



*Improving governance,
collaboration, transparency
& inclusiveness*

Environmental Assessment in Landscape Management

Ten Cases

Benin, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Madagascar,
Mali, The Philippines, Suriname, Tanzania,
Uganda, Zambia

Publication by:

The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) and Shared Resources Joint Solutions (SRJS), a strategic partnership between IUCN NL, WWF NL and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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November 2020



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Environmental Assessment in Landscape Management



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1 Environmental Assessment in Landscape Management

Thank you for your interest in this publication on environmental assessment in the Shared Resources, Joint Solutions (SRJS) programme. SRJS is a strategic partnership between IUCN NL, WWF NL and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs that ran from 2016 till 2020. SRJS worked across the world in 26 landscapes that provide ecosystem services essential for local communities and broader economic development. Among many other approaches SRJS decided that Environmental and Social Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment would also be good tools to enhance multi-stakeholder dialogues. Why these tools?

Why environmental assessment?

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) is a potentially powerful tool for making fact-based, inclusive, transparent, and accountable decisions at project level. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) instrument complements ESIA and brings various stakeholders together around strategic-level decisions on plans, policies, or programmes. Both ESIA and SEA aim to incorporate social and environmental considerations into decision making. Both also aim to make the assessment and planning processes more transparent. This transparency stimulates authorities to work together, in coalition with private sector and civil society, in a formalised manner. The formal link with decision making is conducive to enforcement of decisions and strengthens ownership – so people and organisations take more responsibility in the implementation of decisions.

Did this also work for SRJS?

At first, not all SRJS partners were familiar with the ESIA and SEA tools and needed time to see if, and how, it would help their work. SRJS asked the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) to create more awareness on this. Gradually, with time, more and more SRJS partners started promoting or applying ESIA and SEA in their landscapes and programmes. It depended on the priorities in the landscapes which approach was chosen. In some cases, concrete infrastructure investments asked for active participation of CSOs in ESIA and permitting for those projects. In other cases, land use planning in the landscape called for integrated SEA and planning processes. Today, some 3 to 4 years later, it would be interesting to learn what these approaches brought the SRJS partners. How did ESIA and SEA work for them, what went well, what remained challenges? What happened in the landscapes?

Booklet

This booklet presents an overview of experiences with ESIA and SEA in SRJS, through cases from ten countries across three continents. These cases were shared and discussed, and lessons drawn during a webinar in October 2020. Be on the look-out for the full papers on these experiences, expected to be presented at the conference of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) in May 2021.



2 Key observations

At the start of the SRJS programme, several SRJS partners questioned whether ESIA and SEA would have a distinct added value to the landscape approach. Wasn't the landscape approach in itself supposed to be a participatory and inclusive route to landscape management? Why would additional procedures be needed to improve that further? Besides, they sometimes doubted the effectiveness of the tools of ESIA and SEA in the realities of their countries.

In those discussions, the NCEA would argue that the landscape approach and environmental assessment complement each other in several ways:

- Environmental assessment is mandatory for projects (ESIA) in almost all countries around the world, and a growing number of countries are making it mandatory for strategic decisions on plans, policies, and programmes (SEA). The landscape approach is usually voluntary.
- Environmental assessment is intrinsically linked to formal decision making: the granting of a project licence requires ESIA; the adoption of a plan, policy or programme requires SEA. As such, environmental assessment complements the landscape approach by giving decisions a strong legal basis.
- The landscape approach promotes multi-stakeholder engagement in decision making. ESIA and SEA can strengthen this as they are often the only formal processes for which public participation is statutorily required. Also, they often require that documents produced in the process are made public, thereby allowing effective participation.
- An important step in both ESIA and SEA is the development and equitable comparison of alternatives. This allows the best option to be

selected for a project or plan, given the economic, environmental, and social considerations expressed by the different stakeholders.

After four years of practice and experience in different forms and settings, the cases in this booklet demonstrate that indeed, environmental assessment complements the landscape approach in important ways. SRJS' work on ESIA and SEA shows that transparency and inclusiveness did improve in many cases. The link with formal decision making opened new avenues and partnerships to SRJS partners that previously did not exist. It stimulated cooperation with government authorities, whom in turn came to understand the importance of engaging civil society and have come to value their contributions in decision making processes. Dialogues have become more neutral and partners more credible.

Of course, challenges remain, and commitment does not come overnight. These processes take time, require listening and conscious effort. They also require funding, which should come at least partly from the responsible authorities themselves. But the consensus is that this is a worthwhile investment which pays itself back through better quality, more transparent and more accountable decisions.

In a recent study of the landscape approach as applied in SRJS, the authors call for 'the power of ESIA and SEA to be built into landscape strategies'¹. Likewise, the SRJS partners whose work is presented in this booklet are convinced that they should continue working with ESIA and SEA in their landscapes. They are not there yet, but a good and promising start has been made. The partnerships lead to trust that many expect to last even beyond the specific ESIA or SEA process at hand.

¹Landscapes in perspectives, a study on SRJS & the landscape approach (EcoValue, Final Draft, August 2020)



3 Application of ESIA and SEA in SRJS: Three themes - ten cases

3.1 Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA)

In Benin, Suriname, Uganda and Zambia, SRJS partners worked on ESIA for projects. Some worked on an individual ESIA case, others to improve the system by developing guidelines or building capacity of civil society. Many invested in creating a more transparent decision-making process and in strengthening the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the assessment and review.

CSOs: a recognised party

Overall, the picture is clear: while CSOs have become more aware of their convening role and more experienced in how to influence ESIA processes, authorities from their side have come to recognise civil society as skilled and serious parties in those processes. “There is now more pressure to do things better”, as one SRJS partner put it. Because of these results, there is now more awareness on the importance of transparency and dialogue during the ESIA phase but also during project implementation.

Transparency

The cases show that transparency did improve. ESIAs do help in making information available to affected stakeholders and to the general public. However, while access to information is improving in several countries, it remains difficult in others, both during the ESIA process as well as after decision making on the ESIA, during project implementation. Therefore, government should more actively reach out, and actively involve CSOs in compliance monitoring during project implementation, to see whether environmental and social management plans (ESMPs) are really implemented.

Dialogue

Nevertheless, all cases show that ESIA helped improve dialogue and cooperation. CSOs contact authorities to listen to what they are saying. Relations with private sector improve. Government and civil society work together on developing sector guidelines. Government actively invites civil society to comment on ESMPs and resettlement action plans.



Benin



3.1.1 More inclusive ESIA in Benin

Based on input from Maximin Djondo, BEES, Benin

Since the transition to a democratic government in 1990, Benin has undergone economic recovery by carrying out key economic and structural reforms. Since then, the country realised major infrastructure projects, such as roads, seaports, and dams. Unfortunately, communities are not always fully aware of these developments and often lack the capacity to play a role in decision making processes. ESIA could change this, if effectively applied.

