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How can ESAs be used by Policy Makers?

1. We are experiencing a changing global context. The different “crises” such as the climate crisis, the food crisis, the financial crisis, the biodiversity crisis, the energy crisis, the expected increase in population and the upcoming new economies as China, India, Brazil, have a profound impact on international relations, on national economic development scenarios as well as on local livelihoods. The sectoral policy solutions for the mentioned crises, more biofuels for energy, more intensive agricultural production for food security, more national parks for biodiversity conservation, reducing forest degradation for REDD+, will enhance pressure on land and competing claims will lead to enhanced environmental conflicts. The need for land governance and the role for Environmental Security Assessments to provide strategic information for prevention of these conflicts, is in this context very relevant for policy makers.
2. The Netherlands support the IES project Environmental Security for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA) to strengthen local processes on land governance and improve informed decision making. The Ministry does not consider itself an end user (maybe the Embassies to some extent), but from a development cooperation perspective, the end users should be the national and local governments, civil society and especially the local communities involved or dependent on the resources.
3. Ownership over the methodologies and information analyses, and self-sufficiency of the local end users is crucial for the sustainability of these efforts to promote environmental security assessments. The information should enhance equity in decision making between governmental institutions, NGOs and local communities, normally in a context of power imbalances.
4. On the level of national governments, the absorption capacity to incorporate new methodologies for decision making processes should be taken into account, as well as the reluctance to accept new mapping exercises by national authorities. On the local governments level, who may be playing a role in the problem and be key to the solution, long term confidence is more important than capacity building in itself. On the community level, instead of mere transfer of technology, a more interactive approach seems important, to facilitate dialogue between different knowledge systems. Maps based on local knowledge systems are proven to be very useful, if monitoring is required from local inhabitants.
5. Environmental Security Assessments could be integrated more to Strategic Environmental Assessment methods, as well as Environmental Services Assessments, towards a more holistic approach.

6. The economic development of a country like the Netherlands depends in large part on international trade and thus on international resources. The ecological footprint of our activities should be taken into account. The Ministry is therefore interested in the advances and experiences, to hear from the lessons learned, especially with respect to the practical applicability of environmental security assessments for more equitable decision making processes for sustainable development.