



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment

Advisory Review of the Scoping Report for the ESIA for Gas for Gaza

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES



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Advisory Report by the NCEA

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To	State of Palestine Environment Quality Authority State of Palestine Palestinian Energy & Natural Resources Authority
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Date	08 March 2022
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1. Introduction

This document sets out the advice of the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) on the scope of the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) for the Gas for Gaza project. In this Chapter we give some background to this project and to the NCEA's involvement. We explain who requested the advice, what the purpose is, and how the NCEA has come to the conclusions presented here. Chapter 2 highlights the key messages from our review of the project's scoping document. Chapter 3 then provides more detail on our observations and gives concrete recommendations for the rest of the ESIA process.

1.1 Project background and description

The Palestinian Authorities are developing a project to construct a gas pipeline into Gaza – the Gas for Gaza (G4G) project. The gas will be sourced from Israel, initially from the Leviathan field. More than forty kms of pipeline will run through Israel, and approximately 4 kms through Gaza (see Figure 1.1¹). Planning and permitting for the Israeli stretch of the pipeline has already been completed. The environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) currently under consideration concerns only the section of the pipeline in Gaza. The route proposed takes the pipeline through Wadi Gaza, a waterway and wetland, as well as alongside existing infrastructure. The pipeline is expected to be buried at 2.5 to 3 meters deep. The proposed construction technique will involve open trench excavation.

A reliable supply of natural gas to Gaza will allow the Gaza Power Plant to convert to gas operations, facilitating a significant increase in domestic electricity generation and reduced dependence on imports. The power plant currently runs on diesel, which is costly, and the availability is variable. The supply of the gas is considered necessary to meet the energy requirements critical public infrastructure, including water and sanitation facilities.

The G4G project is subject to ESIA, both according to the Palestinian regulation, as well as to meet safeguards of potential financiers, one of which is the EU. The Palestinian regulation for ESIA is laid out in the Palestinian Environmental Assessment Policy (2000). The Environmental Quality Authority (EQA) is responsible for approving the scoping document and ESIA report, as part of the Palestinian ESIA procedure.

The Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA) is the proponent for this project. PENRA is supported by a task force chaired by the Office of the Quartet (OQ). This latter institution was established in 2002, to help mediate Middle East peace negotiations and to support Palestinian economic development and institution building. The Dutch government is one of the donors to the OQ and has been providing technical and political support to the G4G project.

¹ Taken from the Scoping Document, which in turn sourced the map from the Office of the Quartet: <http://www.quartetoffice.org/page.php?id=5e1e7ay6168186Y5e1e7a>



Figure 1.1: Palestinian Territories' proposed energy infrastructure

An engineering design team (EPCM) and an ESIA team (RSK) have been contracted to support the project. The ESIA assignment is two staged. Phase 1 is the scoping stage, Phase 2 the assessment stage of the ESIA. At the end of Phase 1 the ESIA consultants have delivered a scoping document or ESSS (Environmental and Social Scoping Study). At the end of Phase 2, an ESIA report will be delivered.

1.2 Request for the NCEA's advice

In July of 2019, the NCEA met with PENRA and EQA representatives in Ramallah. The meeting was initiated by the Netherlands embassy in Amman and organised by the OQ and the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah. PENRA and the EQA expressed interest in the NCEA's advice on the ESIA for the G4G project. A formal request for this advice was received in May 2020. The request was for the NCEA to provide:

- Assistance with the review of the ESIA scoping document as well as the ESIA report.
- To support national decision-making, including by the national EIA Committee in the ESIA/environmental approval, to ensure the quality of the ESIA and enhance the credibility of the process.

The request letter, and the NCEA's formal response to that request have been included in Annex 2.

1.3 Approach by the NCEA

From the moment the request was received, the NCEA was regularly informed on developments in the ESIA process. The NCEA has attended two online interministerial workshops in January and February of 2021, where the project itself and key impacts were presented. The NCEA has also been regularly informed on ESIA progress and has attended ESIA update meetings organized by the OQ, as an observer.

The NCEA received the scoping document² on the 23rd of November 2021. The document was accompanied by an analysis of the gap between the European Investment Bank (EIB) standards and the Palestinian safeguard framework. On the 21st of December, the NCEA also received the project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan (dated February 2021), and a Pipeline Codes and Standards Review and Recommendation Report (dated December 2020).

The NCEA was informed that a resettlement framework is under development, but not yet ready to be shared. The NCEA has not reviewed this document.

The NCEA has mobilized a working group of experts to undertake the review. Aside from the NCEA chair and technical secretary, the working group consisted of:

- an oil and gas sector environmental and social management expert;
- a social impact expert;
- and a biodiversity expert.

The working group also had access to a resource person to provide technical information regarding project engineering.

The European Investment Bank environmental and social standards (EIB ESS) are an important benchmark for this ESIA and consequently for the NCEA's review.

As a part of the advisory process, the NCEA's working group would normally visit the project location and meet with a selection of stakeholders on site. In this case, such a site visit was not possible. In part this was due to the specific security considerations associated with Gaza. The continually changing situation in relation to COVID19 and travel was an additional impediment.

1.4 Aligning the NCEA review and the Palestinian ESIA procedure

PENRA has submitted the scoping document for review by the Environmental Quality Authority, as per the Palestine procedure, on the 7th of December. The EQA has forwarded the scoping document to the national EIA committee for comment. The NCEA has presented its preliminary review conclusions on the scoping document in a virtual meeting on the 23rd of December 2021, to both PENRA and the EQA. OQ representatives also attended this meeting. A draft version of the NCEA's advice report was been shared with PENRA, EQA and the OQ to allow opportunity to correct any mistakes or address anything that was unclear, after which this advice report was finalised.

² The scoping document, or ESSS, was dated 19th November 2021.

2. Key messages of the NCEA's review

The scoping document describes a comprehensive scoping process. The report is well structured and addresses key issues for this project³. Particularly where it concerns social impacts, the document is of good quality. The NCEA also notes several shortcomings in the scoping process and scoping conclusions. The most important ones are set out below.