ESIA in Benin

The Government of Benin adopted its National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) in 1993 and revised it in 2001. Since then, it includes a description of the country's major environmental and natural resource management challenges, with a focus to better planning of urban development. Furthermore, the environmental law no. 98-030 makes reference to EIA guidelines (2017) and requires that EIA be applied to projects and programmes.

But implementation of ESIA in Benin often happens too late, or not at all. When it happens late, in many cases the major project decisions already have been made, and the ESIA becomes a formality. Even though it is required, affected people or CSOs are rarely consulted.

CSO capacity for ESIA

By investing in CSO capacity for ESIA, we aimed to increase understanding of the ESIA system and as

such, the ability to effectively participate in ESIA processes. To this end, in 2016 SRJS and its partners started collaboration with the NCEA and the Benin Environment Agency ABE. Especially the partnership with the NCEA made us broaden our scope. We built the capacities not only of CSOs, but also of local communities, academics and municipalities to lobby for a more inclusive and professional ESIA as well as SEA and prepare constructive participation and expert input. We also worked closely with the ABE to ensure an effective framework for the ESIA of projects and activities arising from policies, plans or programmes in Benin.

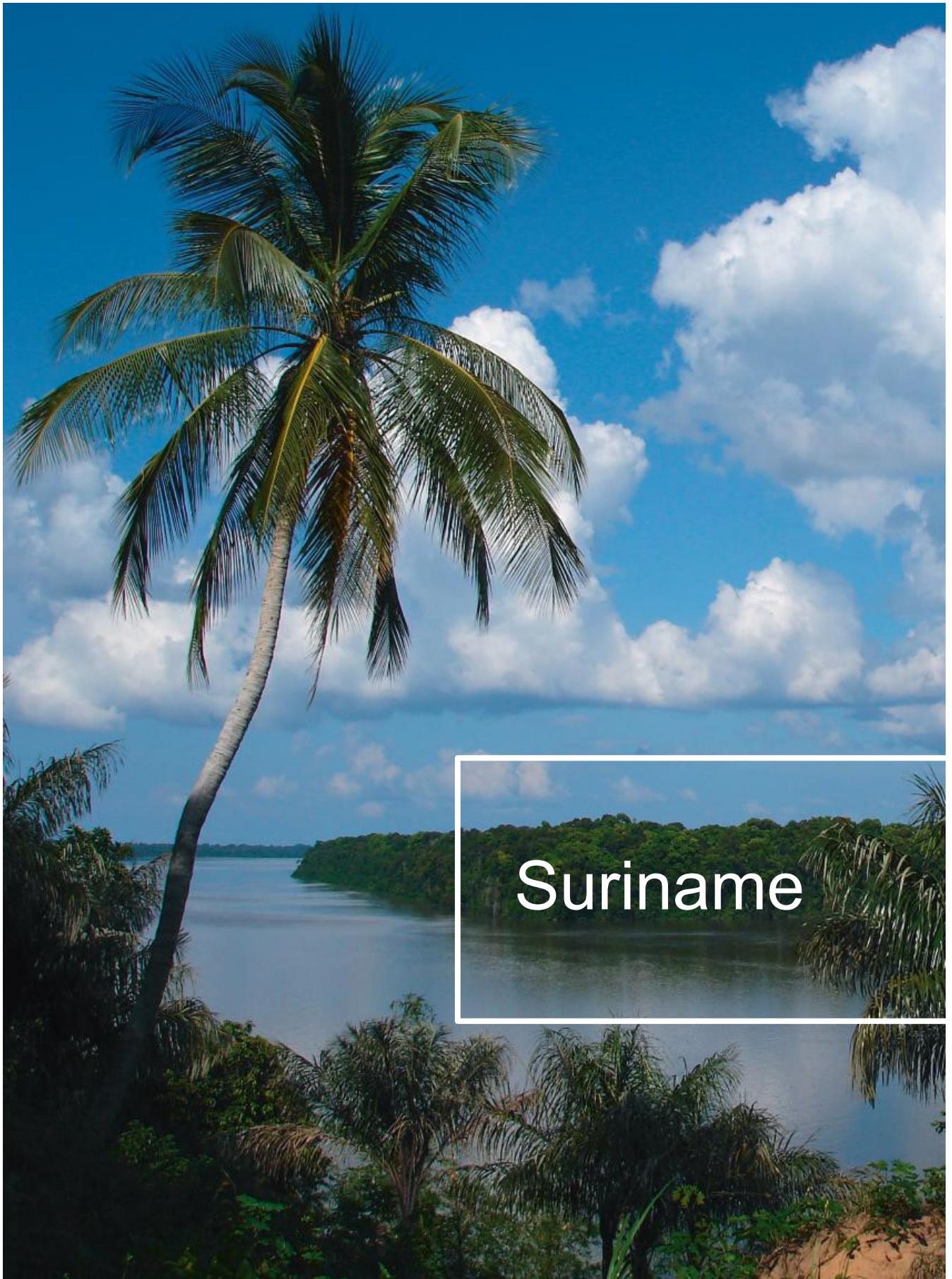
Recognition

Building the capacities not only of CSOs, but also all other stakeholders, helped the ABE to recognise the expertise and role of CSOs as reliable information providers. This led to a more important role of CSOs in the ESIA system, demonstrated by their contributions at the start of the ESIA when they voice local concerns, by their involvement in the validation of ESIA reports, but also by their work on the new ESIA decree, for example.

Before 2016, we were not part of the process. Now, we can more and more influence it. The new decree even formally recognises the role of CSOs and how we can be involved in the process. And in practice, this role is recognised as well.

Mono and Ouémé deltas

The Ouémé and Mono river deltas in the densely populated south of Benin are both of high biodiversity value. Many people living in the coastal area rely on its wetland resources and the functions they provide for their livelihoods. Rapid population growth, urbanisation and industrialisation are putting this area under pressure.



3.1.2 ESIA for oil exploration in Suriname

Based on input from Quan Tjon-Akon (NIMOS) and Farzia Hausil (WWF), Suriname

Suriname started producing crude oil from onshore fields in 1983. Exploration activities offshore have intensified over the years and seismic activities have been carried out for a major part of Suriname's offshore area. All activities in the oil sector are guided and monitored by the environmental agency, NIMOS. On the one hand, the oil industry can bring an economic boom for Suriname, but it can also result in significant environmental and social impacts and risks. The scale is impressive: since 2004, NIMOS reviewed 37 environmental impact statements. This year alone, three additional significant oil discoveries were made.

ESIA for project permitting

As recent as this year, in March 2020, Suriname's environmental framework law was approved. This should really help, as the framework law transformed ESIA from a voluntary process, to a mandatory one. Since the new law, sector specific guidelines for ESIA that are developed get legal status. With the help of SRJS and the NCEA, specific EIA guidelines for the offshore oil sector have been produced in September 2020, that should help to better regulate the sector. Among others, the

guidelines include guidance on establishing offshore environmental baseline and monitoring data.

