA will engage closely with the new Ministry of Environment and its relevant departments to strengthen their role in promoting environmental and social inclusion across policies, programmes and projects, and in overseeing compliance with national legislation.

NCEA meeting with the Ministry of Environment of Indonesia.



Key themes

#Energy

- Central Environmental Authority
- Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority

Sri Lanka



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The Central Environmental Authority (CEA) in Sri Lanka has the ambition to institutionalise SEA by adopting regulations and raising awareness on SEA in government agencies who are expected to take lead in SEA processes. With this goal in mind, the CEA has requested the NCEA for support through the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the end of 2024.



In this context, the NCEA, together with the CEA and the Sustainable Energy Authority Sri Lanka (SLSEA), organised a hands-on training on SEA as part of the preparatory phase for an SEA for onshore wind energy planning. During a workshop held in August 2025, the NCEA discussed with different institutions to clarify the scope, purpose and responsibilities of each. Based on the inputs and insights gained from this workshop, the NCEA provided input for the ToR for the SEA, which the SLSEA used in the tendering process to hire a team of consultants. The SEA process has now started, and the scoping report is expected in May/June of 2026.

During the same visit, the NCEA also engaged in initial discussion on the development of SEA regulations after which the CEA started drafting SEA regulations. CEA is currently planning stakeholder consultations to further refine these regulations. Both CEA and SLSEA have expressed interest in continued NCEA support on the aforementioned topics. Subject to the availability of the budget and internal capacity, the NCEA may provide such support in 2026 as well.

Key themes

#Mining

Key partners

- Ministry of Mining

Thailand



Arend Kolhoff

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In Thailand, the NCEA initiated engagement following contact with a delegation of the Ministry of Mining during the IGF annual meeting in 2024. During these exchanges, the Ministry expressed interest in applying SEA on a pilot basis for a mining development plan in Saraburi province, recognising the limited national experience with SEA and the absence of a formal legal requirement.



In response, the NCEA facilitated an online SEA awareness raising session which resulted in a request by the Ministry of Mining to provide process support to the department responsible for the SEA.

Following this, the NCEA provided advice on the Terms of Reference for the SEA and will be supporting the Ministry with its SEA process in 2026.

Key themes

#Critical minerals
#Sand mining
#World Heritage Sites

Key partners

- Netherlands Embassy in Vietnam
- Vietnam Department of Geology and Minerals
- International Panel on Deltas and Coastal Areas

