

## **Best practices implemented in the environmental impact assessment process in Peru**

Celia Cáceres <sup>1</sup>, David Guerrero <sup>1</sup>, Marielena Lucen <sup>1</sup>, Yanina Ramírez <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peruvian Environmental licensing agency – SENACE (Servicio Nacional de Certificación Ambiental para las Inversiones Sostenibles).

Corresponding autor: Celia Cáceres ([celiacaceres@gmail.com](mailto:celiacaceres@gmail.com); [ccaceres@senace.gob.pe](mailto:ccaceres@senace.gob.pe))

### **ABSTRACT**

Senace, the Peruvian environmental licensing agency was created in 2012, starting functions in December 2015, with the purpose to guarantee a technical, rigorous, efficient, and participatory assessment of Environmental Impact Studies (EIS) for the main investment projects in the country.

The main problems that EIS have faced in Peru, before the creation of Senace were a) citizens' lack of trust in the assessment process, and b) its perception as bureaucratic and inefficient procedure. Consequently, the creation of Senace represents a change in the model that looks to build up trust and promote international best practices in the management of EIS in Peru.

This document identifies the good practices implemented by Senace regarding with the "Principles of Environmental Impact Assessment Best Practice" established by the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA, 1999).

A good practice implemented is an informative platform of environmental licensing, which allows a 100% digitized assessment that simplifies procedures and organizes information, guaranteeing legality and transparency, information security, less consumption of paper, optimizing the assessment deadlines.

Likewise, the continuous internal improvement and the standardization of the assessment criteria have allowed to reach significant and measurable targets on time, with the purpose of carrying out a technical, more efficient, and predictable environmental assessment. Senace promotes an effective public participation, comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive to strengthen the citizens' trust. In a similar way, Senace has implemented the Anti-Bribery Management System (ISO 37001), becoming the first environmental assessment agency in the region to have this certification.

Finally, this document shows the main progress in the application of the principles of environmental impact assessment proposed by the IAIA to the Peruvian context and the opportunities to improve in the future.

**Keywords:** Best practices, Environmental Impact Assessment, Senace, Peru.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Peruvian environmental institutional framework was restructured in 2008 with the creation of the Ministry of the Environment, from a "sector-oriented" model, which generated distrust in the population and in the environmental studies (EIS) ([http://www.sice.oas.org/tpd/and\\_usa/PER\\_USA/Draft\\_text\\_s/Cap-18A.pdf](http://www.sice.oas.org/tpd/and_usa/PER_USA/Draft_text_s/Cap-18A.pdf)).

In the context of 2012, Senace was created and represented an important change in the way of guaranteeing environmental evaluation increasing solid technical criteria and evaluating by rigorous, independent, modern, inclusive, and participatory manner, following the institution's values such as quality and trust. Senace promotes the sustainable management of natural resources through the environmental licensing of main investment projects in the country and to ensure effective coordination with main stakeholders.

The organizational structure of Senace was reviewed considering the main management indicators related with gender, eco-efficiency, effective citizen participation and technologies

implementation, which contributes to the strengthening of quality and trust, within the framework of the environmental assessment carried out by the institution.

The purpose of this document is to identify the good practices implemented by Senace in its operating scheme for environmental impact assessment according to the guidelines and principles of International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA, 1999).

## RESULTS

### 1.- Quality: Strengthening of environmental assessment

The main objectives of Senace are to develop a technical, efficient, inclusive (gender approach), timely and predictable evaluation. As part of the efficiency in the processes, in 2018 the institution has implemented the matrix organization, a new scheme of evaluation (Figure 1).