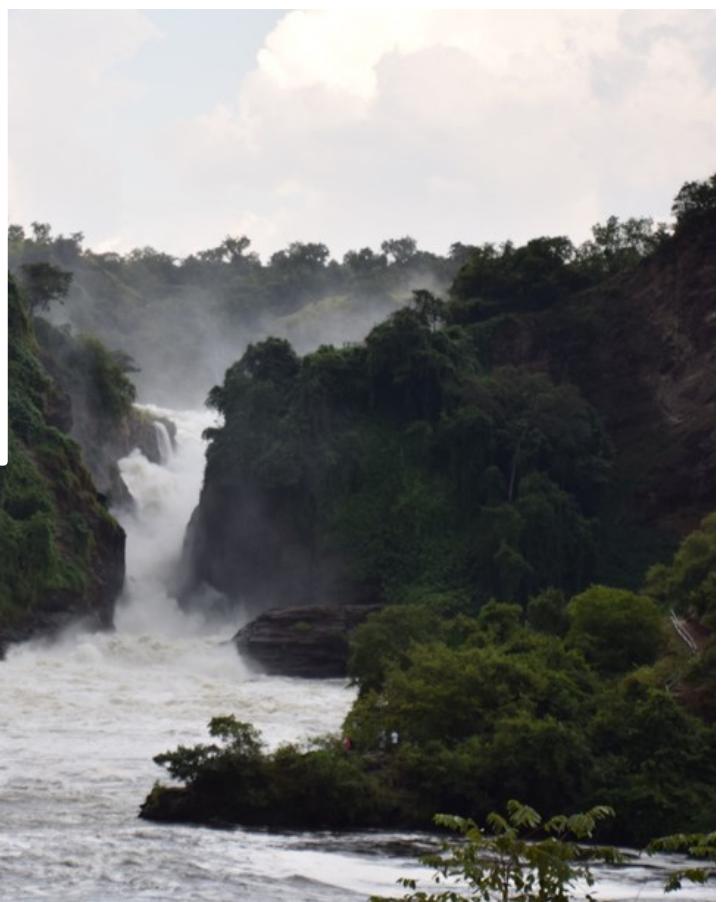
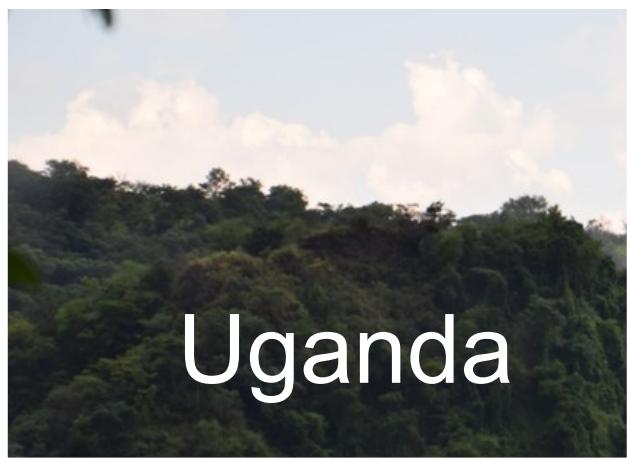
Future ESIA studies will show if it works. Companies show the tendency to follow the guidelines, so it is promising. It helped that they were involved in the development of the guidelines, which makes it more likely for them to comply with them.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Improving the quality of ESIA studies and better regulating the offshore oil exploration by developing sector specific guidelines is important. Next to that, we should also look at this sector from a broader perspective to ensure that its development is guided by high international standards and in harmony with the SDGs. The use of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is such a perspective. SEA is a new concept for the country and, although some initial awareness raising and capacity building for SEA took place, the opportunities to promote this tool as a key means of integrating environmental and social considerations into governments programs and policies are still largely to be explored.

Suriname

Aside from oil exploration, illegal alluvial gold mining and, as a consequence, road construction are also expanding in the pristine interior of Suriname. This is causing increased mercury pollution and disruption of rivers and streams, and opening up largely intact rainforests for development.



3.1.3 CSOs' role in ESIA for the Tilenga oil project, Uganda

Based on input from Dickens Kamugisha, AFIEGO, Uganda

Commercial oil deposits in Uganda were discovered in 2006. Since 2012, the Ugandan government and the oil companies operating in Uganda have been trying to fast-track oil production. The Tilenga project is one of the three main oil projects under which Uganda's oil reserves are being prepared for exploitation, others being the Kingfisher and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) projects. The oil reserves are mainly located in the Albertine Graben, a sensitive and biodiverse area of international importance and provisioner of services such as water, food, and climate resilience.

Legal requirement

To address the risks of oil exploration and related projects to environment and livelihoods, Uganda's laws require that ESIA studies be conducted before implementation of any oil project. The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) is mandated to either allow or reject any project depending on the gravity of threats and nature of mitigation measures. Unfortunately, in practice, poor assessment of the potential impacts of projects as well lack of compliance with the ESIA procedure continue to undermine the effectiveness of ESIA.

Engaging CSOs in ESIA

One way of enhancing the effectiveness of ESIA is to make it more inclusive. From 2017, the SRJS programme worked with the Africa Institute for Energy Governance AFIEGO and CSO partners to build the capacity of relevant stakeholders in Uganda to review and monitor ESIA reports and certificates of approval. That was timely, as in 2018,

an ESIA report was submitted to NEMA for the Tilenga oil project. Consequently, NEMA invited the public to review and make written comments on the Tilenga ESIA report. Public hearings on the report were also organized by the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) as the lead agency.

Comments on gaps

And yes, CSOs were able to engage in the review of the Tilenga ESIA. They participated in public hearings, managed to involve their leaders, and submitted written comments on the ESIA reports to NEMA. For Tilenga, the CSOs and other stakeholders identified several gaps in the ESIA report including incomplete mitigation plans to protect environment and livelihoods. Also, the report lacked assessment of project alternatives to give the public options during their review process.

Better process

Even though not all these gaps were satisfactorily addressed yet, NEMA went ahead to issue an ESIA certificate of approval. Therefore, a court case was started to challenge these decisions. While waiting for the ruling, we continue to monitor the implementation and compliance of certificate of approval. So, it is too early to tell. But a big and positive change can be seen in the process. Previously, citizens would not be aware of mitigation plans. Now, authorities, developers and citizens are talking about their implementation, monitoring and compliance. We hope that is a very good sign going forward.

Murchison

The Murchison landscape in Uganda harbours very critical biodiversity areas of national and international importance. The ecosystems are crucial for provisioning food, water and climate resilience to many people in Uganda and surrounding countries. These ecosystems and the services they provide are threatened by the emerging oil and gas sector and deforestation for food production.