Vietnam

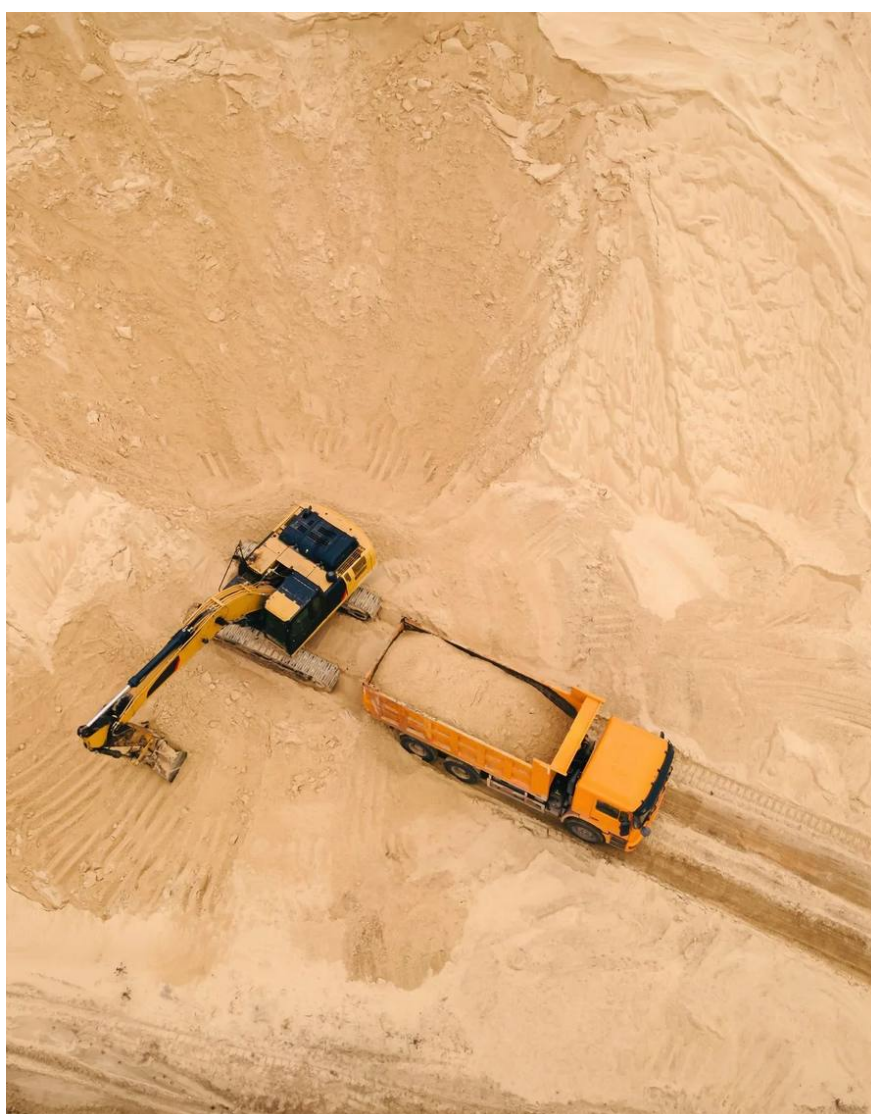


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Until now, the NCEA's activities in Vietnam take place primarily under collaboration frameworks between the Netherlands and Vietnamese governments, including the International Panel on Deltas and Coastal Areas (IPDC) and Partners for Water. This means that the NCEA does not (yet) have solid collaboration partnerships with Vietnamese authorities, but these could evolve through the activities it is engaged in.



Following their Letter of Intent for collaboration in the critical minerals sector, the Netherlands Embassy commissioned a desk study to analyse the stakeholders and institutional framework in Vietnam. As a kick off for this study, the NCEA, with support from the Netherlands Embassy and the Vietnam Department of Geology and Minerals (VDGM), prepared and delivered a workshop to discuss with key institutions how environmental and social safeguards through ESIA and SEA currently function in the critical minerals sector. Insights from this workshop informed the scope and methodology of the study conducted by the consultancy team contracted by the Embassy. The final report identified potential areas for collaboration between Vietnam and the Netherlands, including data management (through Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO)) and providing environmental and social safeguards through SEA and ESIA's (through the NCEA). The Netherlands Embassy and the VDGM still need to discuss the findings and future collaboration. In case SEA and ESIA's are chosen as focus, the NCEA will be ready to provide support, and will align with TNO.

Under the bilateral cooperation framework on offshore sand sourcing between the Netherlands (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management) and Vietnam (Ministry of Agriculture and Environment), capacity strengthening on SEA and ESIA are mentioned as focus areas. One of the priorities of the Vietnamese government has been the formulation of technical guidelines. In the last quarter of 2025, the development of the technical guidelines for sandmining started. The NCEA, under the IPDC flagship, contributed to the ESIA components of these guidelines. The NCEA is currently still working on this with an international and national team of experts. Once finalised, these guidelines will be used by dredgers and relevant authorities in their ESIA and licensing procedures.

Partners for Water (PfW) has already indicated interest in supporting capacity strengthening activities for the

application of the guidelines. The NCEA also stay in touch with Invest International about potential investments in offshore sand sourcing.

In addition to the above, the NCEA established contact with Vietnam's focal point for UNESCO World Heritage Sites within the Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism to explore the potential for an SEA for the Halong Bay / Cat Ba World Heritage site. The World Heritage Committee has repeatedly raised concerns about the cumulative impacts of various developments (e.g. tourism, land reclamation, industrial developments) on the outstanding values of Halong Bay and Cat Ba and recommended the undertaking of an SEA. Should the Vietnamese authorities decide to undertake an SEA, the NCEA is prepared to support this process.



African Development Bank

In the framework of the technical cooperation initiated in 2024, the NCEA and the Environmental and Social Safeguards and Compliance Department (SNSC) of the African Development Bank (AfDB) have conducted several activities in 2025. These activities represent initial steps in this cooperation to build synergies in strengthening the capacity of national environmental and social assessment systems on the African continent.

Two key activities were carried out in 2025:

- A webinar with the SNSC team to present the NCEA Review of a selected set of AfDB country system assessments, in March 2025:
- Participation in AfDB-OPEC fund capacity strengthening workshop in Vienna (June 2025).

These activities allowed the NCEA and the AfDB to identify synergies in several areas. The NCEA for instance, noted that ESIA follow-up, which consists of the monitoring and enforcement of project environmental and social safeguard measures, is weak in most of the countries where it operates. This will lead the AfDB, SNSC, and the NCEA to dedicate and codesign a session on ESIA follow-up during the 2026 AfDB-OPEC capacity strengthening workshop in Vienna.

