



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment



EIA helpdesk for the private sector

When investing in activities abroad, you may be required to do an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Practically all countries around the world have EIA legislation, but requirements differ per country. It can be difficult to find your way around the regulations and institutions involved. The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) can provide advice on EIA in many countries, and can help you on your way.

What is EIA?

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a procedure ensuring incorporation of environmental and socio-economic information in decision-making on projects. It includes analysis of effects of a planned project and assessment of alternatives. EIA is also a process enabling public participation and incorporation of stakeholder comments in the EIA report.

Almost all countries of the world have legislation on EIA. There are however large differences on the types of projects for which EIA is required, as well as on the EIA procedure and responsibilities of different parties in that procedure.

The NCEA

The NCEA is an independent advisory body, providing services on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). With funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it has worked on EIA for over 20 years in over 50 countries, with a focus on developing countries. Its large database of experts ensures access to knowledge on all disciplines relevant for EIA.

The NCEA provides various services. Firstly, it provides independent advice to government agencies on Terms of Reference for EIA and independent quality review of EIA reports. Secondly, it executes capacity building programmes to support EIA authorities and professionals in developing countries to improve legislation and practice. And thirdly, the NCEA serves as a knowledge centre on EIA to a range of interested parties, including private sector. As such, it issues various publications, which are useful for parties dealing with EIA. It also maintains country profiles providing detailed, up-to-date information on EIA systems. Moreover, the NCEA's helpdesk provides quick information upon request on EIA issues.

The NCEA and the private sector

Interested companies planning or involved in activities in Dutch partner countries can contact the NCEA's helpdesk for information on the country's EIA legislation, practice, authorities and decision-making processes. On a case by case basis, the NCEA can also help to bring government and private sector parties together to jointly work towards a smooth and effective EIA procedure, by providing advice on individual EIA processes. Examples include:

- **Procedural information:** information on a country's EIA procedure (legal requirements and practice);
- **Access to networks:** information on which authorities to contact and on local networks of EIA experts;
- **Presentations and workshops:** informing financing institutions or platforms/networks in which private sector parties participate, on EIA and its requirements;
- **EIA screening:** assessment of EIA requirement for a planned activity;
- **Quality control:** review of EIA documents, advice directed at responsible authorities while in open dialogue with the private sector party involved.

EIA screening for Dutch investments

The NCEA is frequently asked to perform an EIA screening of proposals submitted for government funded Dutch investment programmes such as ORIO (DRIVE) or Public-Private-Partnership facilities. From 2009 to 2014, the NCEA screened more than 180 proposals submitted to ORIO and various PPP facilities (FDW, FDOV, and Ghana WASH Window).

A screening typically starts with an assessment of the country's EIA screening regulations. This is followed by a screening conclusion, indicating whether EIA is required, may be required, or is not required. The conclusion is underpinned by a description of conditions or threshold values due to which EIA is required for the project. If requested, a screening can include issues to be taken into account in the EIA and/or the project.



The NCEA's services for Attero

Dutch waste management specialist Attero and NGO Handsforwaste applied for ORIO funding to realize a sanitary landfill for Bujumbura (Burundi). ORIO asked the NCEA for an EIA screening. The activity was found to require EIA according to Burundese law. The Burundese Environmental Ministry and the Dutch consortium visited the NCEA to discuss how to apply EIA. To further improve EIA quality, the Minister asked the NCEA for independent advice on the Terms of Reference for the study. Throughout the EIA process, the partners and ORIO regularly sought coaching from the NCEA. With the in-depth knowledge of the Burundese EIA system provided by the NCEA, Attero hopes to develop a good-quality, sustainable project, accounting for social and environmental aspects. At the same time, it aims for a smooth and efficient trajectory for permitting, while abiding by local procedures and creating local support.

Why involve the NCEA?

For private sector parties, making use of the NCEA's knowledge services has a number of benefits:

- **Preventing missteps:** the NCEA can inform private sector parties on all steps to be taken and information to be included in EIA, according to country regulations. This prevents missteps in the EIA procedure;
- **Increasing support:** the NCEA can advise which parties should be involved in the EIA procedure to fulfil legal obligations and gain (in)formal support. This helps to increase acceptance of the proposed activities;
- **Preventing delays:** EIA can be a lengthy procedure if not all requirements are anticipated from the start.

Investing in better EIAs has important benefits for private sector parties and the countries in which they operate:

- **Reducing risks:** good-quality EIAs help to reduce the likelihood of unexpected adverse environmental or social effects of their activities. Such effects could otherwise form a risk for the activities in later stages;
- **Improving activities:** EIAs help to reduce negative effects and simultaneously identify opportunities for positive environmental and social impact. A good-quality EIA helps private sector parties to identify environmentally friendly options for their activities and

increases their contribution to sustainable economic growth in the country. At the same time, it helps to build the reputation of the private party;

- **Setting a standard:** improved EIA practice of private sector parties can help to raise the standard of environmental and social sustainability in the sectors in which they are active. It sets an example for other local and foreign businesses and ultimately improves the country's sustainable development.

Contact

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