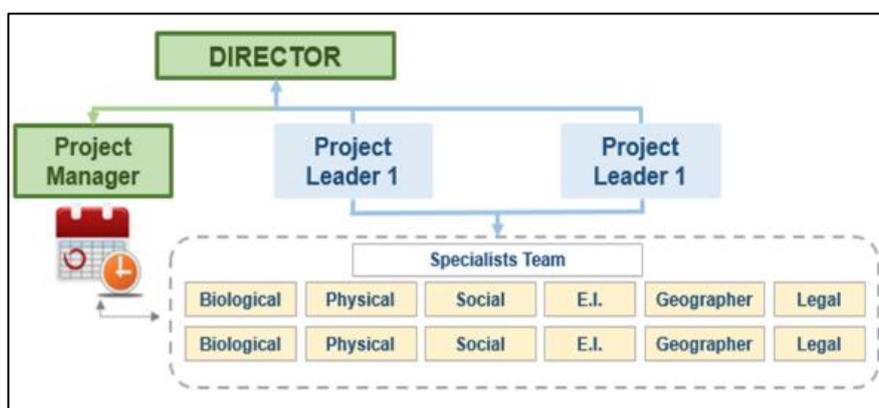


Figure 1: *Matrix organization* implemented in Senace.

Senace became the first environmental authority to adopt this approach. The matrix organization is a new working model conformed by five (05) specialized technical groups, made up of a multidisciplinary team (biological, physical, social, environmental engineers, geographer, and lawyers). This scheme works based on a collaborative and horizontal manner. The Project Leader manages the evaluation teams to assess each EIS; meanwhile the Project Manager ensures the optimal use of personnel and resources. The Specialists Technical Teams ensure the application of uniform technical criteria to reduce specialist's discretion.

The main core of Senace is the 161 evaluators (May 2021), who have an average of 14 years of professional experience. We identified 46,25% men and 53,75% women, so the gender approach in the institution is implemented. Some benefits obtained by the implementation of the matrix organization are:

- Improvement of coordination,
- Efficiency in the use of resources,
- Quick response to changes, and
- Promotes the exchange of experiences.

Additionally, a several training courses have been conducted as part of the strengthening of the technical evaluation addressed to the evaluators and members of the institution (directors, project managers, project leaders and others). Some results obtained by this technical training are:

- 166 members: participated in 05 technical exchange sessions with The National Environmental Licensing Agency (ANLA) from Colombia.
- 184 members: participated in 04 courses with The Environmental Assessment Service (SEA) from Chili (e-learning platform "SEA-CAPACITA"), and
- 15 evaluators: participated in 06 courses through the Pacific Alliance Scholarship Program from Canada.

Finally, with the objective to reduce discretion and improving the environmental assessment of EIS, Senace has developed and approved a series of publications such as manuals, guides, and guidelines to standardize technical criteria, based on legal support. This material is aimed to improve the quality of the EIS, implementing the administrative simplification, promoting public participation, among others. Some publications are listed below:

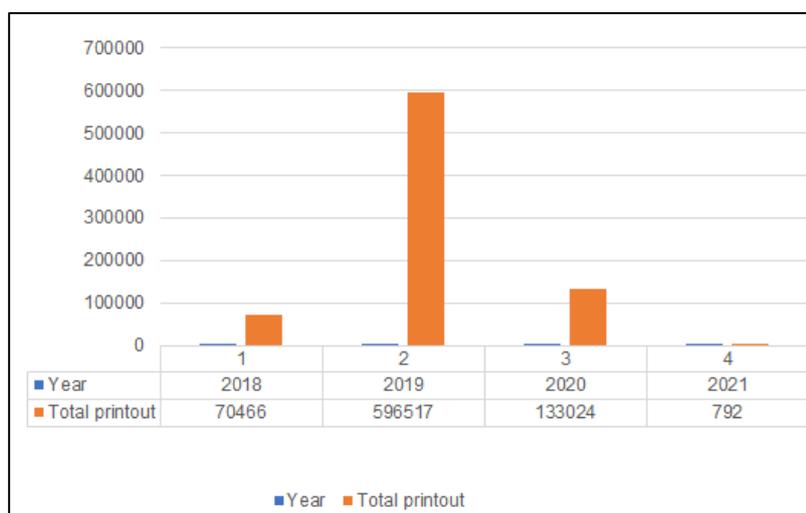
- 10 publishing technical criteria,
- 05 guides and 15 communication tools,
- 05 guides and manuals for: mining, electricity, hydrocarbons, transportation, and
- 03 guidelines: adaptation to climate change, promotion of the participation of women in the environmental certification process and principle of indivisibility.