The review of country system assessments has helped the NCEA initiate talks to build synergy of actions in Uganda and Mauritania in the areas of ESIA follow-up and on the SEA legal framework, respectively.

It has also helped initiate discussions on joint technical support to the Nigerian government in the areas of strategic planning and digitalisation.

The NCEA's participation in the AfDB-OPEC fund conference in Vienna created the opportunity to initiate technical cooperation with the World Bank and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Côte d'Ivoire on the development of SEA guidelines.

It also led to a request for technical cooperation by the EPA in Sierra Leone, which is now under consideration by the NCEA. Country system assessments present a significant opportunity to strengthen national environmental and social assessment system.

However, the design and implementation of these assessments will need to increase national ownership of the process, integrating analytical works with national multi-stakeholder dialogue, and deliberation on key actions needed to strengthen these systems. The NCEA will seek to further develop these country system assessments with the AfDB in the coming years.

Intergovernmental forum on mining and minerals (IGF)

2025 was the third year of a three-years MoU with the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining and Minerals, Metals, and Sustainable Development (IGF). IGF and the NCEA continued their collaboration on a case study in Mozambique, demonstrating how SEA can be applied in the mining sector. This case study builds on the joint publication '[SEA for the Mining Sector - Lessons from country case studies](#).' While the previous publication focused on the 'why?' question, the new case study focuses on 'HOW' to carry out an SEA for mining.

The NCEA has provided Mozambique long-time support to develop the SEA. The SEA is not a sectoral SEA that focuses only on the mining sector, but it is a spatial SEA that focuses on a specific region where mining plays an important role. The case study focuses both on the process for carrying out an SEA as well as on the contents of the SEA. It is expected to be finalised in 2026.

In parallel, IGF and the NCEA initiated the development of a case study on biodiversity in relation to mining and impact assessment.

Plans to carry out a joint assessment of the ESIA mining framework (MET) did not materialise in 2025, due to the absence of corresponding requests from partner countries.

The NCEA and IGF will continue to explore opportunities to carry out a joint MET.

In 2025, the NCEA also participated in IGF's annual meeting, contributing to a panel discussion on water and mining.

In addition, the NCEA and IGF continued their collaboration on mining governance. The NCEA proposed and facilitated the creation of a Community of Practice (CoP) as a follow-up to Susan 2 on critical minerals. Next to the NCEA and IGF, this CoP also comprises members working at Chatham House, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA), Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), and the OECD.

RVO and Invest International

In 2025, the NCEA continued to work closely with key partners RVO and Invest International. With regard to RVO, the NCEA worked together intensively with the CWF programme. After initial discussions in the prior year, the dialogue with CERF (now CWF) continued in 2025, focusing on their intervention strategies. The NCEA provided advice on integrating environmental, social, and governance considerations in these strategies, which CWF subsequently used to develop the sustainability framework for the next phase of their programme.

In parallel, the NCEA and CWF colleagues explored potential areas for collaboration in several countries, including Morocco, Indonesia, Vietnam, Colombia, and Namibia. In May 2025, the NCEA also contributed to a webinar organised by CWF to several embassies, focusing on the potential role of SEA and ESIA in green hydrogen development.

The NCEA also explored opportunities to link up with the Combi Tracks managed by RVO. Despite initial interest and several exchanges around the tracks in among others, Colombia, India, and Tunisia, no concrete entry points for collaboration were identified in 2025.

The NCEA also collaborated closely in 2025 with the Dutch Disaster Risk Reduction and Surge Support (DRRS), Partners for Water, Water as Leverage (WaL), and Reversing the Flow programmes, implemented by RVO. It also worked with the Strategic Water Advisers of the Water Support Programme, implemented by RVO. The latter are important sparring partners for the NCEA in Ethiopia, Yemen, and Mozambique.

The NCEA maintains close links with DRRS. Following an introduction in 2024 to International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Burundi, collaboration continued

in 2025 on environmental and social impact related to refugee and internally displaced person challenges and climate risks. In 2025, the NCEA worked closely with IOM in Burundi (see East Africa section). At the end of 2025, the NCEA also worked with DRRS regarding its interventions in Kenya.

Collaboration with Partners for Water took place in Vietnam and Indonesia, for example with the Delegated Representative Water in Indonesia. The NCEA continued to support WaL in Nakuru, Kenya and Cartagena, Colombia. A locally-led development programme, Reversing the Flow, was an important sparring and learning partner for the NCEA in terms of how community-based initiatives fit in strategic planning.

