

Strengthening Environmental Assessment Processes for Sustainable Minerals Management

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Session Overview

Purpose:

- To explore the role of **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)** and **Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs)** in sustainable minerals management, key challenges faced and recommendations for improvement.

Structure:

- (1) Presentation (~ 20 mins)
- (2) Q&A and Discussion (~40 mins)



What are EIAs and SEAs?

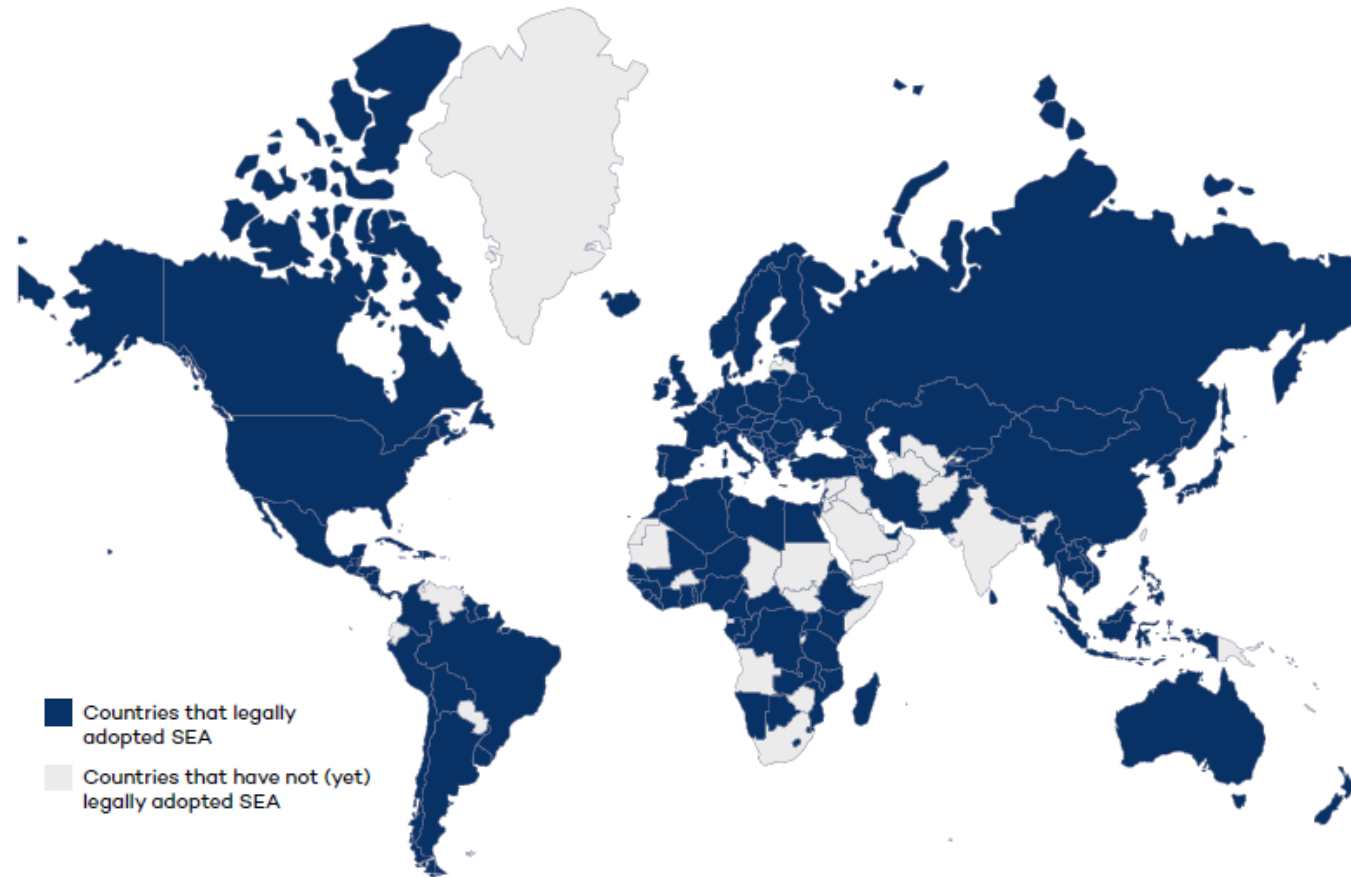
- **EIAs:** Primary tool for environmental decision-making.
 - Most widely used environmental planning, management, decision-making tool.
 - Linked to environmental permitting.
- **SEAs:** Gaining increasing momentum during the past 30 years.