Biodiversity impacts are underappreciated

The evaluation of alternatives that has taken place to date (for pipeline routing and technology) emphasises social and economic considerations. Biodiversity impacts are underappreciated. The NCEA does not suggest that biodiversity impacts are more important than other impacts, but notes that the alternative comparison is not balanced in this respect. This underappreciation of the potential impact on biodiversity is also prevalent in the rest of the scoping document. Specifically, the information basis that has been established for the identification and valuation of impact on biodiversity is too limited. That is problematic, because a well-founded conclusion on whether critical habitat requirements are triggered needs to be drawn early, so that the associated requirements can be accommodated in the rest of the ESIA process. More effort will be needed to assess biodiversity impacts than the scoping document now suggests. The NCEA wants to impart a sense of urgency here, as some of the biological surveys necessary are season dependent.

Aligning the ESIA and other work processes

The scoping document recognizes the benefit of aligning the engineering and the ESIA processes. However, the NCEA was not able to gain a good understanding of whether relevant information compiled by the engineering team will be available in a timely manner for consideration in the ESIA, and vice versa. In addition, the livelihood and resettlement planning seems to be a separate workstream, and it is not clear how this will align with the ESIA work, which will also address impact on existing land use. Similarly, the NCEA notes that the analysis of the gaps between the EIB standards and the Palestinian requirements identifies a number of additional assessments and management plans that are needed to address specific issues. These do not seem to have been consistently integrated into the ESIA approach. The different work processes will need to be streamlined to ensure both that the ESIA covers the issues that need to be addressed, but also so that solutions developed within the ESIA can still be incorporated into the project's design and implementation planning.

Application of the mitigation hierarchy

The NCEA emphasises that the EIB standards require that the mitigation hierarchy is applied⁴. This scoping report focusses on remedying of impacts, it does not prioritise prevention. We see opportunities for impact prevention that are now not in view. One example: reducing the width of the permanent right-of-way for the pipeline to allow existing land use to continue.

³ The NCEA does have some suggestions to improve the readability of the texts, which may be of benefit for future reports in this ESIA process. These are outlined in Annex 1.

⁴ Article 5 of EIB ESS 1 states as objective of assessment: "Applying the mitigation hierarchy by identifying measures to be taken to avoid, reduce and, if required, compensate/remedy significant adverse residual effects on workers, affected stakeholders, and the environment, so as to contribute to the avoidance of any deterioration in the quality of human life, the environment and any net loss of biodiversity and ecosystems"

Strengthening the stakeholder engagement approach

The NCEA notes that the stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of the scoping work is extensive, despite the difficulties associated with COVID19 and security issues. The identification of stakeholder in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) is appropriate, but future consultation will need to expand to include the local communities and civil society identified. We also point out that the ESIA scoping results need to be verified with stakeholders and disclosed. It is now unclear if that is planned.

Significant improvement to the ToR for the ESIA is needed

In the next Chapter the key findings summarized above are further elaborated. We also address a range of additional areas where the ESIA work to come can be further strengthened to optimally support project design, stakeholder engagement and PENRA and EQA decision-making. The NCEA is of the opinion that the shortcomings identified in this review can be adequately addressed in phase II of the ESIA, but it will require a significant update of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the ESIA that is presented in Chapter 8 of the scoping document. The ToR provides a good starting, but it lacks focus and on some topics the approach described is too generic for this stage in the ESIA process. We have formulated a series of recommendations that can be incorporated in the ToR for the ESIA. A summary of those recommendation is given below.

- Consideration of alternatives:
 - Improve the readability of the description of alternatives.
 - Make trade-offs explicit.
- Clarify how the engineering and ESIA processes will be aligned.
- Define the project scope more specifically and include material sourcing.
- Reconsider the proposed methodology for determining impact significance.
- Further specify the content of the ESMS and ESMMP that the ESIA will deliver.
- Stakeholder engagement:
 - Document future stakeholder engagement in more detail.
 - Disclose the scoping documents and consult on the scoping conclusions.
 - Closely align stakeholder engagement and ESIA work, specify information disclosure and how stakeholder inputs will be addressed.
- Assessment of impacts on the biological environment:
 - Reconsider the characterisation of the habitat in Wadi Gaza.
 - Consider the implications for the ESIA of relevant management plans or conservation objectives for Wadi Gaza.
 - Augment the biodiversity baseline with additional surveys and analysis of ecological functions.
 - Adopt a suitable methodology for identification and assessment of ecosystem services.
 - Further detail the biodiversity related mitigation measures that will be developed in the ESIA.
 - Consider how the biodiversity value of the permanent right-of-way for the pipeline can be optimised.
- Assessment of impacts on the physical environment:
 - Detail the topsoil management measures that will be included in the ESIA.
 - Identify mitigation measures needed in case contaminated soil is mobilised.

- Include the impact of the project’s water use in the assessment.
- Assessment of social impacts:
 - Align livelihood compensation and resettlement planning and the ESIA work.
 - Reconsider the criteria for land use within the permanent right-of-way.
 - Extend the tangible archaeological heritage surveys and establish strategies and procedures to safeguard cultural heritage.
 - Specify the EIB ESS 8 labour assessment topics that the ESIA will address.
 - Include a skill gap analysis in the ESIA.
 - Consider how to overcome barriers for local suppliers.
 - Specify how occupation health and safety will be addressed in the ESIA.
- Assessment of risks of unplanned events:
 - Further detail the assessment of both natural and human-made hazards that will be done.
 - Expand the security consideration in the ESIA ToR to include relevant UN codes.

3. Review findings and recommendations

In this Chapter we set out the full range of findings of the NCEA’s review of the scoping document and provide specific recommendations for the ESIA work still to be undertaken. We will first consider a number of topics related to the ESIA process overall. From section 3.7 onwards we then present recommendations for the assessment of four specific categories of impact: impacts on the biological environment, impacts on the physical environment, social impacts, and finally risks related to natural and human-made hazards. The latter are referred to as unplanned events in the scoping document.

3.1 Consideration of alternatives

Chapter 2 of the scoping report describes the comparison of alternatives that has led to the currently proposed route, pipeline system design, process technology and construction technique. It is an important Chapter for this project, because it gives insight into the extensive technical and administrative consideration of alternatives that has already taken place. Yet the chapter is not easy to read due to the sometimes technical nature of the text and limited use of visuals.

The alternatives comparison itself seems to emphasize social and economic arguments over biodiversity arguments⁵. The weighting of criteria is not fully transparent. The preferred pipeline corridor and construction method will have more significant biodiversity impact than the other options considered. Consequently, more effort will be needed to address the impacts on biodiversity in the ESIA and in project implementation. This does not seem to be fully recognized in the scoping report text.

