



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment



The NCEA's systems approach to SEA & ESIA

The systems approach to SEA & ESIA

In the past 20 years, the NCEA has contributed to the strengthening of ESIA and SEA systems in about 30 low and middle-income countries. Starting point for our approach is the idea that if we want to understand SEA or ESIA effectiveness, we need to take into consideration the whole SEA/ESIA system in the country.

The NCEA defines an ESIA/SEA system as the interaction of individual ESIA and SEA processes, the capacity of organisations with responsibilities in those processes and the quality of a coherent set of 'functions' that are necessary for effective ESIA/SEA practice.

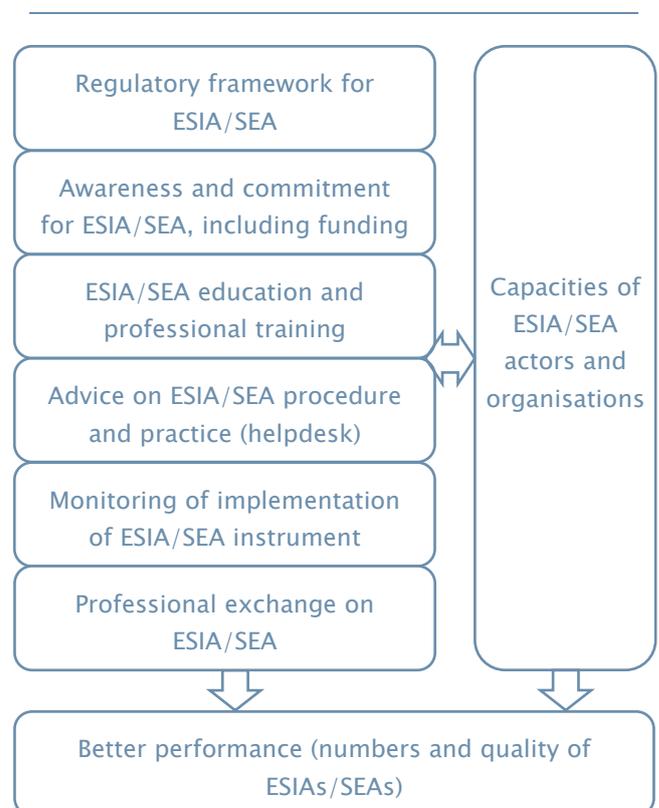
This means that we do not only look at individual ESIA/SEAs or the capacity of organisations with ESIA/SEA responsibilities, but also include the ESIA/SEA regulatory framework, awareness and commitment, education, and compliance and enforcement after permitting. This so-called systems approach is based on the practical experience we have gained in our work.

Levels

We distinguish three levels in our systems approach:

- At the **system** level, we look at key functions that should be fulfilled within a system to enable good practice ESIA or SEA. We have identified six key functions (in the left column of the graph on this page) that, in the view of the NCEA, need to be fulfilled for an ESIA/SEA system to be effective.
- The **organisation** level is about the capacities of actors that have a role in the ESIA or SEA system (right column of the graph). An important component is to develop mechanisms that secure the capacities that have been developed. We structure work at this level using the 5Cs – see the table at the next page.
- At the **process** level, we look at how individual ESIA/SEA processes are undertaken.

The ESIA/SEA system



Performance indicators

For each level, we have identified key results that should be achieved if each function, capacity or process were to perform well. Each result is subsequently translated into a set of indicators, including the means of verification that allow assessment of the progress on that result.

Where do we intervene?

The systems approach allows us to understand who the actors in a specific ESIA/SEA system are, and which role each of them plays. Whether we actually work on all the levels of the system in a country depends on which actor requests assistance, and on local priorities and available resources.