Throughout 2025, the NCEA held regular two-monthly meetings with Invest International's ESG team to get updates on trajectories where NCEA advice would be expected. The NCEA also organised a session to the ESG and Investment Officers to introduce ESIA and SEA and to clarify the role the NCEA can play in supporting such processes.

UNESCO

In 2024, the NCEA signed a five-year MoU with UNESCO and IUCN aiming to advise on ESIA or SEA for world heritage sites at the request of UNESCO low- and middle-income member states.

At the annual meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC), world heritage sites (WHS) are assessed and categorised. If a WHS is under threat to maintain the Outstanding Universal Values, the WHC may instruct the member state to conduct a best practise SEA. As many low- and middle-income countries have limited experience with SEA, the NCEA can provide process support.

The government of Thailand is the first country that requested the NCEA for this support under the MoU. Support to the SEA process started in 2024 with awareness raising and capacity development for the key authorities. In 2025, the NCEA provided advice on the ToR for the SEA.



December 2025 marked the end of a four-year collaboration between WWF and the NCEA, called 'Supporting voices for just climate action.' Between 2022 and 2025, WWF-NL and the NCEA worked together towards this aim in Suriname, Zambia, Paraguay, Cameroon, Gabon, Republic of Congo, and Namibia. In 2025, activities under this collaboration took place in several countries.

In September, an exchange visit took place between WWF-Paraguay, WWF-NL and the NCEA. The visit was co-hosted by Bureau Stroming and HKV amongst others. The NCEA was asked to organize a 1-day program on September 4th. This consisted of a morning visit of the Paraguayan delegation to the NCEA offices, where 4 ESIA and SEA related presentations were given and discussions held. In the afternoon a site visit/ excursion took place to Lent (River Park Nijmegen and Room for the River Waal). The visit to the NCEA led to a request for an SEA training in November 2025 on the topic of SEA and strategic and sustainable planning for river navigation in the Paraguay river in Asunción, with the participation of public institutions, civil society organizations, private sector, and academia.

For the TRIDOM countries (Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon), the NCEA facilitated a workshop in Gabon, related to forestry and environmental issues in mining.

In Namibia, online meetings took place with WWF's country director to explore opportunities for including ESIA/SEA international best practices and independent advice on developments and extractives in particular. This led to subsequent online meetings with WWF's Namibia team.

Through this team, the NCEA came into contact with the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Tourism (MEFT), who asked the NCEA for support in capacity development on ESIA and SEA. This led to a one week training of the NCEA in Namibia in November 2025.

Under a new three-year cooperation agreement starting from January 2026, WWF NL and the NCEA will continue their collaboration in Paraguay, Zambia, Namibia, and TRIDOM.



[More information](#)
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Strategic partnership
report 2022-2025

Other activities

In relation to issues relevant to our partner countries, the NCEA is always on the lookout for ways to raise awareness for impact assessment and increase the buy-in of 'other' stakeholders, such as private sector and civil society stakeholders. The global IA community under the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is also important to the NCEA. Through IAIA, we stay up to date with important developments and international good practice.

Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)

Between 2-7 November 2025, the NCEA contributed to a workshop organised by the Danish Institute for Human Rights on integrating human rights into ESIA. Target participants were representatives from DIHR partner organisations, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Environmental Agencies, mining licensing authorities and expert CSOs from Zambia, Malawi, and DRC.

This workshop was much appreciated as it created a safe space for these stakeholders to share their experiences and enhanced more understanding and appreciation for each other's struggles and views. The participants left the workshop with a joint agenda to improve human rights considerations in their impact assessments of mining projects.

Nature-based Solutions and SEA

The NCEA is jointly with the Ecoshape consortium developing a white paper on how Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) can support the use of

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in river basins, coastal zones, and marine environments. NbS are increasingly recognised as sustainable responses to complex environmental challenges and are widely promoted by the Netherlands and international organisations active in dredging, coastal protection, and biodiversity conservation. In the Netherlands, the Ecoshape consortium plays a leading role in advocating for NbS in coastal and river-catchment planning.

To highlight the important role of SEA in shaping environmentally sound coastal defence designs, the NCEA was invited to prepare a joint paper with Ecoshape. To ensure the inclusion of ecological expertise, particularly on biodiversity and the integrated use of ecosystem services - IUCN was also engaged as a partner.

Work on the white paper began in 2025 and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2026, with the possibility of follow-up guidance documents. The paper is anticipated to serve as a key reference document for the international impact assessment community on the application of SEA for NbS implementation.