Zambia



3.1.4 Engaging civil society in ESIA, Zambia

Based on input from Agness Musutu, WWF, Zambia

In Zambia, the policy and legal framework for Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) is quite strong. However, in practice its effectiveness leaves much to be desired. Compliance with the ESIA procedure is limited, ESIA reports are often of poor quality, there is limited capacity for follow-up and the governance of such processes is often inadequate. Although aware of these shortcomings, civil society is not always effective at influencing ESIA processes.

Missed opportunity

This is a missed opportunity, as civil society can be a rich source of (local) information that can be used for accurate impact assessments. CSOs could also check if the information in the ESIA is correct and complete, they can visit the site to check what is on the ground, mobilise people and prepare them for public hearings. Although the Zambian ESIA guidelines provide for stakeholder engagement, public consultations are often poorly attended, information is not available to communities and CSOs, or meetings take place in locations with difficult access for stakeholders, including CSOs. Another reason why CSOs are not always effective in influencing ESIA is that their capacities for review are limited.

This was also recognised by the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) when they call for comments on a project to provide technical reviews especially on hydrology and environmental flows. As the number of ESIA reports increased, the need to strengthen the capacity of other CSOs engage in the review of ESIA reports and stakeholder consultants became more apparent.

Building capacity

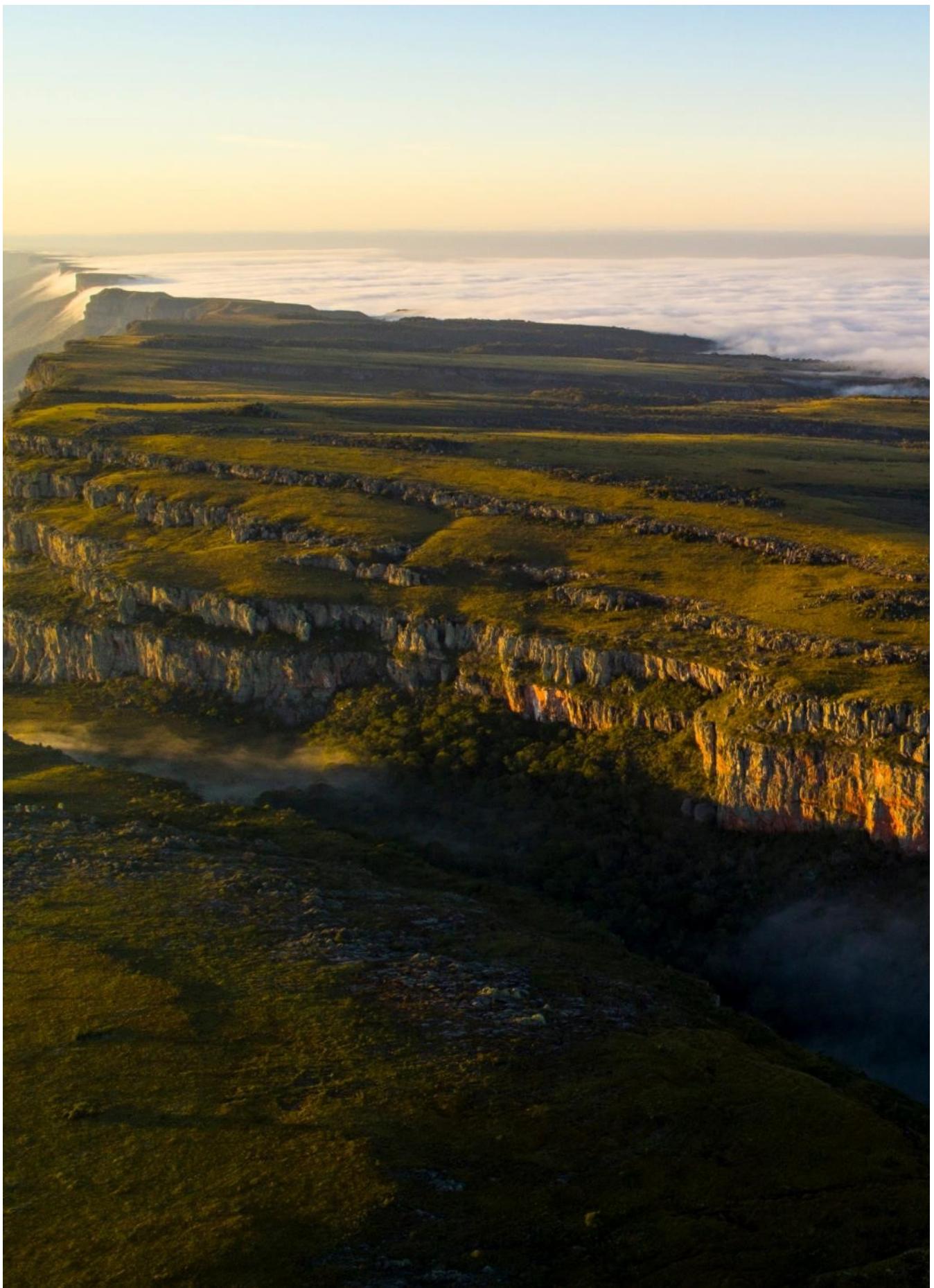
Over the last 5 years, WWF together with ZEMA and the NCEA and with support from SRJS, have worked with CSO partners on how to effectively participate in ESIA review. We learned how to formulate comments and submit them in time and in such a way that they can be formally taken into account in the procedure by ZEMA. This has led to CSO partners having engaged in more than 5 ESIA processes for large water infrastructure and mining projects, through the review of ESIA project reports, participation in public hearings for projects, and gathering and documenting information from the affected communities on their concerns. In addition, the coalition has also engaged in the review of the ESIA National guidelines, to increase CSO participation in decision making and ESIA processes.

Changing times

The situation is now changing quickly. There is an increase in interest from the general public and CSOs to address the reported flaws in ESIA processes. Increased vigilance and pooling of resources through localised coalitions, as well as national and international partnerships are heightening CSO involvement in ESIA processes. In addition, the mandated authorities are also building partnerships with CSOs to improve participation. Cases of communities working with CSOs and resorting to litigation to challenge decisions are increasing. ZEMA increasingly realises the benefits of collaborating with civil society in areas where they play complementary roles and continues to invite civil society to review and comment on large scale mining and hydropower projects in key landscapes. The informal and formal ways of engagement have helped to create trust and to reduce the problematic political constraints CSOs tend to face.

Zambezi

The Zambezi's freshwater ecosystems, that are crucial to water provisioning, food security and climate resilience, are threatened by infrastructure development, large-scale agriculture and mining.



3.2 Starting up Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

In many countries, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is still completely or relatively new. It may be part of the regulatory framework, but not be practised yet. Or the other way around: there may be some experiences with voluntary or donor-driven SEAs, but no guidelines or legal framework exists yet.

In Burkina Faso, Madagascar and Tanzania, SRJS partners started to work on SEA for the first time. What does it mean, to be starting something new in a context where there is little or no experience yet? What does it take to convince others of the added value of SEA? And to take a step further, to start actual SEA processes for concrete plans?