Common Definitions:

- **EIAs:** Formal structure for assessing environmental implications of projects and its integration into the project cycle.
- **SEAs:** Proactive assessment of alternatives for plans and programmes, as well as policies, within a broader vision, set of goals or objectives.



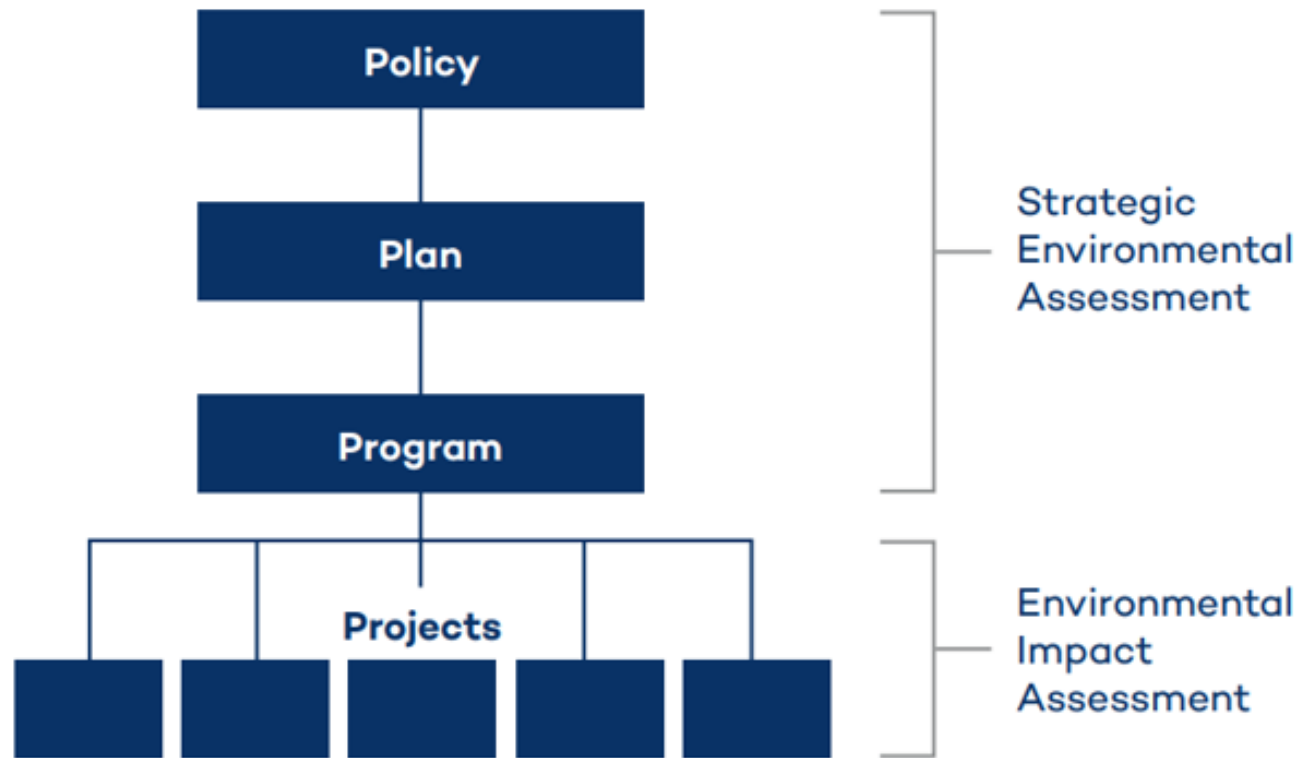
World map of SEA legislation



Source: Reprinted with permission from NCEA, 2024.

