Strengthening ESIA practice for coastal resilience

10 Key Learning Points

1 — Address the ESIA-implementation gap explicitly—and learn before implementing

Build explicit adaptive management mechanisms into ESIA design with clear triggers for adjustment, while recognising that exchanges between cities at different implementation stages create invaluable learning opportunities to strengthen ESIA quality before breaking ground.

2 — Place social assessment teams before technical design

Front-load participatory design into scoping and alternatives analysis phases, using the ESIA process itself as an opportunity to establish community relationships before construction begins.

3 — Reality-test ESIA environmental programmes for feasibility

Environmental management plans must include rigorous municipal capacity and cost assessments, while recognising that budget limitations can drive creative, community-appropriate solutions when paired with genuine participation.

4 — Recognise community engagement quality as implementation success factor

Stakeholder engagement plans should consider diverse institutional arrangements—whether direct municipal presence or strategic civil society partnerships—with resources for sustained relationship-building throughout the project cycle.

5 — Operationalise gender and diversity analysis across all ESIA components

Every ESIA component (alternatives analysis, impact assessment, mitigation, monitoring) should include explicit gender and diversity considerations with concrete, measurable management plan commitments.

6 — Detail individualised ESIA resettlement implementation mechanisms

Resettlement frameworks must detail how standards translate into individualised support mechanisms with sufficient budget and timeline for livelihood restoration, not just physical relocation.

7 — Build participatory monitoring for ESIA accountability

Monitoring and evaluation plans should specify participatory structures with genuine decision-making power and transparent grievance mechanisms with documented response protocols.

8 — Design ESIA phases as dynamic and overlapping—not linear

Explicitly plan for overlapping phases, particularly starting community co-management arrangements during construction rather than treating "handover" as a post-implementation afterthought.

9 — Formalise multi-sectoral coordination with clear institutional roles and internal capacity

Governance arrangements should formalise multi-sectoral coordination with explicit role definitions, address political-technical boundaries, and integrate capacity-building strategies that develop municipal and civil society expertise through direct involvement in assessment processes—not just as stakeholders, but as co-practitioners.

10 — Design ESIA communication for accessibility from the outset

Communication strategies must use visual, oral, and culturally appropriate formats, while recognising that sometimes the most effective "communication" is collaborative problem-solving that demonstrates respect for local knowledge.