IAIA SEA section

The NCEA is an active member of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). IAIA is the worldwide platform where impact assessment practitioners with different mandates, backgrounds and experience meet once a year and share experiences and start initiatives. IAIA facilitates thematic sections through which members collaborate on specific topics such as climate change, biodiversity, and research. During the IAIA annual conferences in 2023 and 2024, the NCEA made an inventory of the need for the re-establishment of the SEA section, which had been inactive for about 15 years. At the 2025 IAIA annual conference, a group of about 25 SEA experts and practitioners confirmed the need to revive the IAIA SEA-section to support international knowledge exchange and SEA advocacy. This led to the formal re-establishment of the section, approved by the IAIA board in the last quarter of 2025. The NCEA will chair this section, under which four working groups have been established:

- SEA repository aiming to collect SEA good practice cases and make these publicly available;
- SEA tiering, aiming to share experience and assess whether we can work on a joint agenda;
- SEA and planetary boundaries, aiming to assess the linkages with on the one hand tiering and on the other hand the IAIA initiative Fit4Purpose that takes a global perspective on the role of IA;
- SEA and hydropower development, aiming to support the development of SEA guidelines for the sustainable development of the hydropower sector to be adopted by the Hydropower Sustainability Alliance and International Commission on Large Dams.

Presentation in between sessions at the NCEA stand at the IAIA25 conference in Bologna. The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is an important organisation for the NCEA to keep up to date on global trends and good practice related to impact assessment expertise.



Marine Spatial Planning

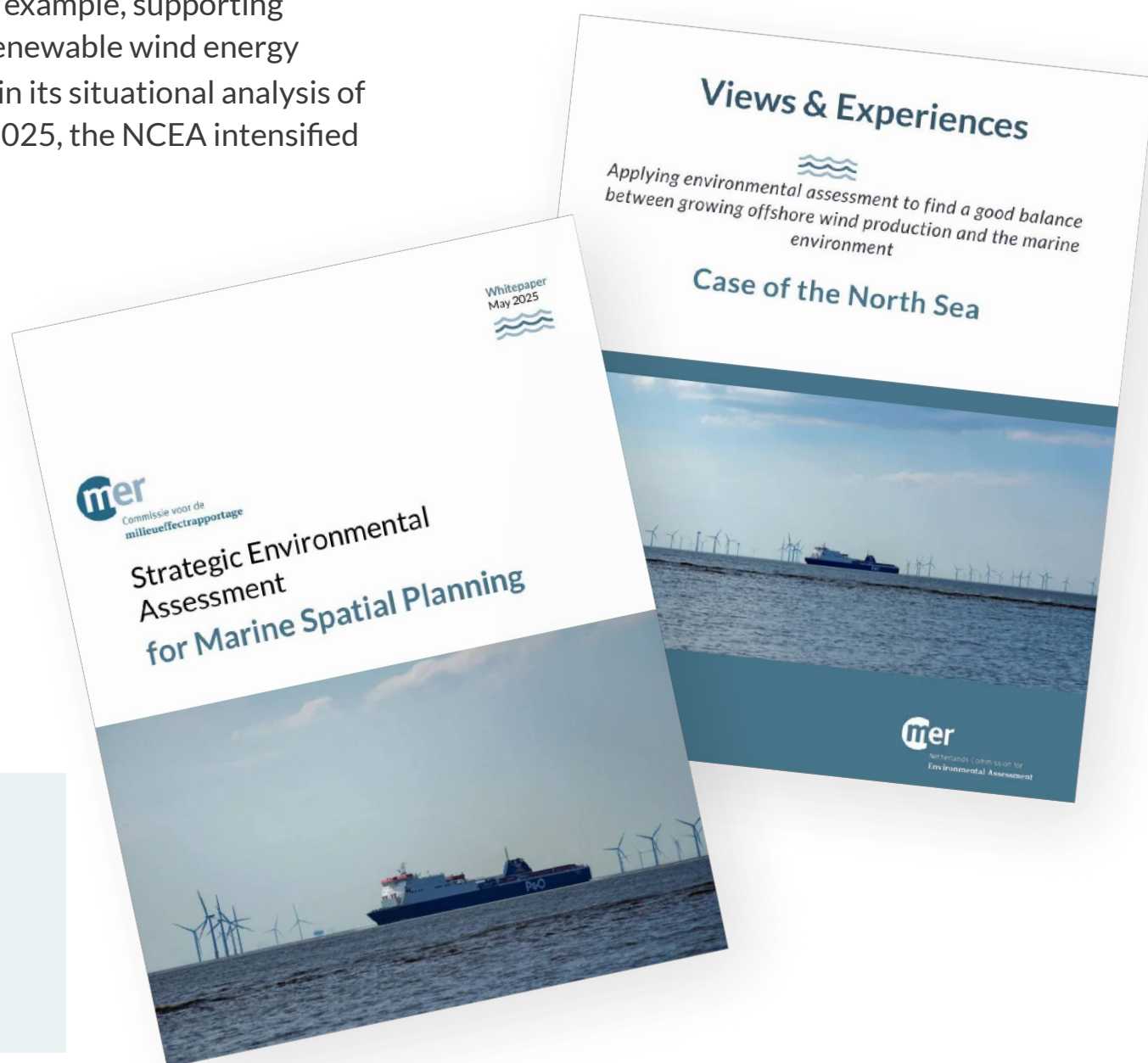
As activities in coastal and marine zones continue to expand, the need for integrated spatial planning in these areas becomes increasingly critical. Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) offers a holistic framework by bringing together all coastal-related uses into a single, coordinated plan. SEA plays an essential supporting role in MSP, particularly by helping assess cumulative and transboundary impacts, evaluate broad alternative development pathways, promote joint fact-finding, and provide a structured, legally grounded approach for incorporating environmental and social considerations into strategic decisions. The 2025 white paper further explores how SEA strengthens and complements MSP, and outlines practical steps for applying SEA within MSP processes.