Source: *Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Mining Sector: Lessons from country case studies (April 2024) (IGF)*

EIAs and SEAs in decision-making



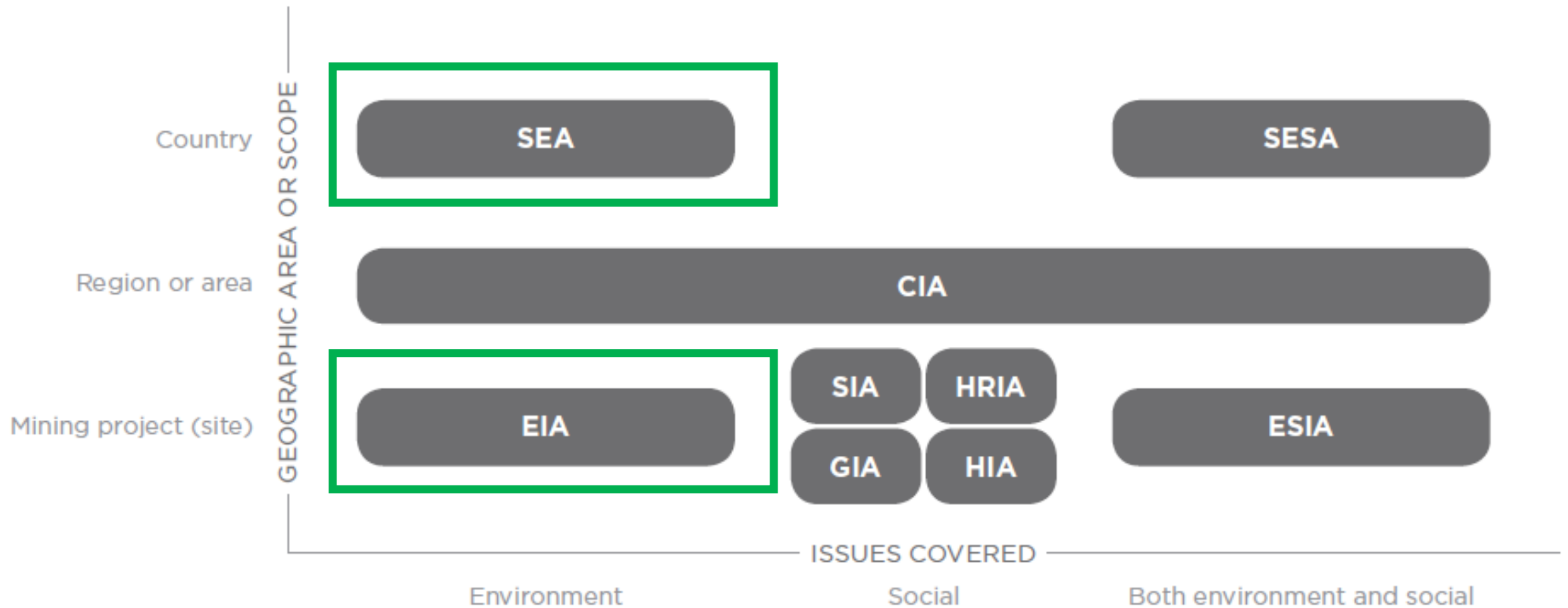
Source: Reprinted with permission from OECD, 2006.

Differences between EIAs and SEAs

SEA	ESIA
Applied to PPPs with a broad and long-term perspective	Applied to projects and their specifications
More of a multi-stage, iterative process	Usually a well-defined, linear process
Broad range of policy options and alternatives	Limited range of project alternatives
Broader perspective, with emphasis on balancing environmental, social, and economic objectives	Narrower perspective, with emphasis on minimizing and mitigating impacts
Responsibility of the public agency in charge of PPP	Responsibility of the project proponent

Source: Adapted from NCEA, 2017a.

The Family of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments





Environmental Assessments: Global Policy Context

- **Globally recognised** as essential.
 - Principle 17 of the Rio Declaration.
- Embedded in **regional and international agreements**.
 - E.g. Espoo Convention (and its Kiev Protocol on SEA), UNCLOS, CBD, UNFCCC and BBNJ).
- EIA established in **customary international law**.
- Key role played by **financial institutions**.