The NCEA assumes Chapter 2 will form the basis for the alternatives Chapter in the ESIA report. The NCEA recommends improving the readability of the alternative’s description.

⁵ The EIB standard on biodiversity and ecosystem specifically ask to demonstrate that there are no alternatives to development affecting natural, semi-natural or critical habitats. This requires explicit assessment of alternatives “from a biodiversity perspective” (article 28, EIB ESS 3).

More visualisations or graphics would also be helpful. We also recommend making the trade-offs that have been made in coming to the preferred alternative more explicit.

3.2 Interface between the engineering and assessment work

The scoping document recognizes the benefit of aligning the engineering and the ESIA processes, and clearly the teams working on each (EPCM and RSK) have interacted. However, the NCEA struggled to fully understand how the two processes are aligned and whether relevant measures for impact prevention are addressed, in line with the mitigation hierarchy.

First of all, it appears that basic design is finalized, and detailed design has started, but it is not fully clear at what stage the engineering works are now. It is also not clear what information the detailed design will generate that is relevant for the ESIA, and how this will be fed into the ESIA, and vice versa. This applies to the route refinement survey⁶ that is proposed, but also to factors such as seismic events, flooding, erosion and the potential corrosion risk from pipeline exposure to groundwater⁷.

Secondly, it would be useful to explicitly set out how the proposed mix of design and safety standards will affect the environmental and social performance of the project. Usually, the rigorous application of such standards will limit the risk and associated impacts and can therefore have consequences for the scope of the ESIA. This could be made more explicit.

The NCEA recommends that the alignment of the ESIA and engineering process is further clarified in the ToR for the ESIA. Particularly concerning:

- The stages of the engineering works and timing in relation to the ESIA activities, and how the two will interact.
- The relevant risks that will be studied further during detailed design, and how this will inform the ESIA work.
- How the design standards affect risk reduction and mitigation-by-design.
- Assessment of risks related to seismic events, flooding, erosion and corrosion.

3.3 Project scope

Chapter 3 of the scoping document describes the project. It takes a broad approach to the project activities and also lists associated facilities that could be included in the scope of the ESIA (in section 3.8.). However, no clear conclusions are drawn on what will in fact be included and what will not, nor how this will be determined. The rest of the scoping

⁶ Described as “a detailed route refinement survey of the proposed route conducted with EPCM and supported by consultations with the CMWU and UNDP”.

⁷ The information in the scoping document now suggests that the groundwater table may be below the pipeline. However, if there is a risk that the pipeline comes into contact with groundwater, the quality of the groundwater will be relevant to assess pipeline corrosion risk. The scoping document now states that samples from six community wells will be taken to characterize groundwater quality along the pipeline right-of-way. It is questionable whether these samples (taken from deeper aquifers) would provide a sufficient representation of groundwater quality at shallow depth to identify a potential risk of pipeline corrosion. The installation of monitoring wells at suitable locations would be more suitable.

document mostly concentrates on the impacts of the pipeline itself. Potential impacts related to the material needed (such as sand and gravel) also do not seem to be in clear view.

The NCEA recommends specifying the impact of associated facilities and works, as well as the sourcing of material, that will be considered in the ESIA, and that the ESIA ToR in Chapter 8 is amended to reflect this.

3.4 Impact significance methodology

The NCEA is concerned that the application of the methodology presented in Chapter 8 to determine impact significance may overemphasise socio-economic impacts over biodiversity impacts. To illustrate, according to the example criteria for the planned activities are likely to be scored “low” because they are local in geographical extent. Table 8.4 ranks receptor sensitivity. Here it seems possible that environmental receptors will predominantly score “low” due to the existing degree of disturbance in Gaza. At the same time, social receptors are likely to score “medium” for the same reason, i.e., the degree of disturbance caused by conflict, unemployment, lack of social infrastructure, etc. This could result in a stronger emphasis on mitigation of social impacts rather than on mitigation of impacts on the biophysical environment, due to their lower overall significance scores.

The NCEA recommends that the methodology proposed to determine impact significance is reconsidered in the ESIA, to ensure a balanced evaluation.

3.5 ESMS and ESMMP

Section 8.4.11 of the scoping document explains that the ESIA process will deliver the framework for an Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) for the project. The ESMS will include an overarching environmental and social management and monitoring plan (ESMMP). The content of the ESMS and the ESMMP is described in general terms and formats but does not build on the impacts and mitigation measures identified in the scoping document.

At this stage, the ToR should be more specific about the key impacts and mitigation measures that the ESMS and ESMMP will need to focus on. We also note that throughout the scoping document, and in the gap analysis, a number of topical management plans are mentioned (for biodiversity and emergency preparedness, for example), but it is unclear if these will be prepared as part of this ESIA process or not.

The ESMS and ESMMP will need to be specific about the allocation of responsibilities. Many tasks will be delegated to contractors, but ultimately PENRA will be responsible for the proper implementation of any specific requirements set out in the ESMMP. This may well put a strain on available capacity for oversight. Section 8.4.11 notes that the ESIA will provide proposals and recommendations for (institutional) capacity building but does not seem to include an analysis of capacity available.

The NCEA recommends that the expectations concerning the ESMS and ESMMP are clarified. A more detailed and tailored approach will be needed than the ESIA is now likely to deliver⁸. The section in the ToR for the ESIA on the ESMS and ESMMP needs to be further developed to reflect priorities in impact avoidance and mitigation, topical management plans that need to be prepared, and potential constraints in capacity for effective supervision.

3.6 Stakeholder engagement

In keeping with ESIA good practice, the engagement of stakeholders is described as an integral part of the ESIA process in the scoping document. Not all the engagement planned could take place due to COVID19 related issues and a temporary escalation of conflict in the project area. Consequently, the engagement has tended towards institutional stakeholders (national authorities, local authorities, International NGOs, UN organizations). Local associations were not yet engaged, nor community-based groups or potentially affected communities. This will need to be corrected in the upcoming consultation.

The description of the stakeholder engagement undertaken during scoping is informative, but not always sufficiently detailed. The attendance lists provided in Appendix 2C are not particularly helpful in identifying which organizations and participants were represented. Nor is the project information that was disclosed at the different meetings sufficiently described. It would have been useful to document the frequently asked questions (FAQ), for example. Questions raised by stakeholders regarding the route of the pipeline along the Wadi Gaza are noted but not addressed. For example, a comment was made about timing construction between March and November, to ensure access to the Wadi Gaza banks for agricultural activities is not disrupted. Will this be taken into account? It is also stated that objections to the project are expected in some locations, but no explanation is given on what these concerns are (Appendix, page 36). An engagement database has now been set up, so a more detailed description of the stakeholders' input can be expected in the future.