Over the years, the NCEA has assisted several countries with MSP-related initiatives, for example, supporting Colombia in planning offshore renewable wind energy development, and Mozambique in its situational analysis of MSP and ocean governance. In 2025, the NCEA intensified

its engagement in MSP, aligning marine planning efforts with terrestrial spatial initiatives. This included collaboration with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) on MSP global guidelines for offshore wind energy. The NCEA also contributed, through the Netherlands Ministry of Infrastructure and Water, to the South Asia workshop on ratifying the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ – Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction), where MSP plays a key role in promoting sustainable ocean governance. Additionally, the NCEA participated in the third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, where MSP was highlighted in relation to land-based impacts on marine ecosystems.



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about MSP



Sustainability Analysis (SusAn) programme

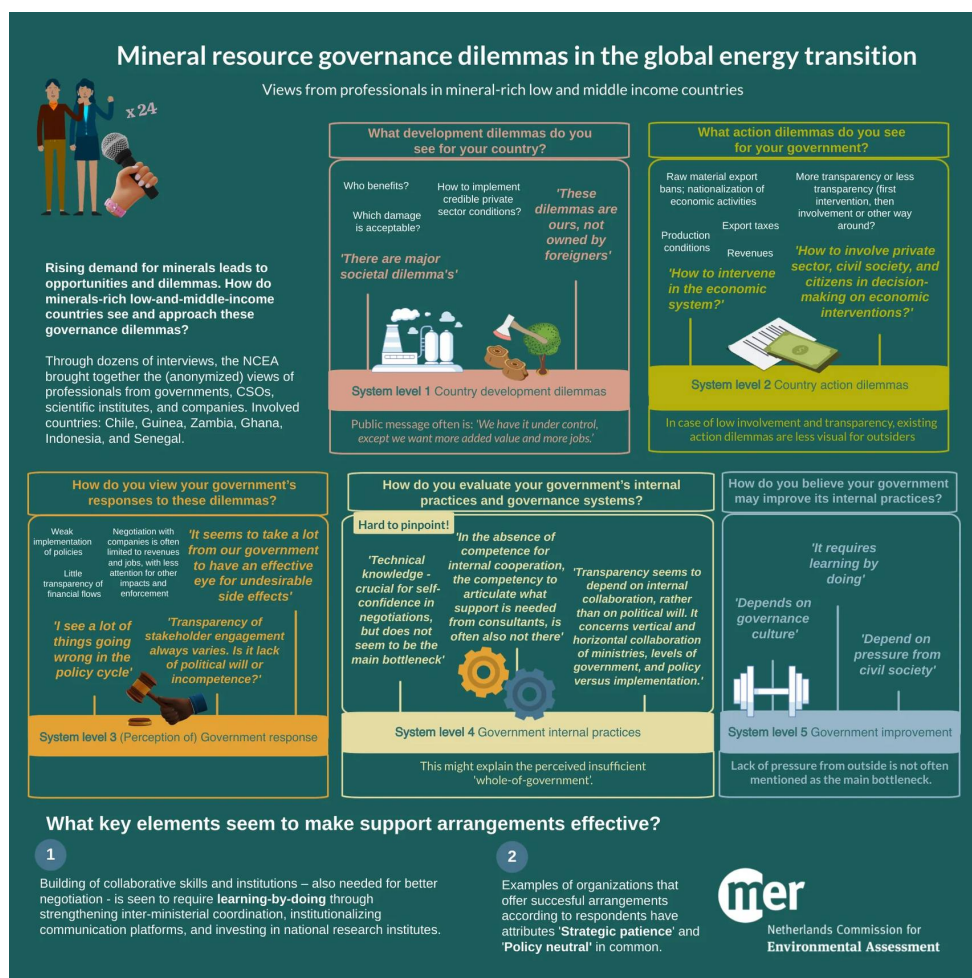
The Sustainability Analysis programme (SusAn) aims at facilitating analysis and dialogues on sustainable development dilemmas, policy interactions and trade-offs and their impacts on decision-making process. In 2025, we collaborated with other Dutch and European knowledge institutes, like PBL (SuaAn 3), the Netherlands Food Partnership (SusAn 4), and ECDPM (SusAn 2).