All this material is available in: <https://www.senace.gob.pe/criterios-tecnicos/>  
<https://www.senace.gob.pe/publicaciones-z/guias-y-manuales/page/3/>.

## 2.- Trust: Modernization, Inclusion and Transparency in Environmental Assessment

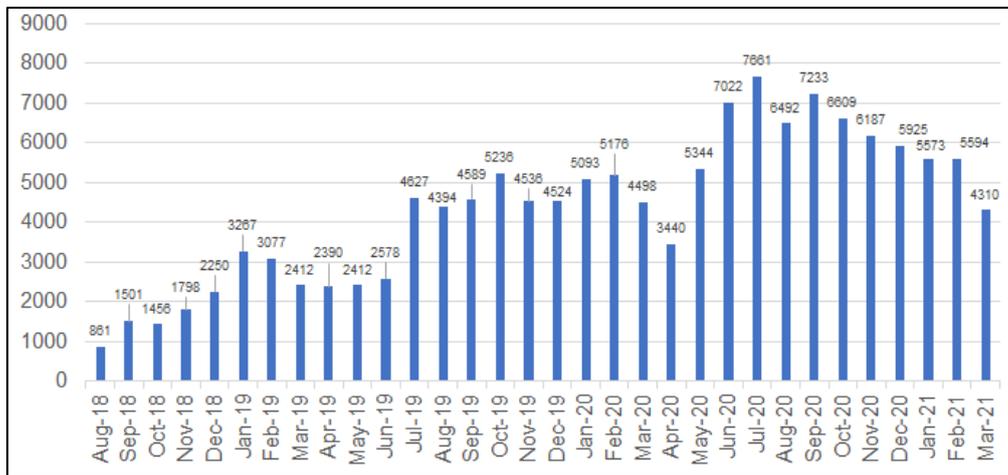
Senace promotes digital government, administrative simplification, eco-efficiency, effective citizen participation, and has been making multiple efforts to carry out an environmental assessment based on transparency. A digital platform, called EVA, have been implemented to ensure the interoperability and optimization of the procedure and the information management. This platform is mandatory since 2018 for all the environmental studies for evaluation competence by Senace. This initiative was awarded in 2019 as a good practice in public management. The main characteristics of EVA computing platform are:

- 100% digital evaluation, significant reduction paper use.



**Table 1: Use of paper in Senace period 2018- 2021.**

- Before the implementation of digital platform EVA, the environmental studies evaluation was 100% physical, almost 10,000 sheets per EIA-d file, 1,000 sheets per Classification Request and 2,000 sheets per Technical Report.
- Availability 24/7.
- Interoperability between Senace and the authoritative organizations.
- Digital signature, which offers more security and allows continuity in the environmental assessment services through remote work.
- Electronic notification to bidders.
- Portability, allowing access from anywhere with any device.
- Citizen access in the consultation modules. The number of visitors of EVA is increasing (Table 2).



**Table 2: Number of visits to the EVA portal period 2018 – 2021.**

Senace implemented in 2018 a geospatial information tool called Geo-Senace. This important tool allows citizens to view the maps of environmental studies by sector. In addition, Senace promotes successful citizen participation based on confidence. To conduct a successful citizen engagement, Senace has implemented a total of 586 participatory workshops, 114 public hearings, 156 baseline supervision and 91 early social engagement.

As well, Senace has a Regional Articulation Directorate with the aimed objective is to disseminate knowledge about the roles of the institution related to the environmental certification process and thus contribute to the development of capacities both in citizens and in authorities and local government officials. Since 2016 to 2021, Senace has conducted:

- 532 Information activities (workshops, briefings, information activities) carried out in 24 regions of the country, and
- 9,859 attendees have been trained, including managers, officials, professionals from regional governments and professional societies, teachers, and university students, among other regional actors.