Partnership building

All cases show that it takes time to start planning processes and to convince parties to integrate SEA into that planning process. Investing in partnership is clearly at the core of starting SEA processes. Without trust among the stakeholders that are engaged in the development of a plan, it is hard to reach inclusive, sustainable decisions that respect the concerns of all involved. Different factors are mentioned that contribute to successful SEA and plan processes:

- Patience! Take time for the whole process of raising awareness, building trust, setting up meaningful stakeholder engagement, creating a good link with the right level of decision making. This may seem time consuming, but it pays off in the end. Often not only for the planning process at hand, but for other or future activities as well

- Listen! Listening to each other is more important than negotiating at the start of the process
- Multi stakeholder platforms are recognised as important in starting SEA processes. They help ensure that CSOs, governments and private sector are involved in the process jointly, at the same time. This is the foundation of building trust and getting to know each other and understanding where other views are coming from. It helps create a sense of joint responsibility and ownership. Only then collaboration can be optimised
- A neutral facilitator – in this case the NCEA – helps in connecting different stakeholders that do not traditionally find each other or recognise or respect each other's roles.

Challenges remain

And of course, challenges remain. For example, power dimensions continue to undermine processes. Discussions are initiated by CSOs, but the decision-making power is at a higher level. It takes time to change such dimensions. Also, private sector engagement remains challenging and time consuming. But it is also promising when this works.

Did the SEAs contribute to better decisions or plans? It is early days to draw conclusions, as the plans and their SEAs are still being developed in these cases. Yet, overall, all three cases show that processes are now more inclusive compared to the prior situation. Respect and recognition of the points of view of others have grown. The overall sentiment is that this will indeed result in plans that are better balanced between social, environmental, and economic concerns.



3.2.1 The Nakanbé Basin, Burkina Faso

Based on input from Mamadou Karama, AGEREF/CL, Burkina Faso

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) does exist in Burkina Faso but is little practised. The Environmental laws of Burkina Faso provide for SEA as a relevant tool for the planning and implementation of development policies, plans and programs that have significant impacts on the environment. Nevertheless, none of the national actors involved in the process (the Ministries in charge, environment agency BUNEE, other governmental and technical offices, and CSOs) have sufficient capacities for its realisation. Despite the limited experience with SEA, SRJS aimed to use it to achieve three major objectives for the sustainable management of the Nakanbé basin:

- To facilitate synergy of action, transparency, and complementarity
- To build trust among stakeholders and allow good collaboration that considers the different interests and needs
- To promote the practice of SEA in planning for landscape management in Burkina Faso.

Multiple pathways to change

In 2017, to fill the gap in capacities on SEA, the SRJS programme asked the NCEA to facilitate a first training on SEA as part of the landscape planning of the Nakanbé basin. Participants were key CSO partners of SRJS as well as the National authority of Environmental Assessment (BUNEE), watershed management agencies, technical governmental offices, mining companies, CSOs and community-based organizations.

Then, several developments contributed simultaneously to a greater momentum for SEA. On

the one hand, a separate cooperation between the NCEA and the BUNEE led to a greater open-mindedness of BUNEE. At the same time, SRJS empowerment activities resulted in greater community involvement in governance processes and added to the competencies and confidence of CSOs in advocating for better compliance with laws and regulations and the denunciation of evident shortcomings. In this, having solid information about the processes and activities is important. Thematic studies helped make convincing evidence available to the debate.

Today is greener

The result today is a greener and more inclusive governance of natural resources in the Nakanbé basin. One factor is better knowledge of the laws and regulations governing the management of water resources by all stakeholders. Another is better involvement of all stakeholders in consultation frameworks. Financing is also important, and we now see not only payment of taxes by mining companies, the financing of the action plans of the local water committees (CLE), but also in-kind protection of the banks of the Nakanbé river by the local communities with stone bunds and reforestation. Finally, the first SEA is now being carried out by the Water Agency of Nakanbé (AEN).

To start SEA and convince parties to apply it took time and effort. It was difficult to start dialogues and build partnerships with each stakeholder. The positive change we see today is to be attributed to not just one of the described initiatives, but by the combined efforts together.

Nakanbé

The Nakanbé Basin secures water, food, biodiversity and resilience to climate change for over eight million people. Due to poor governance and pressure caused by an increasing urban demand for basic products resulting from population growth as well as industrial and artisanal gold mining, the area suffers from biodiversity loss, land degradation and deteriorating water quality and quantity.



3.2.2 The Ampasindava peninsula, Madagascar

Based on input from Jeannie Raharimampionona, MBG, and Patrick Ranirison, Famelona, Madagascar

In Madagascar, territorial development planning is done at the regional and the municipal levels. This planning looks at the identification and analysis of the potential of each development sector in the region or municipality. Such approach looks at each sector separately and primarily focuses on socio-economic issues. As a result, it neglects the environmental and social impact dimensions. It also does not help articulate strategic visions for the various interventions of the territories.

In the Ampasindava peninsula in the north east of Madagascar, an SEA was launched to stimulate a more integrated and strategic planning. Ampasindava is very rich in biodiversity and has a lot of potential: mineral resources, marine and terrestrial protected areas, the agribusiness, the tourism... We expected from SEA a landscape development plan with a strategic vision for the potentially conflicting activities in the Ampasindava landscape, a plan that will consider the environmental and social consequences of the different choices to be made.

Integration of planning and SEA

Instead of applying SEA to evaluate existing territorial development planning, we have developed an approach combining both processes, conducting the SEA process integrated into the landscape development planning process. SEA is not yet part of the Malagasy system, so it took time to find out what would be the best way of doing it. Our challenges included ensuring effective engagement of local communities to the process at site level, and

at national level to align the processes with Madagascar's context. This meant dealing with two major issues 1) the unclear legal framework of SEA and 2) the gap in landscape development planning. It really takes time when such process is new.

Multi-stakeholder approach

The SEA involves all relevant actors in the governance of their space. We have used SEA to facilitate neutral dialogues, giving voice in a round table to the different stakeholders and potentially competing actors in the landscape such as local communities, civil society, scientists and conservationists, protected area managers, private enterprises (the mining company and tourism entrepreneurs), state services, and so on. Together, we developed an approach that shows which plan to develop, who is responsible for that plan, how to integrate the SEA into the planning process, and who should play which role. This approach was a joint decision and signed by the multi-stakeholder platform. This moment signified the formal start of the SEA and planning process.

Listening

The plan and SEA are not finished yet, but we managed to get the process started and to keep everybody on board. Even the mining company, whose activities are perceived as most threatening by other stakeholders, continues to come to the meeting. Key is to build trust, and to make sure that we listen to the other's interests, not only for them to understand our objectives. We have to keep listening to each other.