Amid a rapidly evolving global landscape marked by political instability and growing uncertainty, enabling dialogues on the effective development pathway call for a deeper understanding of emerging challenges, innovative solutions, and new forms of partnership, while fully safeguarding sovereign ownership of countries of the Global South.

In 2025, priority was given to the following initiatives aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness of SEA and ESIA by addressing persistent governance challenges, including promoting collaborative governance approaches to support more inclusive and solution-oriented decision-making processes:

SusAn 2: Critical Minerals Governance in the Global Energy Transition

Over the past years, the NCEA has received an increasing number of requests for impact assessment on sustainable production of minerals. Country-level challenges often go beyond what impact assessments can achieve. There have



been insufficient dialogues on how countries can improve their governance of minerals value chains.

In June, the NCEA [published an analysis paper](#) which examined the underlying governance challenges in LMICs related to the exploitation and international trade of transition minerals, which are becoming increasingly important for the global energy transition. The study examines the tensions between economic opportunities and potential negative side effects, drawing on interviews with diverse stakeholders across six countries (Chile, Zambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Ghana and Senegal). It offers insights on development dilemmas, action dilemmas, government responses, internal governance practices and opportunities for improvement. The analysis was presented for the inter-ministerial group in the Hague, together with a matching analysis by PBL. Subsequently, the NCEA proposed and facilitated the creation of a Community of Practice (CoP) which comprises other international organisations namely Chatham House,

Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Intergovernmental Forum on Mining (IGF), The Initiative for Responsible mining Assurance (IRMA), Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), and the OECD, with a view to strengthening synergies for creating lasting positive changes in partner countries. For further details, [see this brochure](#).

SusAn 3: Green hydrogen production and sustainable development in LMICs

The Netherlands promotes the import of green hydrogen from countries including those in Africa, within the framework of the EU energy transition. The NCEA has provided support for several partner countries on green hydrogen. There has been a debate in the Netherlands on the possibility to make this development beneficial for the populations and ecosystems of these countries. Several Dutch ministries saw a need to share views on this question to be better prepared for public debates.



The NCEA jointly with Royal Haskoning DHV and IGG/BZ organised a deep dive meeting for dialogues between the most involved ministries (IGG/BZ, KGG), their implementing agencies (CWF/RVO), financial institutions (Invest International and FMO), knowledge institutes (PBL), experts, and semi-private institutions (Port of Amsterdam).

SusAn 4: Rural land use governance in view of agricultural value chains

SusAn 4 aims at increasing the NCEA's synergy with Dutch programmes on the nexus of water, food security, biodiversity and trade, with a view to contributing to the broader objectives of Dutch international policy.

SusAn 4 was launched in November 2025, in collaboration with the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) and Fair & Sustainable Consulting (FSC), focusing on the intersection

of rural land use governance and agricultural value chains, an area where few transformative Impact Assessments are currently undertaken. Challenges related to rural land uses include deforestation, land degradation, ecosystem fragmentation, food and water insecurity, and poverty in rural communities. The attention of the analysis shifted to the knowledge diplomacy needed to foster a national dialogue on the enabling environment for sustainable rural development.

SusAn 4 has been conceptualised and will be evolved in 2026 with a view to piloting innovative arrangements for collaborative governance as well as drawing lessons from them.



Communication, Evaluation, and Learning

The Communication, Evaluation, and Learning team supports the work of colleagues in countries with the development of communication materials and knowledge products, supports internal and external learning and exchange, and monitors overall progress of the programmes.