The NCEA recommends that future ESIA stakeholder engagement is documented in more detail.

The NCEA notes that EIB ESS 10 requires that stakeholders "should be able to provide input to the draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan and any other scoping document and receive feedback on how their comments and input have been incorporated and addressed." In this case, it is not clear if such validation is foreseen.

The NCEA recommends organizing consultation on the scoping conclusions and the SEP.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan that was shared with the NCEA is dated February 2021 and concentrates on engagement in the scoping phase of the ESIA. It does not give a detailed plan

⁸ The EIB standards require an ESMS in which processes, procedures such as environmental management, occupational health and safety management are covered. As well as an ESMP to manage the project's impacts, that include prioritization of the measures, availability of a tool to assess implementation and expected effectiveness of the mitigation and compensation measures and to identify unforeseeable adverse impacts (See EIB performance standard n°1).

for stakeholder engagement in the ESIA work still to come. Chapter 8 gives some indication (in 8.4.5.6) but this is quite brief. So, the NCEA cannot evaluate the stakeholder engagement activities planned, but will give several points of attention:

- Local NGOs have been identified in the mapping process. However, only one NGO is singled out as an important stakeholder for further engagement. The other NGOs will only be informed. More extensive engagement of civil society actors should be planned.
- Traditional leaders like the Mukhtars should be considered for engagement, as has been suggested by stakeholders engaged in scoping.
- Ensure that engagement takes place across all the relevant impacts. So far there is little indication that biodiversity or ecosystem services have been included as a topic in the stakeholder engagement process. Have impacts on vegetation been presented to the stakeholders during meetings? Has it been communicated that no deep-rooted shrubs or trees will be allowed in the 20m wide right-of-way corridor, for example?
- The NCEA also wants to recognize that the establishment of the gas pipeline will change the local diesel and electricity economy, particularly for private operators generating and selling electricity to households. We do not consider this an impact that the project needs to avoid or mitigate directly but suggest to consider engaging with these operators to better understand the implications for this group.

The NCEA recommends that the stakeholder engagement planning is either integrated into, or closely aligned with, the ToR for the ESIA. Explain what information will be disclosed throughout the process, and how the stakeholders will be provided with feedback on how their inputs were used.

3.7 Assessment of impacts on the biological environment

On this topic, the NCEA notes a number of shortcomings. The proposed pipeline route goes through Wadi Gaza, which is an area recognized for its biodiversity and provides different ecosystem services. The NCEA is not convinced that the scoping document presents sufficient effort to assess the implications of the protection status of the area, to characterize the habitat potentially impacted, and to determine if critical habitat is affected. We also do not think that the scoping document draws the right conclusions about what is needed to address impacts on biodiversity in the rest of the ESIA. The NCEA concludes that at this stage, the mitigation and management approaches that can reduce the impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services should have been more developed, and the consequences for the coming ESIA work presented in more detail in the ToR in Chapter 8. We elaborate on this overall observation below.

3.7.1 Critical habitat and conservation status

The EIB standards are stringent where potential impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems are concerned. What requirements apply depends on the classification of the habitat impacted. When critical habitat is potentially impacted, additional requirements are triggered, specifically concerning the impetus for avoidance of impacts and for demonstration of positive outcomes for biodiversity ('net gain'). The scoping document applies the criteria in EIB ESS 3 to determine habitat type, but the baseline information that is collected to support

this characterization is too limited in the opinion of the NCEA (see the next section 3.7.2), as is the consultation with local conservation experts on this classification.

We also note that modification by human intervention does not necessarily mean that an area will not be classified as a critical habitat, as the scoping document now suggests. It concludes that the project “is not considered likely to trigger critical habitat” and that “further stakeholder engagement will be undertaken as part of the ESIA to refine the findings” (Chapter 6 of the scoping document, page 12).

The NCEA recommends that the characterization of the habitat in the Wadi Gaza is reconsidered for the purpose of the determining the applicable EIB ESS 3 requirements. The definitive characterization will have implications for the comparison of alternatives, the baseline sections as well as for the impacts, mitigation and monitoring sections of the ESIA, and therefore needs to be determined as soon as possible.

Also, EIB ESS 3 says that when a project potentially impacts a legally protected area or area internationally recognized for biodiversity, the project proponent needs to establish that the project is consistent with management plans or conservation objectives for that area. This is noted in the gap analysis, but not picked up in the scoping document. The scoping document does identify Wadi Gaza as an important bird area and a local nature reserve. It also discusses potential UNESCO and Ramsar designations of Wadi Gaza. However, the document does not consider the project’s potential impacts in relation to existing conservation objectives.

The NCEA recommends that the implications of management plans or conservation objectives associated with the Wadi Gaza protection status are analysed, in light of EIB ESS 3 article 17. Any implications for the project design need to be communicated with the design team, and consequences for impact management need to be included in the ToR in Chapter 8.

3.7.2 Biodiversity baseline

The biodiversity baseline should provide a solid basis for determining the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The current baseline provided is not yet sufficient. We note:

- The ESIA survey methodology in Appendix 5 of the scoping document includes amphibians. But Table 6.2 in Chapter 6 of the scoping document “Screening of potential critical habitat trigger species of fauna” does not contain amphibians. Has this group been fully assessed?
- The vegetation surveys carried out have been undertaken only in small quadrats of 25m². Vegetation mapping should be undertaken for the entire pipeline route, and some hundred meters down the wadi to identify relevant features that could be affected by construction and commissioning activities, or operational failures. The same comment is valid for the fauna surveys. Fish and invertebrates have not been considered and the field work for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians was very limited. Consequently, the field surveys undertaken to date do not provide a sufficiently solid basis to determine the absence or presence of species.

- The surveying work that has been done to identify migratory bird activity is too limited in terms of frequency and seasonal coverage to assess the value of this area as a migration, refuge or reproduction zone.
- Connectivity studies should be undertaken, taking into consideration current movement of fauna (including fish and invertebrates). We note that permanent vegetation clearance could affect this ecological function.
- The timing of the surveys in relation to the engineering works is also important. In the scoping document some surveys, e.g., for flora, are proposed to be undertaken as part of the pre-construction surveys. This may be too late to influence route refinement.