Ampasindava

The diverse ecosystems and the unique biodiversity that underpins local economies on the north-west coast of Madagascar are under pressure from shifting cultivation and large-scale mining, among other threats. A high proportion of the population relies directly on natural resources for their livelihoods, and competing claims over land and water are critical issues.



3.2.3 The Lake Rukwa Basin, Tanzania

Based on input from Andrew Mariki, LEAT, Tanzania

The Tanzania Environmental Management Act (EMA of 2004) requires that SEA be conducted when preparing new policies, bills, regulations, strategies, plans, and programmes. In 2017, the National guideline for SEA was published. This is one among several initiatives that Government deploys to mainstream SEA in National Development Plans. There is increased recognition that SEA is important in linking a healthy environment with the wellbeing of the citizens. Nevertheless, SEA practice is still very new in Tanzania. And it is a challenge: previous SEA cases in Tanzania show that knowledge of stakeholders on SEA is unsatisfactory, stakeholder engagement processes are often poor and access to relevant SEA information limited.

Roadmap

In 2018, the Ministry of Water planned to undertake SEA for the revision of the integrated water resources management plans for 5 basins, including Lake Rukwa Basin. Excessive water demand for socio-economic plans is a growing concern for Lake Rukwa. The approach allowed only a very short SEA process, with only one meeting with basin stakeholders. That would certainly be insufficient, especially given that SEA was new to most of the parties involved. Therefore, the SRJS alliance decided to work on a multi-stakeholder engagement roadmap for the SEA. This roadmap would help to build a shared understanding among basin

stakeholders and pave the way for effective and efficient stakeholder engagement during SEA implementation. That way, the stakeholders should be able to make sure that environmental and social concerns are addressed in the Lake Rukwa development plan, and not only socio-economic concerns.

Partnership building

The SEA is now at the level of scoping. We managed to proactively engage with government authorities – not just at national, but also at the district level. Trainings of different stakeholder groups helped prepare them for the SEA. At the level of the basin, a multi-stakeholder SEA platform was established. The interactions amongst stakeholder on SEA were continued in the already existing sub-catchment water user forums. That way, over 4500 people were engaged in the process.

Of course, the assessment stage is yet to start. But already we see better partnerships and trust between government and basin-based partners, including private sector and CSOs. The process so far resulted in the development of a Terms of Reference for the SEA, in which their points of view were included. This ToR is now submitted to the Ministry of Water. The level of trust and partnership that we have now reached will not just benefit this planning process, but others now and in the future as well.

Lake Rukwa

The biodiversity rich lakes, woodlands and national park of the Rukwa-Katavi landscape are under pressure from a steep increase in large-scale economic developments. This is exacerbated by poor land use planning and weak implementation of environmental regulations.



3.3 Complete Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA)

In Indonesia, Mali and the Philippines, SRJS partners concluded one or more SEA processes. Like the previous group, they also encountered challenges in starting up SEA processes and getting them properly linked to the appropriate planning process. How did they manage to make this happen? Important factors mentioned in all three cases were inclusiveness, commitment by government, and a neutral, facilitated process, with often CSOs as an external driving force.

Inclusiveness

SEA provides the opportunity to engage stakeholders that would otherwise not have the chance to be involved in decision making. This refers to broad inclusivity: different levels of government, owner and user groups, age groups, a good gender and cultural balance, and so on. Unfortunately, stakeholder engagement is not always effective and not by definition inclusive. It requires a deliberate effort to benefit from this opportunity brought by SEA. It was stressed that you need to engage with stakeholders in and according to their context. Therefore, in all cases an elaborate and participatory stakeholder mapping was done to identify whom to involve in the process. This is quite challenging in remote areas, but a prerequisite to know whom to involve, to understand their role and to design the best strategy to engage each of these (groups of) stakeholders.

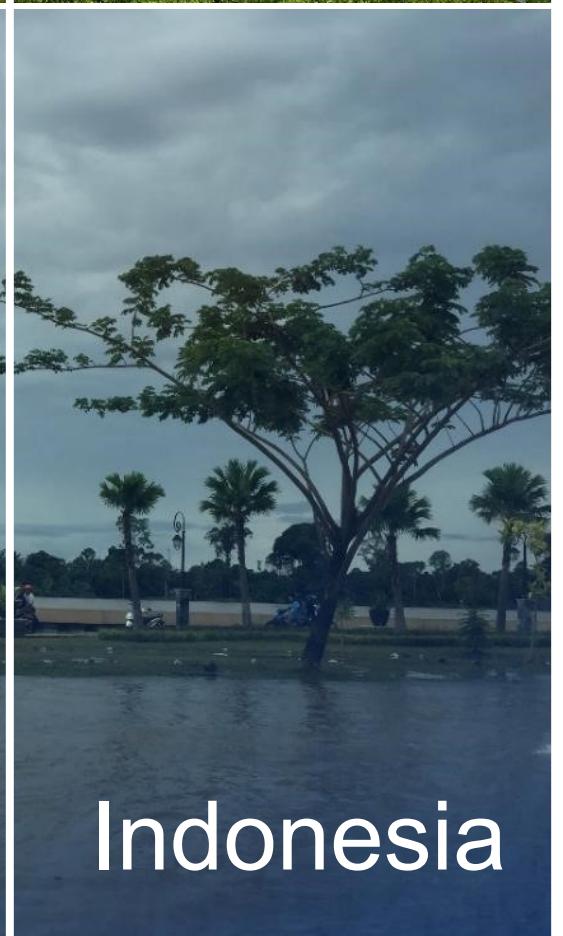
Government commitment

Another driving force in successfully concluding SEA was commitment of government. Such commitment is essential for the effectiveness of SEA in influencing decision-making on the plan that is being developed. Again, several factors that enhanced government commitment were recognised by the partners. Firstly, it helped when SEA was a requirement by law. The link with a formal planning process helped planners do their

job in a proper way. Related to that, the more closely the SEA is integrated into the planning process, the more likely it is to influence that same planning process, again motivating government to do a good SEA. Secondly, in all cases there was government involvement at multiple levels: local, regional and/or national. SEA was more effective where it involved governments at the appropriate levels and where it invested in dialogue between these levels, so that they came to acknowledge each other's different mandates and roles in decision-making. The above-mentioned stakeholder mapping exercises also helped to identify and engage high level decision makers from the start, which made them more likely to endorse the results from the SEA and their integration into the planning process. A third factor is funding. In all three cases, part of the funding came from external sources, but always in combination with funding from government itself. This shows commitment to get results, but also enhances commitment to jointly ensure an effective planning and SEA process.

A neutral process

For SEA to be effective and credible, it needs to be a process that is well designed and professionally facilitated, preferably by a neutral facilitator that is recognised as such by all stakeholders. In many instances, the NCEA brought this neutrality into the process, which helped convince governments and other stakeholders to kick-off SEA and start a neutral debate. In all cases, a strong CSO played an important role as a driving force throughout the process. They helped convince decisionmakers to do the SEA and acted as mediator, facilitator, and coordinator between stakeholders. This driving force pushes the process and makes government recognise the constructive role of CSOs in good governance. An important result that is likely to last beyond the individual SEA and planning process.