To guarantee the effective public participation and to improve coordination with Indigenous Peoples and their organizations, Senace have the Road Map with Indigenous Peoples, an agenda regarding indigenous communities and issues to gain better understanding of Senace’s environmental certification process.

<p>Action Plan (2016 – 2017) (*)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 workshops: Indigenous organizations (63 trainees)</li> <li>• Plan, adaptation, and standards guidelines: communication materials</li> <li>• Publishing of social tools for environmental certification</li> </ul>
<p>Action Plan (2018 - 2019)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 workshops: communicators, legislators, local and regional leaders (198 trainees)</li> <li>• Informative sessions: 3 days of EIA (Loreto)</li> <li>• 2 discussions: Indigenous groups, interculturality and gender equality</li> <li>• 3 working sessions with Indigenous peoples’ leaders</li> </ul>
<p>Senace’s Agenda (2020 - 2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 planning meetings with Indigenous peoples’ organizations</li> <li>• 1 workshop: technicians, consultants and citizens of rural communities and urban areas</li> <li>• 1 intercultural workshop with Senace evaluators about interculturality</li> </ul>

(\*) Methods adapted according to the target public.

**Figure 2: Road Map with Indigenous Peoples.**

Finally, the institution has been certified in 2018 under the standards contemplated in ISO 37001: Anti-bribery Management System ([Certificado ISO 37001:2016 | Gobierno del Perú \(www.gob.pe\)](#)) and renewed annually. Senace is the first environmental assessment organization in the region to receive this certification. To reinforce this objective, Senace has developed some management instruments:

- Policy against bribery.
- Anti-bribery manual.
- Channel of honesty and ethics.
- Prohibition of collaborators to accept inappropriate gifts.
- Appointment of the Compliance Officer and Institutional Integrity of SGAS (Anti-bribery Management System), and
- Staff training continues.

## **DISCUSSION**

Senace is an important driver point for the development of sustainable investments in the country. The institution is building trust and credibility with citizens through providing an efficient, timely and predictable environmental licensing service for investment projects. Additionally, Senace is promoting and strengthening technical knowledge with the application of international standards and best practices for a better performance of the environmental impact assessment process.

The application of basic principles in Senace is contrasted. The environmental impact assessment we carry out is rigorous, efficient, interdisciplinary, transparent, and participative to ensure it fulfills purpose and is carried out to internationally accepted standards.

There is a direct effect of the application of best practices such as the inclusion of gender equity in the work teams, use of project status visualization technologies that guarantee transparency, a deconcentrated involvement of information activities for effective citizen participation, inclusion of the holistic vision of indigenous peoples. Likewise, the anti-bribery policies promote objectivity and evidence a predictable treatment of each proponent.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Senace is committed to continuing the application of best practices and principles of IAIA for environmental impact assessment.
- The inclusion of technologies that allow the citizen to access more easily the information of a project of interest and to the proponents to carry out in immediate time lapses, reducing inputs such as paper, and the carbon footprint of the environmental study itself.
- Additionally, it is pertinent to update the practices considering the gender approach both as a good practice of the environmental impact studies.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Continuous promoting and strengthening technical knowledge for a better performance of the environmental impact assessment process.
- Enhance the use of EVA to promote citizens' participation.
- Strengthen the interoperability between Senace and the authoritative organizations.
- Promoting the consideration of the gender perspective in public participation mechanisms to achieve women participation in the environmental processes.
- Continuous monitoring, periodic audits, and reviews to prevent, detect and address bribery.

## **REFERENCES**

- IAIA and IEA – International Association for Impact Assessment and Institute for Environmental Assessment UK (1999), Principles of Environmental Impact Assessment Best Practice, available at [www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/principlesEA\\_1.pdf](http://www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/principlesEA_1.pdf).