The NCEA also wants to suggest that the ESIA make more extensive use of local expertise, and locally available information⁹. The IBAT¹⁰ database is also recommended to be used for fauna and flora.

The NCEA recommends augmenting the existing baseline for biodiversity. Surveys should be planned to study vegetation for the entire route, as well as all fauna groups (vertebrates and invertebrates). Surveying should take place for longer periods and with higher coverage. Given that some of the surveying needed is season dependent, this issue needs to be taken up as soon as possible. We also recommend that ecological functions are analysed, including connectivity. It is further recommended that the proposed surveys are timed in parallel with route refinement so that survey findings can be used in this refinement. The ToR for the ESIA needs to be amended accordingly.

3.7.3 Ecosystem services

The ecosystem services identification in the scoping document does not follow a clear methodology, therefore there is a risk that important ecosystem services are missed, or not valued appropriately. Further analysis of these ecosystem services is planned as part of the social data collection process, but again, a methodology is not given. The NCEA notes that a social emphasis might mean a focus on production and cultural services, while regulating services may be equally relevant¹¹.

The NCEA suggests that the ESIA ToR identify a recognized methodology to be used to identify and assess impact on ecosystem services. Different methodologies are available¹², of which the TESSA method could be well suited.

⁹ For example, from the Gaza Universities and research centres such as Islamic University of Gaza.

¹⁰ Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool, <https://www.ibat-alliance.org>.

¹¹ The EIB ESS identify the following four types of ecosystem services: provisioning services, regulating services, cultural services and supporting services.

¹² – Toolkit for Ecosystem Service Site-based Assessment (TESSA). This toolkit provides accessible guidance on low-cost methods for how to evaluate the benefits people receive from nature at sites in order to generate information that can be used to influence decision making (<http://tessa.tools>).

– Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services (CICES). This tool aims to classify the contributions that ecosystems make to human well-being that arise from living processes. Can be used as a reference classification that would allow translation between different ecosystem service classification systems (<https://cices.eu>).

3.7.4 Biodiversity and ecosystem impact mitigation

In section 7.4.2 of the scoping document the impacts on the biological environment are described, and in section 7.4.5. the impact on ecosystem services. Loss of habitat is noted as a potential impact during the construction and commissioning phase. Mitigation measures are mentioned, such as habitat restoration and seasonal constraints. However, in Chapter 8, the ToR for the ESIA, no further detail is given for these measures. The text there is generic. The Biodiversity Management Plan that is mentioned in the gap analysis also does not feature in this Chapter.

The NCEA recommends that Chapter 8, the ToR, detail the mitigation measures that will be further developed in the ESIA process to manage impact on biodiversity.

The impact section further explains that impacts during project operation will be minor, and no further evaluation is needed. But the NCEA notes that the infrastructure will have a permanent impact on vegetation, and potentially on flora, fauna, habitats and ecosystem services dependent on this vegetation. A permanent right-of-way is planned: an open area, up to 20 meters wide, near 4 km long, where no trees are permitted.

The NCEA recommends that the impact of the permanent right-of-way during project operation is considered in the ESIA. Consider also how the biological value of this corridor may be optimized. Amend the ToR for the ESIA to reflect this.

3.8 Assessment of impacts on the physical environment

3.8.1 Soil

Possible soil management measures are outlined in section 7.4.1.6 of the scoping document. The focus here seems to be on management of valuable topsoil in the productive areas along the construction right-of-way. In the impact table (page 35 executive summary and appendix), this impact is only mentioned in relation to tangible cultural heritage impacts. However, the quality of the soil also affects biodiversity. In addition, successful revegetation and topsoil management reduces the risk of erosion. A walk-over survey of the route is planned to identify and record visual evidence of contaminated land, but it is not clear what will happen if contamination is found.

The NCEA recommends that the ToR for the ESIA further detail the topsoil management measures in the productive areas within the right-of-way. The NCEA also recommends ensuring that the risk of remobilising any existing contamination identified during the walkover is adequately mitigated. If necessary, potential disposal sites should be identified as part of the ESIA.

3.8.2 Water

Water usage by the project is not sufficiently covered, even though significant volumes of water need to be sourced for dust suppression, hydrotesting and other purposes. The impact of hydrotesting is considered of minor significance, not warranting further assessment, on the basis of the assumption that the water will be treated (section 7.4.1.7 of the scoping document). The NCEA suggests that a full assessment of the impact of water use is needed, including a description of water volumes needed, sourcing of water, potential use of chemicals (biocides, etc.), potential treatment options and a discharge strategy to avoid erosion. Note that water discharge during hydrotesting could have significant impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services, as could water abstraction.

The NCEA recommends including an assessment of the impact of the project's water use in the ToR for the ESIA.

3.9 Assessment of social impacts

The preliminary social baseline is of good quality and usefully informs the scoping decisions. It also identifies the data gaps and how to complete them. The key potential social impacts are captured, and the relevant potential mitigation measures are in view. Complexities and challenges linked to the land acquisition specifically in the Gaza context are well understood. The maps provided clarify the project's area of influence, and if refined in the ESIA process with for example overlay maps showing settlement, etc. these will provide good illustrations. Vulnerable categories of project affected peoples are also identified, such as refugees and Bedouins. Data collection on these groups is planned in further baseline work in the ESIA which should provide better information on their potential interactions with the project.

Below we reflect on four different categories of social impact: impact on existing land use, impact on cultural heritage, labour-related risks and local content, and security.

3.9.1 Land use and livelihoods

Preliminary land use mapping of the pipeline route corridor undertaken so far helps to understand the project's potential impacts on settlements and activities, but needs to be ground-truthed, and land ownership information is still to be provided. The full extent of the impact on current land use will be assessed in the upcoming work. In addition to the pipeline, the project will need land for other permanent facilities, such as the pressure reduction and metering station, an operation building and the temporary 30-meter-wide pipeline right-of-way for construction and soil storage, etc.

Presumably, impact on land use and livelihoods will be addressed further in LRP and RAP (livelihood restoration and resettlement action plans) but the link between these and the ESIA is not yet well established. A "land access and resettlement action plan" is listed as a "typical mitigation measure" in Chapter 7, and as a deliverable separate from the ESIA in the ToR in Chapter 8. The ToR also sets out a number of studies that will be done within the ESIA, such

as: a survey to refine the route choice within the 100-meter buffer zone¹³, and the socio-economic field baseline survey. The latter will be tackled essentially through a qualitative approach (focus groups, community participatory mapping and key informants' interviews and a detailed route walkover survey¹⁴). Land use and livelihoods will be also addressed in these studies, but the PAPs (project affect peoples) will presumably be identified in the LRP and RAP.