3.3.1 Spatial planning in Bulungan, North Kalimantan, Indonesia

Based on input from Astrid Puspitasari, Sawit Watch, Indonesia

SEA has been mandatory since 2009 for every policy, plan, and programme in Indonesia. It has to be undertaken by the local, provincial or national government. Even though SEA is relatively widely applied, in practice we see that the process is not always effective. How could that be changed? Sawit Watch is an Indonesian CSO that works on encouraging more participative SEA processes, first in the district of Berau, and recently in Bulungan, North Kalimantan. The goal of the SEA in Bulungan was to protect the Kayan watershed and delta and to integrate community forest areas into the spatial planning process.

A broader perspective

In the SEA for the spatial plan for Bulungan district, we tried to look beyond spatial or physical aspects of the environment. We recognised the human-environment interactions that create the landscape. These interactions make it even more important to engage stakeholders. And when doing so, we need to acknowledge the interactions that affect the environment beyond administrative borders. For example, upstream land use and activities affect the rest of watershed and the delta of the river. We invited local academics to strengthen the SEA process and to create a more holistic perspective.

Stakeholder participation

From our previous experience in Berau, we knew we needed to improve and diversify our strategy for public participation. Among other things, we developed an online platform, conducted several discussions with communities in the affected area

and used visual material to help the discussions. We organised participation from outside of the affected area and facilitated joint learning among other stakeholders. Also, we also tried to get commitment from the highest decision-makers in Bulungan.

Integration of SEA and planning

The SEA greatly contributed to our goal to protect the Kayan watershed and delta and to integrate community forest areas into the spatial planning process. This goal was achieved due to two key factors. Firstly, we ensured continuous communication between the SEA and the spatial planning teams. This way, the recommendations resulting from the SEA could be easily integrated and accommodated in the spatial planning process. Secondly, the SEA provided the opportunity for CSOs and local communities to be actively involved in that process. The involvement of stakeholders in the SEA process is crucial to ensure the integration of their inputs into spatial planning.

Future practice

There are still many challenges to ensure the effective integration of SEA into the planning process in Indonesia. Especially, we need to raise awareness of the importance of stakeholder participation in the SEA process. In Bulungan we managed to increase the participation of stakeholders, from communities, to local government officials, and local academics. We are hoping that this kind of participation of multiple stakeholders in SEA will guide future practice in Indonesia.

Bulungan, Kalimantan

In the watershed and delta of the Kayan River in Kalimantan, expanding palm oil, timber and mining industries and food & energy estates are the main drivers for rapidly decreasing natural ecosystems, causing soil deterioration, exacerbated floods and droughts by the damage to watershed forests upstream and food-insecurity for local communities.



Mali



Sourou

The limited land and water resources in the biodiversity rich Sourou floodplain are source of intense conflict between different users. Unsustainable practices have deteriorated this once fertile area considered the granary of the Mopti region. Among the main challenges are water management, population growth, land cover degradation, loss of biodiversity, and pollution.

3.3.2 Integrated and Sustainable Development of the Sourou, Mopti Region, Mali

Based on input from Bakary Koné, Free Lance Consultant, Mali

The Sourou is an area with enormous potential: it is a large floodplain with its related water resources, fish, biodiversity, rice fields, etc. It also meets various challenges: it is an unstable region where water and food insecurity, poverty and unemployment, climate change, population growth, degradation of natural resource and loss of biodiversity, soils infertility all play a role. These issues could not be dealt with purely from the national level, as is the custom in Mali. Instead, a multi-stakeholder platform of local authorities called the Inter Collectivité du Sourou (ICS) was set up. The ICS prepared an Integrated and Sustainable Development Programme for the Sourou. For this programme, an SEA was done, one of the first of this kind in Mali.

Unifying programme

The Sourou development programme functions as a unifying programme where the ICS invites programme and project proposals that fit within its principles. These are, among others, based on the sustainable development goals (SDGs), which were integrated into the planning process right from the beginning. Coupled with the effective participation of the population of the Sourou, and the continued search for synergy and alignment with existing and future projects, the programme is seen as the way forward to overcome the major challenges of the Sourou area.

The participative and transparent planning process meets the requirements of an SEA. The programme and SEA are published jointly, in four parts. Volume 1 presents the programme as such while Volume 2 represents the environmental impact report required by the SEA-decree issued by the Malian government. Volume 3 then contains the diagnosis and presents the data, mainly based on own field surveys among the population and historic statistical

data. Lastly, Volume 4, called Synergy & Alignment, presents an overview of four types of development programmes and projects of third parties in relation to the strategic axes of the programme.

Sense of urgency

The SEA development process has been completed, with the obtaining of the environmental permit from the Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development. The next step is its joint implementation. Because of the complexity of transboundary water governance of the Sourou River, the population had to lower their ambitions for rice irrigation for the moment. But the Sourou development programme increased the sense urgency for better water governance. And the participatory process helped build trust between the communities and the local authorities, the ICS. Similarly, the ICS now have the ear of the water authorities. In the meantime, the SEA helped them discover alternative options for sustainable development which they can give priority. Without it, we would see poorly designed development models with often irreversible environmental impacts.

Better governance

The Sourou SEA is one of the first applied in Mali. Its main contribution so far is that it created accountability and transparency of the ICS towards the citizens on choices made for the Sourou floodplain, as well as towards to national authorities. That way, SEA constitutes an ideal framework for decision-making, and for the ownership of the decisions taken. Already, we have started replicating this participatory approach to decision-making in another basin in Mali, the Sankarani sub-basin. In that sense, Sourou served like a field school for participatory planning and SEA in Mali.



The Philippines



3.3.3 Land use planning in Zamboanga del Norte, the Philippines

Based on input from Nonoy Panorel, PARTS, The Philippines

With rapid urbanisation in cities and town centres, increasing population, looming threats for food and health security, diminishing natural resources and intense climate change, land use management is of primal concern in the Philippines nowadays. Local governments are being pushed to formulate or enhance their land use planning to guide sustainable investments in various sectors. In the First District of Zamboanga del Norte in Mindanao, it was decided to embed an SEA in that planning process. A new and challenging approach, not in the least because of the political and cultural sensitivity of the area in Mindanao, in which the SEA was carried out.

Innovative planning

In the Philippines, this SEA process was an innovation from the usual process in planning and policy formulation. Important elements from the start were building trust, formulating shared objectives, and joint ownership of SEA results. This determined the commitment and courses of action to be undertaken for the successful conduct of SEA. Building trust and credibility was achieved through multiple actions. After an initial one-week training on SEA, a formal partnership was established between government and PARTS, to act as a local, neutral process manager. This helped establishing and mobilizing horizontal and vertical support with state and non-state stakeholders, including the academia. Multi-stakeholder dialogues and localised participatory activities such as consultations, workshops, and meetings, were organised. Sometimes, when the political situation so required, this was done on neutral and secured ground.