Communication and awareness

The CEL team kicked off in 2025 with the launch of the new NCEA website. As many of our partner countries are French-speaking, the ambition of the CEL team is to develop more and better francophone communication. The development of the website and the launch of newsletters in French are part of the ambition. Other reasons for renewing our website are improved accessibility according to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards, improved data security, and better facilitation of audiovisual information. The animation series demonstrating how ESIA and SEA work, are frequently viewed. The NCEA therefore added a new episode to the series, about how to prepare SEA. These animation series have been translated into Spanish and Portuguese.

The CEL team helped to develop knowledge products for topics in high demand. It published a white paper about SEA for Marine Spatial Planning and developed a case study offshore wind energy in the North Sea.

These products were presented during various events, such as during trainings in Colombia, the United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice), and the IAIA annual conference in Bologna. There was strong interest in these presentations and materials (see page 83).

The CEL team supported the West Africa regional conference in Saly, Senegal, for French-speaking countries and coordinated the making of videos, interviews, and podcasts by a Senegalese film team around team around this event. Podcasts are very instrumental for communication and awareness raising, knowledge exchange, and internal learning on collaborative governance, inspiring approaches of partner countries, and what kind of support is desirable for these countries when being involved in governance of large and complex sustainability dilemmas. Going forward, the NCEA aims to further document and share more podcasts and video interviews.

Knowledge and learning

The team of advisors at the NCEA expanded and became international and diverse in educational backgrounds. At the same time the world is quickly changing. This raises question how the NCEA as organisation stays relevant for partners, to continue making a positive impact.

The NCEA set some time apart to bring new staff up to speed and facilitate in-depth exchange between all advisors. This was done through the ‘master circles’ approach where individual NCEA advisors prepared and shared their work case for colleagues and external masters to comment on.

The CEL team also organised the regular team weeks, in which in depth- exchanges take place between team members. With many of our colleagues travelling regularly, these weeks are the best opportunity to keep everyone updated on each others’ work and progress. Also strategic directions of the team were discussed.



[Listen the podcast](#)
Collaborative governance
of the Fouta Djallon
Massif (Guinea)



Monitoring & Evaluation

Besides the regular work, such as monitoring the activities within the programme, one outcome evaluation of our work was started in 2025. For this, the work in Guinea was selected. Late 2025, the evaluator was chosen and the results will become available in 2026. The evaluation focusses on learning: How have our partners (and others) benefitted from NCEA’s work, and what can be done better in the future? How are we relevant for our partners, and is the set of activities coherent?

The NCEA is also experimenting with change pathways for monitoring, especially to track longer term trajectories and engagements. This is to be further developed in 2026.

Communication statistics

1.383	1.642
newsletter subscribers	LinkedIn followers
11	14
animations (1 new, 10 translations)	lectures and presentations
1	3
podcast	publications



Team & experts



As at 31 December 2025,
the NCEA had a workforce
of **17.13 FTEs** (excluding
support staff)



External experts who participated in the NCEA's working groups in 2025:

- Mme. T. Alarcon
- Mr. dr. D. Annandale
- Mme. V. Arango Villegas
- Mr. B. L. Bakouan
- Mme. S. Becker
- Mr. E. Biais
- Mr. D. Bitondo PhD
- Mme. K.B. Broche Derradji MSc
- Mr. H.D. Cissé
- Mr. S. Dakono
- Mr. D. Damaj MSc
- Mr. dr. G. Edema Taako PhD
- Mme. C.G.E. Giscard d'Estaing
- Mr. H. Gounabi
- Mme. B. Habonimana
- Mme. M Hartman
- Mme. P. Karkare
- Mr. B. Kone
- Mr. H.M. Konkobo
- Mr. J van der Kwast PhD
- Mr. G. Lamoree MSc
- Mr. I.F. Loayza Careaga
- Mr. S.A. Mejonang Mbienda
- Mr. I.C.M Chitumba Mwiinga
- Mr. P.O. Odhengo
- Mr. S. Olichon
- Mr. dr. G.O. Omondi Opinde
- Mme. dr. H. Pflästerer PhD
- Mme. P. Piot
- Mr. J.M. Miles Scott-Brown
- Mr. D.J. Smith
- Mr. Y Soumbati
- Mr. dr. P.W. Wayne Tarr
- Mme. dr. ir. A.I. Van Heek
- Mr. drs. A. de Wilde
- Mr. A. Wya PhD

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.



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