The NCEA recommends that the planning of the ESIA and LRP/RAP processes is integrated or aligned, as soon as possible. Clarify in the ToR for the ESIA what information and consultation on land use and livelihood will be addressed when, and how the ESIA and the LRP/RAP work will inform each other, as well as the design process.

We caution that the timelines for any resettlement action plan, livelihood restoration plan as well as for the entitlement, land valuation and compensation procedures needed are not to be underestimated. These are usually time consuming (and debated) activities that need to be carefully synchronized with the start of construction (and ideally also the ESIA).

The NCEA also wonders if impact on existing land use can be minimized by revising the approach to the proposed permanent right-of-way for the pipeline. The scoping document describes a permanent safety exclusion zone of up to twenty meters wide along the pipeline route, where trees will not be allowed due to safety considerations. Rather than not allow trees at all, vegetation exclusion could be limited to deep-rooted trees to maximise land-use in agricultural land. There are examples of pipeline safety exclusion zones that allow shallow-rooted vegetation¹⁵. Furthermore, given the economic and cultural value of olive trees in the area, existing olive trees could be temporarily moved and stored in a dedicated place during construction, and replanted once construction is finalized. As olive trees are shallow-rooted, replanting could be considered along the permanent right-of-way.

The NCEA recommends revisiting the criteria for the permanent right-of-way to support reducing the impact on existing land-use, and to include this in the ToR for the ESIA.

3.9.2 Cultural heritage

The possible presence of tangible archaeological heritage and intangible cultural heritage was taken into account in the scoping process. A number of mitigation options are noted in

¹³ This is described as "a detailed route refinement survey of the proposed route conducted with EPCM and supported by consultations with the CMWU and UNDP". The objectives given for this route survey are avoidance and reduction of impacts and risks among which erosion, flooding within the wadi Gaza, impact on areas of ecological value, arable land, residential receptors close to the route, access to water for livelihood purposes during construction, etc.

¹⁴ This survey is described as a detailed route walkover survey to assess the social characteristics and sensitivities of those living on the route. This survey is part of the social baseline and included in the ToR of the ESIA. This survey will be conducted after the route refinement survey is done.

¹⁵ See for example the Trans-Adriatic-Pipeline in Italy:

- <https://www.tap-ag.com/sustainability/environmental-protection/biodiversity>
- <https://www.tap-ag.com/land-and-local-residents/safety-near-the-pipeline>
- <https://www.tap-ag.com/news/news-stories/tap-italy-qa-re-olive-tree-removal>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h7BDF53W6c>

Chapter 7 of the document. The ToR for the ESIA in Chapter 8 proposes a walkover survey for ground truthing along the pipeline route but does not develop the mitigation from the previous Chapter further. The NCEA suggests that the walkover survey should be extended to cover all areas where physical ground disturbance takes place (associated facilities, temporary storage yards, borrow pits, new access roads, etc.). Trial pits should also be considered (as described in Chapter 6) to assess the likelihood/risk of impact on cultural heritage.

The NCEA recommends to consider extending the tangible archaeological heritage survey in the ToR to a wider area, while also clearly specifying which areas would be covered by the walk-over and any trial pits. The NCEA also recommends that the ESIA:

- Further define the approach for safeguarding known cultural heritage sites.
- Establish a strategy to minimise the risk of chance finds during construction by e.g., trial pitting and additional investigation.
- Establish procedures for a rapid cultural heritage site assessment to cover areas previously not investigated (e.g., for the borrow pits to be identified at a later stage by construction contractor).
- Establish a chance finds procedure and associated personnel requirements for supervision during physical ground disturbance as part of the ESMP.

3.9.3 Labour assessment and local content

As noted in Chapter 2 of this advice, conclusions made in the assessment of the gaps between the EIB standards and the Palestinian requirements have not been consistently translated into concrete assessment work to be undertaken in the ESIA. This applies to the assessment of labour associated risks as well. The gap assessment states that “ESIA will cover all specific labour-related information named in the EIB standard”. But the ToR for the ESIA in Chapter 8 does not include the specific topics that the EIB ESS 8 lists, such as the working conditions, compliance with ILO Core Labour Standards, etc.

The NCEA recommends that the ToR for the ESIA specify the aspects of the EIB ESS 8 labour assessment that the ESIA will address, and the labour issues that need to be tackled in the ESMS and ESMP.

Local content through local employment and local sourcing is covered by the scoping document. The risks linked to unmet expectations and competition over job access are also highlighted. This seems particularly important in the context of Gaza which is characterized by a very high level of unemployment and restricted economic development. However, some important aspects are not mentioned. For instance, in order to enhance the local content, an assessment of skill availability and gap analysis against the project’s workforce needs is necessary.

The NCEA recommends expanding the ToR text regarding local content to include skills availability and gap analysis in the baseline.

It is noted in the scoping document that specialized personnel, such as welders, will be expatriate. This is understandable for jobs requiring specific skills, training and certification. But for other, less technical, assignments this will not be the case. A training plan for certain categories of skills would be useful. It is also important to clarify with stakeholders what 'local' means in practice (i.e., from Gaza?) to avoid misunderstandings and to manage expectations.

The scoping document suggests that the access of local enterprises to the project opportunities will be low because of different barriers that exist. It also states that the project will maximize purchasing goods and services from Gaza. But it is not said how existing barriers will be overcome, and it seems that no data is going to be gathered on this matter. In order to identify realistic opportunities that local suppliers can benefit from (e.g., catering, transport of personnel), the socio-economic baseline should provide some information on the capacities of local enterprises to meet the project's needs. Engaging with local economic stakeholders should be part of this effort.

The NCEA recommends considering local supplier opportunities and the development of a training plan in the ESIA, and therefore in the ToR in Chapter 8 of the scoping document.

3.9.4 Occupational health and safety

Pipeline construction carries occupational and safety risks for the workers engaged, which will need to be managed through adequate operational procedures, protective equipment, training, etc. This is recognised in the gap assessment, but the impacts Chapter of the scoping document and the ToR in Chapter 8 focus on community health and safety, less so on occupational risks. For example, the gap analysis notes that HAZIDs (Hazard identification) and HAZOPs (Hazard and operability studies) are needed to assess working environment risks, but these are not linked to the ESIA work, and not mentioned in the ToR.