Inclusivity

The participatory planning approach that was brought along by the SEA also enabled indigenous peoples and CSOs to have their voice heard. Previously, they would not have been given attention. Now, their concerns related to environmental sustainability, ancestral domains, livelihoods, and food security, were not only given attention, but incorporated into the comprehensive land use plan.

SEA's contribution

The SEA has helped the local governments in the district to jointly redefine priorities. SEA provided: (a) an opportunity to develop more context-driven and evidence-based land use solutions putting primary consideration on the environment ; (b) a venue for stakeholders to participate in this planning process; (c) a good mechanism for dialogue and to influence decision-making to address land use issues, including conflicts in territorial boundaries and cross-boundary concerns affecting water, food, biodiversity and climate; and (d) alliances among local governments for cross boundary cooperation on the further implementation of the plans.

Of course, the undertaking of SEA should not stop with a decision and a plan. The next challenge is now the implementation and enforcement of the adopted comprehensive land use plan for District 1, Zamboanga del Norte. Being context-driven, this SEA has been an effective, relevant and convincing approach. SEA creates long-lasting impact and that is how other planning processes should be.

Zamboanga del Norte

Mining and other forms of land conversion threaten the ecosystems and natural resources on which many communities and sectors in the Philippines depend for water, food and climate resilience.

4 Reflections: looking back at the role of ESIA and SEA in SRJS

On behalf of SRJS: Edy Blom, IUCN NL, The Netherlands

SRJS was about facilitating multi-stakeholder cooperation to realise joint integrated landscape management. The planning and development of large infrastructural projects in those landscapes are often quite political processes, with long-term impacts, and high political and financial stakes, where power relations play an important role. Especially in contexts where civic space is restricted, SRJS' aim was to help CSO partners increase their influence on decision-making in the landscapes where they work.

Improving governance

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) seemed good instruments to incite and facilitate dialogue between stakeholders and get them to jointly provide input to the development and decision-making of projects and plans in a neutral manner. ESIA and SEA would also allow to work through the formal system and provide a legal basis for decision-making through a multi-stakeholder landscape approach. The landscape approach promotes multi-stakeholder engagement in decision making – one of the major pillars of the SRJS programme. It was hoped that promoting ESIA and SEA as tools for multi-stakeholder dialogue, and capacitating CSOs on the tools, would have two positive side effects related to governance: increasing civic space in general, and improving inclusiveness and gender equality – through bottom-up approaches - in decision-making in the landscapes.

Demand driven

SRJS worked at several levels, depending on the needs and opportunities in the different landscapes.

In countries where an initial needs assessment had shown interest among the SRJS partners to work with ESIA or SEA, the NCEA was asked to facilitate introductory activities to build basic ESIA and SEA awareness and understanding, and help articulate approaches that would best fit the local circumstances and needs. This could be working on the environmental assessment system and procedures themselves and the role of CSOs in these systems, the correct application of the environmental assessment laws and regulations, the content, and the participation of civil society. In other instances, it took the form of capacitating CSOs through training, coaching, and connecting them, inciting them to develop, show expertise and take up their role in ESIA or SEA. In yet other landscapes, specific SEA and planning processes were started or completed. In all countries where SRJS partners decided to work on ESIA and SEA, a link was sought with the competent authority on environmental assessment, and thus a link with formal planning and decision making. The NCEA would then accompany both the competent authority and the CSOs in the process. Collaboration with the NCEA in the use of ESIA and SEA in the landscape approach has been essential. Their role of neutral facilitator and trainer helped build trust in the process and between participants.

Wider collaboration, credible partners

Across the SRJS landscapes, and despite the wide variety in approaches, the ESIA and especially SEA trajectories have proven conducive for collaboration with a wider variety of actors than what these actors were used to, in the landscapes as well as at national level.

In the landscapes where an SEA was started or completed during the SRJS programme, the collaboration of CSOs with ‘new’ actors turned out to be an important advantage of the SEA. It appeared that highly differing stakeholders softened toward each other during the dialogue, diminishing their opposition in views and increasing their willingness to collaborate. Also, SEA for landscape planning indeed allowed for coalitions to formalise, across legal/administrative boundaries, creating transparency and creating ownership for joint, integrated solutions embedded in formal decisions for which stakeholders are accountable. A proper SEA as the ultimate inviting perspective is an important stimulant to look bigger and further ahead, more strategically. The programme clearly pushed CSOs to a more strategic level.

Transparency

And also in the countries where no concrete SEA was started (yet), the awareness and interest raised for environmental assessment pushed the responsible authorities to improve the functioning of the ESIA and SEA system as a whole, including securing an appropriate role for civil society. The CSO partners report that these processes have given them a way to be heard. Governments start to consider them as credible and often valuable partners. This in turn helped CSOs to address ecosystem and social concerns around the investments and plans.

Despite this progress, fact-based, inclusive, transparent, and accountable decision-making for projects and plans remains difficult if the cases are highly political and compliance limited. Without pressure e.g. from donors or an informed public to apply and comply with procedures, many projects continue to be surrounded with a lack of openness. In a context of restricted civic space, coalition building may be crucial in such cases.

Inclusiveness

SEA and ESIA have proven to be valuable, innovative tools for convening different viewpoints across the

landscape, including those of women and marginalised communities and population sub-groups, different age, ethnic and religious groups, lower level authorities, private sector, and so on. But of course, promoting inclusiveness of in such multi-stakeholder decision making processes, especially in highly heterogeneous settings, does not automatically ensure that it is done effectively. This also applies to engaging the private sector. This remained more limited, and only succeeded where they had a direct interest to engage, when concrete decision making in a landscape was likely to influence their activities directly.

Where these aspects of inclusiveness were explicitly addressed in the assessment process, they were also explicitly considered and embedded in landscape planning and development. This shows that it requires a specific effort to facilitate inclusiveness, such as by strengthening the capacity of specific stakeholders to participate and by supporting the organisation in their participation. Without such effort, the existing mechanisms that define the status quo in the landscape are more likely to guide the (auto) selection of participants.

Monitoring, compliance and enforcement

Our experience shows that an effective SEA or ESIA makes the planning and assessment process more transparent and this stimulates authorities to work together, with private sector and with civil society, in a formalised manner. However, the assessment results are not necessarily translated and formalised in decision-making, let alone implemented. More attention and effort need to go to monitoring, compliance, and enforcement. It is promising that increasingly, CSOs are also considered credible partners in this respect. Future programmes like SRJS should continue to apply ESIA and SEA to landscape management, and continue to promote inclusive, transparent, and accountable decision making and follow-up.

Colophon

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