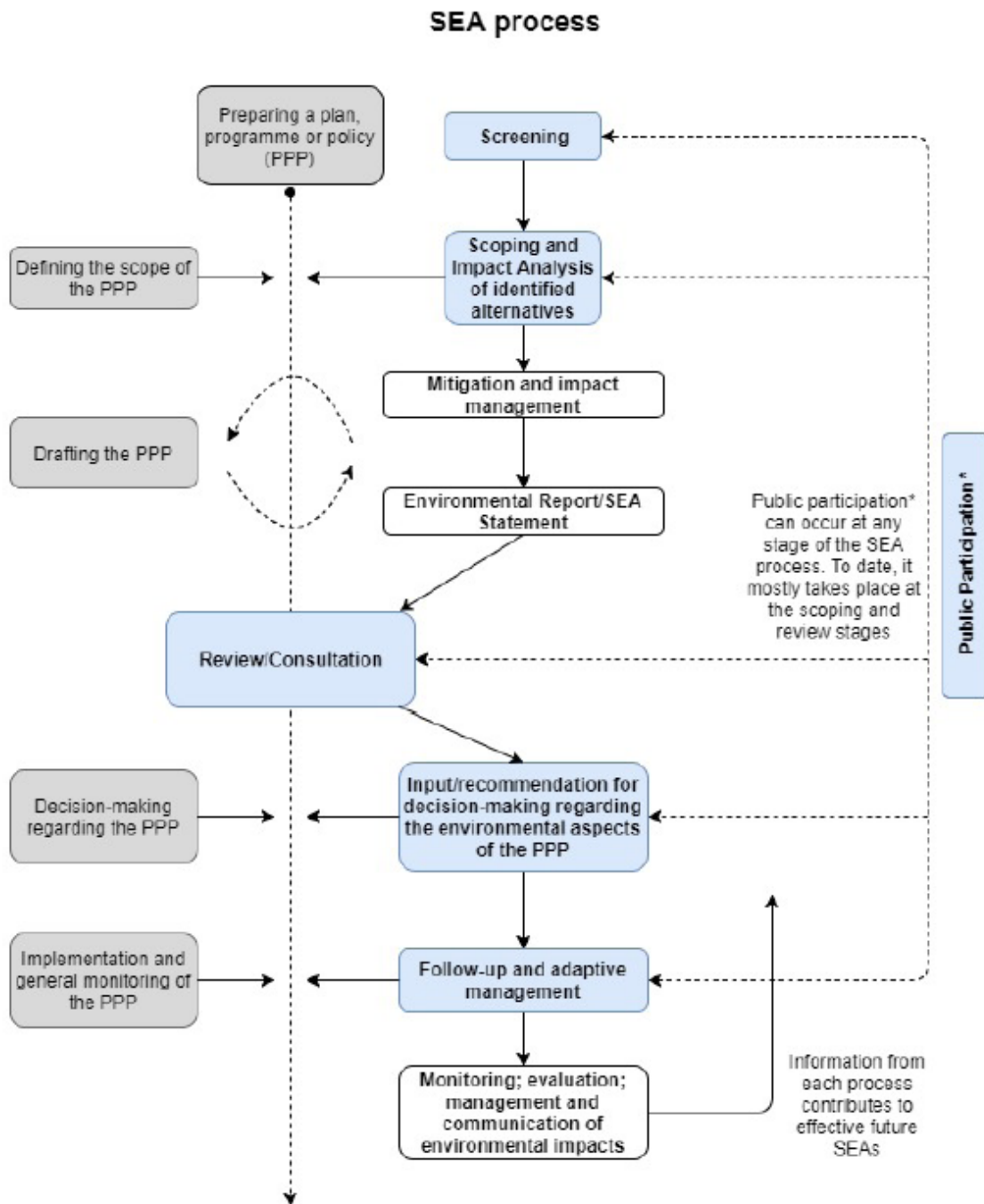


Role of EIAs and SEAs in Sustainable Minerals Management

- Essential for delivering the environmental dimensions of the SDGs.
- Key tools for prevention and mitigation of environmental and social impacts of industrial activities, such as mining.
- Entry point for public participation.
- Promote sustainable practices and innovative technologies.
- Inform policy-making to strengthen regulatory frameworks and practices.

