



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment



Independent advice on SEA reports

At the request of a government authority the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) advises on the quality of environmental and social information in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) reports. The NCEA does not prepare these SEA reports, nor do we advise on the decision to approve a programme or a plan. Our role is to check that there is a solid basis for public debate and political decision-making. All our advisory reports are published and available via NCEA's website.

An independent advisory body

The NCEA was established as an independent advisory body in the Netherlands by decree in 1987. In 1993 the NCEA started to provide services internationally as well. Most –but not all– of our international work is carried out under an agreement with the Department for International

Cooperation of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The core of NCEA's international work is to assist environment and sector ministries, environmental assessment professionals and non-governmental organisations to achieve better environmental assessment practice.

Who can request advice?

Our independent advice will be given at the request of a government authority on environmental assessment or a sector ministry as long as they have the mandate for decision-making. In addition, the NCEA also prepares advisory reports at the request of International Finance Institutes, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Netherlands Embassies. Although NGOs can ask for our involvement and establish first contacts, we do not provide advisory reports on SEA to them directly.

Our Approach

Our approach is based on lessons learnt with a variety of projects in different countries. The most important characteristics of this approach are:

Working group of experts

In order to prepare a plan or programme-specific advice, the NCEA puts together a tailor-made working group of experts. Together the members of the working group cover all relevant fields of expertise for the plan or programme in question. Preferably, the working group consists of a mixture of international and local experts.

On-the-job training

Usually, government staff responsible for SEA are invited to collaborate with the NCEA working group. In this way, the preparation of the advisory report can be considered as an on-the-job training exercise.

Country and site visit

In principle, the working group visits the country requesting the advice. A country and site visit usually takes 4 to 8 days.

SEA and climate in Kenya's Tana delta

An SEA has been undertaken for the new land use plan of Kenya's Tana Delta. The NCEA provided technical assistance in this process.

The aim of this SEA was to identify zones for different types of land use. Climate change was a main issue of consideration in assigning types of land use to specific areas. The zone which is most vulnerable to salinisation due to sea level rise has been assigned as tourism and nature area. Inland zones are hardly affected by climate change. However, water availability is expected to reduce due to increasing water consumption upstream. This has led to the decision to develop more water-efficient agriculture in that region.

Participation/stakeholders

The working group always meets with relevant (representatives of) stakeholders who have an interest in or might be affected by the plan or programme. and those that might be affected by the plan or programme.

Advisory report

Experience has shown that an advisory report can be finalised in approximately six weeks, i.e. from the moment the formal request for advice is received. With optimal support from the requesting authority the NCEA is able to

Critical questions for good SEA design

To determine what the planning process is all about, what the need for and goal of the SEA is and how the SEA could be integrated in the plan process, the NCEA usually starts its advisory activities by discussing a number of critical questions with stakeholders involved.

1. At what stage is the planning process: has it just started, is the process half way or is a draft plan already available?
2. What are the problems that need to be solved by the PPP or in other words: what are the objectives (social, economic, environmental, technical, institutional) of this PPP?
3. Who is/are the responsible agency(ies); who is the owner/developer of the planning process?
4. What decisions will be taken in the planning process and when will these be made?
5. What is the spatial and time horizon: is the PPP geographically defined (if yes, how?) and how long will implementation take (10, 20, 30 years or more?)
6. What information (data) is available?
7. What is the budget and time-line of the planning process? And how much time and money is available for the SEA? Who will undertake the SEA and who will pay for it? This includes planning and budgeting for public participation.
8. What is the purpose and scope of the SEA?

visit the country in the fourth or fifth week. The main findings or the draft advice are presented to the government before the NCEA leaves the country.

Experiences

The NCEA has drafted advisory reports on SEA for governments in over 15 different countries in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Advisory reports have been made for the following types of PPPs:

- Sector plans: oil and gas, mining and coastal zone development;
- Spatial and land use plans;
- Regional economic development plans, often related to infrastructure;
- Strategies and agreements, such as Poverty Reductions strategies and Free trade agreements.

Examples of NCEA's international SEA experiences

- Association Agreement EU–Central America
- Infrastructure planning Socotra, Yemen
- IWRM support programme, Dutch Embassy, Rwanda
- Land Use planning, Georgia / Kenya
- Mining sector Katanga, Democratic Rep. Congo
- Spatial Planning, Montenegro, Vietnam, Mozambique
- Oil and gas related planning Mauritania / Bolivia / Ghana / Uganda
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Ghana
- Regional development plans, Bolivia
- South Coast Development Plan, Albania
- Urban planning, Guyang City, China
- Watermanagement plans, Bolivia /Macedonia
- Zambezi Catchment, Mozambique

Costs

The costs for NCEA's advisory services are covered by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All countries that have a bilateral agreement with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs can make use of our services free of charge. Other countries can contact us for more information on costs.

Contact

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