The NCEA recommends that the ToR more clearly integrate the work needed to meet the EIB requirement on occupational health and safety, and specify how this will be addressed in the ESIA and ESMP.

3.10 Assessment of risks of unplanned events

The ToR in Chapter 8 of the scoping document is very brief regarding risks related to unplanned events. It refers to the Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA) described in Chapter 7. However, there is practically no detail on the QRA in Chapter 7. The assessment of natural disasters (seismic events, flooding, scouring, etc.) is not well described in the scoping document. There are currently significant data gaps that need to be filled by the geotechnical and geophysical surveys by EPCM. Geohazards create a significant risk to pipeline operation and require assessment as part of the unplanned events. Other natural hazards such as flooding, water induced-corrosion, pipeline displacement due to vegetation rooting also need to be considered (see also section 3.2).

In addition, we note that the risk of Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs) is not addressed and not included in the ToR for the ESIA. Nor are other human-made hazards, such as (illegal) sand mining or projectile impact. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the impact associated with accidental events such as a pipeline rupture can have transboundary impacts.

The NCEA recommends augmenting the ToR for the ESIA to address risk and impact associated with both natural and human-made hazards. Their probability of occurrence and potential effects need to be considered, as well as relevant mitigation measures and monitoring. It is possible that these risks will be appropriately addressed in the engineering process, in which case that should be explained in the ESIA. See also section 3.2.

Risks related to security operations for the pipeline are addressed in the scoping document. However, we note that for security aspects the standard referred to in the scoping document is the Voluntary Principles of Security and Human Rights. To meet EIB standard, the following references need to be added: UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the International Code of Conduct on Private Security Providers.

The NCEA recommends expanding the security considerations in the ToR to include relevant UN codes. Note that this will likely imply a more detailed security assessment.

Annex 1: Suggestions to improve the readability of the ESIA documents

While the report is generally well structured and well written, the NCEA has some suggestions for improving the readability. These can be acted on if it is decided that the scoping document itself needs to be revised in its entirety. If not, these suggestions can be a reference for future documentation in the ESIA for the Gas for Gaza project.

The NCEA notes that:

- The executive summary is far too long, and very descriptive in nature. It does not concisely present the scoping process and key conclusions. More graphics and visuals, especially map material, would be helpful.
- A table of content is important for the navigability of a scoping report. There is no table of content in the document version that the NCEA reviewed. We have been informed that such a table will be added to the final version of the document.
- The legend of fig. E-S1 (and similarly fig. 1.2, 2.6 and 3.2 as the same figure is used) could be improved incl. showing national borders to help with visualization. Furthermore, the insert needs to be corrected (it now shows eastern Africa).
- Table 7.1 screening matrix for planned events is not transparent as there is no legend. Furthermore, the table does not always correspond to the text provided later.
- The benefit of the 2.6 bcm gas supply to the GPP is not clearly described. The text sometimes refers to enabling 140 MWe power generation which would stabilize electricity supplies for 24 hours, sometimes 600 MWe is stated to be needed to reach electricity security.
- There is an extensive use of abbreviations throughout the report which makes the text more difficult to read.
- The more technical design and routing descriptions in Chapter 2 are sometimes hard to follow. Also, Table 2.7 in that Chapter is difficult to grasp and at times seems arbitrary. Why, for example, is routing through the Wadi considered to be a schedule risk and what could be abnormal construction requirements?
- The methodology and ranking of impacts are not introduced until Chapter 8. While a preliminary assessment is already made in Chapter 7. Readers therefore struggle to understand the rationale for the conclusions of Chapter 7. Furthermore, there is inconsistency regarding the operational phase as maintenance is not always taken into account.
- Table 8.1 would benefit from an additional column listing the data gaps identified in Chapter 6 as this would allow better evaluation of the proposed activities during the ESIA stage.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

State of Palestine
Environment Quality Authority



State of Palestine
Palestinian Energy & Natural
Resources Authority

سلطة جودة البيئة
صادر عام
الرقم: ٤١٣ - ٢٥٢٦
التاريخ: ٤ - ٥ - ٢٥٢٥

No : _____

Date: _____

Ms. Tanya van Gool
Commission's Vice Chair International
Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment

Subject: Request for Advice -Gaz 4 Gaza Project

The Gaz 4 Gaza (G4G) project facilitates the agreement and construction of a gas pipeline from the Israeli gas network to Gaza power plant, in support of the Palestinian efforts to secure access to reliable, affordable cost effective and sustainable energy in Gaza. It is led through the formal Task Force platform, launched and chaired by the Office of (OQ), in support of the State of Palestine.

The Task Force operates with the close support of the Government of the Netherlands, which has played a crucial role in funding the platform and providing technical and political support to the G4G project since 2015. In addition, in 2018 the European Union (EU) became one of the project partners. During the beginning of 2020 a draft ToR for developing Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) scoping and report for G4G project.

Based on our previous communication regarding G4G project, the Environment Quality Authority (EQA) and Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA) kindly request the assistant of Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) to:

- Review the ESIA scoping document, as well as the ESIA report
- Support the national decision-making including the national Environmental Impact Assessment committee in the ESIA/environmental approval, to ensure quality of the ESIA, to enhance the credibility of the ESIA process, etc.

For the official communication please contact:

EQA, Mr. Ahmed Abu Thaher, Position Director General for Projects and International Relations
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بريد الكتروني:



A-B

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

State of Palestine
Environment Quality Authority



State of Palestine
Palestinian Energy & Natural
Resources Authority

No : _____

الرقم: _____

Date: _____

التاريخ: _____

PENRA, Mr. Abdul Hadi Barakat, Position Director General for Project Management Unit
Mobile:0562002448 - E mail: abarakat@menr.org / abarakat@penra.pna.ps

Sincerely Yours,


Eng. Adalah Atteereh
Chairman of EQA




Eng. Zafer Milhem
Chairman of PENRA



CC: Mr Rob Verheem, Director International - NCEA
Bobbi Schijf Technical Secretary International Cooperation- NCEA ,

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Netherlands Commission for
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State of Palestine Environment Quality Authority
Eng. Adalah Atteereh, Chairman of EQA
Al Bireh –P.O. Box 3841
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Palestinian Energy & Natural Resources Authority
Eng. Zafer Milhem, Chairman of PENRA

our reference
7109-01

enquiries to
Bobbi Schijf

direct phone no.
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CC: Tessa Terpstra Netherlands Embassy in Jordan
Subha Ghannam Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah
Roxana Mastor, Office of the Quartet

Date: 18 May 2020

Subject: Request for advice on the ESIA for the Gas for Gaza project

Dear Ms Adalah Atteereh and Mr Zafer Milhem,

We have received your letter dated the 4th of May, 2020, requesting the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) to advise you on the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) for the Gas for Gaza (G4G) project. You have asked for our advice on the ESIA scoping report and ESIA report for this project. This advice will support decision-making by the national EIA committee on the ESIA/environmental approval for the G4G project and will help to improve the quality of the ESIA and enhance the credibility of the ESIA process.