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A Closer Look at the SEA Process



The typical process involves:

1. Triggering factor
2. Screening
3. Scoping and Impact Analysis
4. Review of the SEA report
5. Public Participation
6. Decision-making
7. Follow-up and Adaptive Management

Relevant Stakeholders

Government authorities

Mining companies

Independent experts or environmental agencies

Individuals, affected communities, civil society



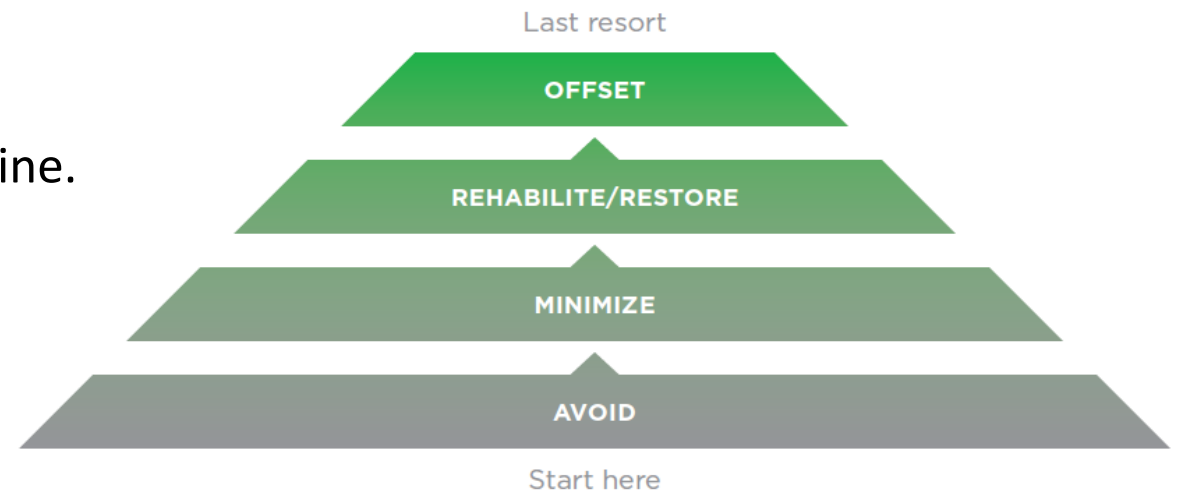
Barriers and Challenges

- Often seen as a “**regulatory hurdle**” & lack of awareness.
- Inconsistent **methods/tools** for impact quantification.
- Variable **quality** of assessments.
- Limited **consideration** of findings and recommendations.
- Financial, environmental, and social considerations often **isolated**.
- High **discretion** to implementing agencies.
- Gaps in **implementation** and follow-up.
- Limited **public participation**.
- Over-reliance on **permit conditions** for mitigation.
- Insufficient accessible and fit-for purpose **data**.
- Limited use of the **mitigation hierarchy**.
- Inadequate mine **closure procedures**.



Strengthening Environmental Assessments

- Clear legislated process, with defined **stakeholder roles**.
- Promote **broader uptake of SEAs**.
- Integrated consideration of economic, social and environmental factors across project **lifetime**.
- Clear linkages between **EIAs, permitting**, and broader **sustainability goals**.
- Explicit incorporation of the **mitigation hierarchy**.
- Ensure meaningful **public participation** throughout.
- Strengthen implementation and **follow-up measures**.
- Promote **coordination** and cross-sectoral **cooperation**.
- **Mine closure** planning integrated across the life of a mine.