We thank you for this request and are pleased to be able to honour it. Please find in the annex to this letter a more detailed description of our working process, and the conditions under which we can provide advice. This same information has also been shared with your organisations in previous communications, but we have made some updates to this text related to the current travel restrictions. Normally, the NCEA visits the country where the project is to take place, and specifically the proposed project area, as part of the advisory process. However, dependent on the duration of the current COVID-19 related measures, we may need to explore long-distance means to interact with yourselves and relevant ESIA stakeholders for our advice.

We will swiftly commence the preparation of the requested advice. Dr Bobbi Schijf will be the main contact for the day-to-day arrangements. She will get in touch with the contact persons



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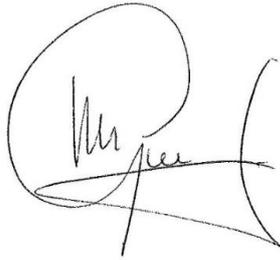
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you have indicated: Mr Bakarat and Mr Abu Thaher, as well as the contact persons at the relevant Netherlands representation offices and the Office of the Quarter, to determined how best to proceed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if there are any questions or unclarities concerning the advisory process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tanya van Gool', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Tanya van Gool
Vice Chair International NCEA



Annex:

Working process NCEA independent advice

- In order to prepare an advice on an ESIA for a project, the NCEA puts together a tailor-made working group of experts, as follows:
 - A chair of the working group who is responsible for strategic contacts with yourself, and any other key parties. The chair also ensures that the working-group prepares a well-balanced advice with sound scientific content and clear messages for decision makers. A chair typically has significant (international) experience with complex decision-making processes. The current chair for our international activities is Ms Tanya van Gool.
 - A technical secretary who coordinates the activities of the working group and is responsible for drafting the advice, based on the expert input. This technical secretary is also the main contact person for day-to-day arrangements. In this case, this role will be fulfilled by Dr Bobbi Schijf.
 - Both the chair and the technical secretary are permanent staff members of the NCEA secretariat.
 - The experts of the working group cover the relevant fields of expertise concerning the impacts of the project in question. They are not NCEA employees. When appointed as a working group member they are expected to operate as an independent expert, and not on behalf of an organisation they may normally work for.
 - You will be informed of the selection of experts and will be given the chance to point out any possible (perceived) conflict of interest of these experts. If there is any reasonable doubt as to whether an expert can advise independently, the NCEA will reconsider the engagement of this expert. The NCEA's secretariat will take the final decision when this situation arises.
- In principle, the working group visits the country where the project is to take place, and specifically the proposed project area. The working group will normally meet with the project proponent (PENRA), the ESIA team, as well as government staff responsible for ESIA/Environmental approval (EQA). The working group also meets with a selection of (representatives of) other stakeholders who have an interest in the project.
- In practice, it may be agreed that staff of the proponent and/or environmental authority join the working group during specific location visits or stakeholder meetings. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.
- A site-visit generally takes somewhere between 3 and 6 days (in-country, excluding travel to the country itself). At the end of the site visit, the working group will normally hold a meeting with the requesting party to share the preliminary conclusions. Other interested parties can be invited to this meeting, in agreement with yourselves.
- However, given the current COVID-19 related travel restrictions, as well as security-related difficulties in travelling into and within Gaza, we will have to consider how best to organize interaction between the working group and key Palestinian parties. We may need to make use of video conferencing and other online meetings formats. Key aim will be to ensure



sufficient appreciation of the project setting, and potential impacts on stakeholders, for the working group.

- After the site-visit, or an alternative programme of virtual meetings, the NCEA will prepare the draft advisory document. The NCEA review is confined to the ESIA documents (scoping report or ESIA report) and the ESIA activities that have provided the basis for that document. The NCEA will provide an assessment of the quality and completeness and, when relevant, identify any essential shortcomings in the ESIA work. The advisory document will also set out how those can be remedied. The NCEA will not comment on the acceptability of the project as such, or advice on whether this project should take place or not.
- The draft advisory document will be shared with you to verify whether it is understandable, and to provide opportunity to point out any mistakes or misunderstandings in the document. The working group will also be open to any recommendations on how to optimise the utility of the advice document, given the specific sensitivities related to this project. Typically, we will have a meeting directly with the requesting party to discuss any feedback on the advice, as well as the appropriate timeline for disclosure. We will then amend the advisory report as necessary, on the basis of this communication. However, the contents of the advice remain the responsibility of the NCEA itself.
- The final advisory reports of the working group will be sent to PENRA and EQA and all actors the working group has met during their visit, or in a virtual meeting. It will simultaneously be made publicly available on the website of the NCEA (www.eia.nl).

Working conditions

To enable the NCEA to provide a review advice, the following working conditions are needed:

- Access to information, the includes the key ESIA documents, as well as any other documents we need to consider to understand the ESIA work. Unless otherwise indicated beforehand we will assume that the information will be available in English.
- The NCEA will need assistance from the requesting party in making arrangements for (virtual) meetings with relevant actors.
- The NCEA's operational budget will cover all the costs for the NCEA working group (fees, travel, accommodation, etc.). This budget does not extend to any costs associated with local staff (of the PENRA or the EQA for example) that may accompany the working group during the site visit or attend virtual meetings.
- Experience has shown that an advisory report can be finalised in six to eight weeks from the moment we receive the document to review. We are more likely to meet this this timeline if we have been forewarned when the document can be expected, so that we can mobilise the working group. The support from the requesting party with the local arrangements is also an important factor in this timeline.
- We would also request that the PENRA and the EQA cooperate with future monitoring and evaluation of the outcome of the advisory report.