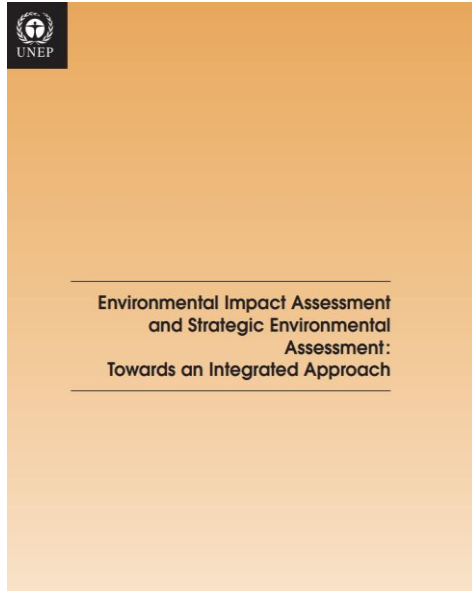


Key Takeaways

- Many environmental impacts can be mitigated through environmental regulation, monitoring and enforcement.
- Robust EIAs and SEAs are key tools to ensure sustainable minerals management.
- Public participation is crucial.
- Careful consideration should be given to how the EIA and SEA process is relevant throughout the life of mining projects, plans, policies and programmes.



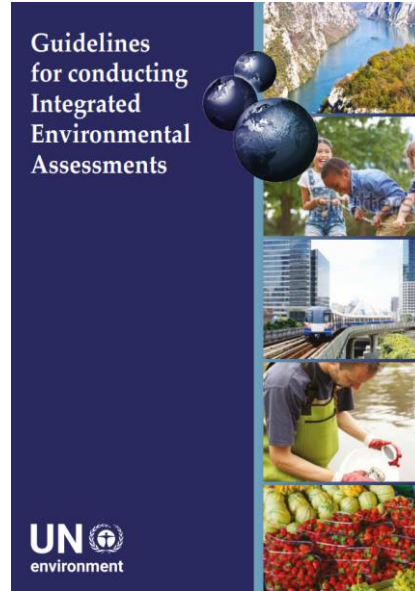
UNEP Tools



[Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment: Towards an Integrated Approach \(2005\)](#)



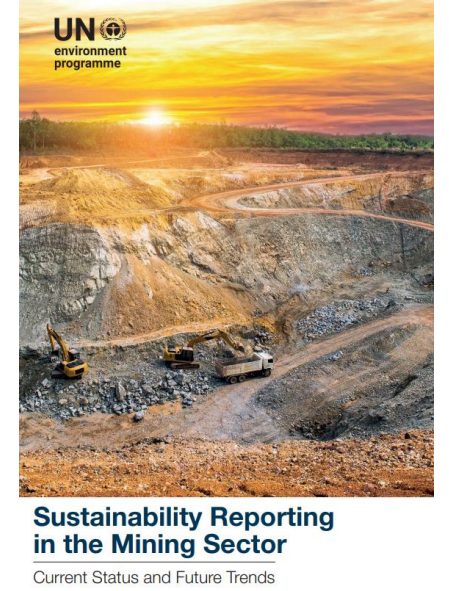
[Assessing Environmental Impacts: A Global Review of Legislation \(2018\)](#)



[Guidelines for conducting integrated environmental assessments \(2018\)](#)



[Managing mining for sustainable development: A Sourcebook \(2018\)](#)



[Sustainability Reporting in the Mining Sector \(2020\)](#)

Montevideo Programme



Q&A and Discussion

Legal Framework

- Does your country have in place **SEA legislation** applicable to plans, policies and programmes in minerals governance? Are there examples of good practices or key challenges you would like to share?

Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice

- **Access to information:** How is the public able to **access information** related to mining operations, plans, programmes and policies?
- **Public participation:** What opportunities exist in your country for the public potentially affected by mining operations, plans, programmes or policies to be **consulted** and share their views? How do authorities take into account this feedback in the final decision?
- **Access to justice:** What **remedies** are available to the public to challenge a decision related to mining activities, plans, programmes or policies if they believe environmental and health considerations were not adequately considered or if they believe that their concerns and input were not considered in the decision-making process?

Adaptive Management and Follow-Up Measures

- What measures are in place to ensure **monitoring** and **mitigation throughout the life** of mining projects, plans, policies and programmes?

Mine Closure

- What mechanisms are in place to ensure adequate and effective **mine closure**? For example, are there funding mechanisms or requirements for companies to ensure adequate rehabilitation during and after project completion? Could you share a **key challenge** and an example of **good practice**?

Thank you

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