



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

GEF/C.57/Inf.05
December 12, 2019

57th GEF Council Meeting
December 17 - 19, 2019
Washington, D.C.

**GUIDELINES ON
GEF'S POLICY ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS**

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INTRODUCTION

1. The GEF Council approved the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards in December 2018¹. These Guidelines are intended to support the effective implementation of the project and program level documentation and reporting requirements set out in this Policy by GEF Partner Agencies (hereafter “Agencies”), the GEF Secretariat, as well as GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs) in recipient countries, executing partners, and other stakeholders.

2. These Guidelines are not meant to create new requirements, but to provide further guidance on how to implement the project and program level requirements set out in the GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (hereafter “Policy”), including documentation and reporting throughout the GEF Project Cycle.

BACKGROUND

3. The Policy sets out the GEF’s approach to anticipating, and then avoiding, preventing, minimizing, mitigating, managing, offsetting or compensating adverse impacts that GEF-financed projects and programs may have on people or the environment throughout the project or program cycle, thereby enhancing the environmental and social outcomes.

4. The Policy states nine minimum requirements for the Agencies to identify and manage environmental and social risks and impacts in GEF-financed projects and programs. It requires all Agencies to have necessary policies, procedures, systems and capabilities in place to ensure that these nine minimum standards (see Box 1) are met at all levels of project and program implementation, including by executing partners.

5. In addition, the Policy:

- (i) Provides requirements for Agencies to document and report on environmental and social risks and potential impacts, and their management, throughout the GEF project and program cycle. These requirements are intended to enhance the flow of information on safeguards implementation across GEF-financed projects and programs; and

Box 1. GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Minimum Standards

| | |
|-----|--|
| MS1 | Environmental and Social Assessment, Management and Monitoring |
| MS2 | Accountability, Grievance and Conflict Resolution |
| MS3 | Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources |
| MS4 | Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement |
| MS5 | Indigenous Peoples |
| MS6 | Cultural Heritage |
| MS7 | Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention |
| MS8 | Labor and Working Conditions |
| MS9 | Community Health, Safety and Security |

¹ SD/PL/03 http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/gef_environmental_social_safeguards_policy.pdf

- (ii) Sets out a role for the Secretariat in the review of projects and programs for the availability and completeness of the information requested at the various stages of the project and program cycles; and the monitoring of and reporting on safeguards implementation at the portfolio level.

6. The Policy sets out mandatory requirements for identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts in GEF-financed projects and programs. It indicates that Agencies are required to have policies, procedures, systems and capabilities to ensure that projects and programs are screened as early as possible to identify risks and potential impacts. Projects and programs are classified based on level and magnitude of potential risks and impacts, including considerations of direct, indirect, cumulative, transboundary impacts, the risks and impacts of Associated Facilities, and other considerations, as set out in more detail in MS1. The minimum standards themselves indicate the types of risks that need to be considered. For easy reference, these are summarized in Box 2, and set out in more detail in Annex I.A of the Policy².

7. The Policy specifies that, based on Agencies' environmental and social screening and risk classification procedures and systems, Agencies document and report on environmental and social risk and potential impacts associated with the proposed project any associated measures to address such risks and impacts throughout the GEF project cycle.

8. The Policy further calls on the Secretariat to report, annually, to the Council on the type and level of the risks and impacts identified in GEF projects and programs and the management of these risks and impacts during project implementation and at project completion. The GEF templates and Portal provide a tool for Agencies to submit this information, and for the required reporting by the Secretariat. The portal also enables Agencies to upload Agency templates and documents related to environmental and social safeguards assessment and compliance.

9. The Policy (Minimum Standard 1: Environmental and Social Assessment, Management and Monitoring), requires Agencies and project implementing entities to disclose relevant documents so as to provide stakeholders with timely, relevant and understandable information,

Box 2. Types of Risks and Potential Impacts to be screened and assessed in GEF Projects & Programs

- (MS1) Climate Change and Disaster
- (MS1) Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Individuals or Groups
- (MS1) Disability Inclusion
- (MS1) Adverse Gender-related impact, including Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation
- (MS3) Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources
- (MS4) Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement
- (MS5) Indigenous Peoples
- (MS6) Cultural Heritage
- (MS7) Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention
- (MS8) Labor and Working Conditions
- (MS9) Community Health, Safety and Security

² Paragraph 4 of the Policy

and allow stakeholder to participate in Meaningful Consultations, starting as early as possible, such as during screening, and continuing throughout the project and program cycle³. For further information and guidance on Stakeholder Engagement see the Policy and Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement⁴.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARD REQUIREMENTS IN THE GEF PROJECT CYCLE

Project Identification (PIF Preparation)

Relevant Policy Requirements⁵:

“In Project Identification Forms (PIFs) and Program Framework Documents (PFDs) submitted for Work Program entry or CEO Approval, Agencies provide indicative information regarding any Environmental and Social Risks and potential Impacts associated with the proposed project or program; and any measures to address such risks and impacts.”

10. Minimum Standard 1 of the Policy⁶, requires Agency systems and procedures to ensure that projects and programs are screened as early as possible to identify environmental and social risks and potential impacts considering the type of risks and potential impacts contained in the Policy.

11. Based on Agencies’ systems and procedures related to identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and potential Impacts, and based on preliminary screening and/or assessment, Agencies provide in PIF submission:

- (i) **Initial risk classification of the overall project or program:** Provide the initial risk rating based on the Agency’s internal risk level classification system.
- (ii) **Types and risk classification of any identified risks:** Provide the initial identification of the relevant types of risks) associated with the project or program and, if available, the risk rating for each identified type based on the Agency’s internal risk level classification system.
- (iii) **Available screening/assessment reports:** Submit, if available, any supporting documents, such as final screening reports or preliminary Environmental and Social Risk and Impact Assessment report(s) and any preliminary measures to address identified risks and potential impacts.

12. The Secretariat, in its review, assesses the availability and completeness of the provided indicative information on environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with

³ Paragraph 4h of the Policy

⁴ *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/PL/01) and Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/GN/01)*

⁵ Excerpt from Policy Para 11.

⁶ Paragraph 4a of the Policy

the project or program, including associated documents (if any) and response measures to address identified risks and impacts.

| Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities during PIF Preparation | |
|--|--|
| Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Screens project to identify environmental and social risks and potential impacts. ▪ Discloses relevant documents and informs/consults Stakeholders on information related to environmental and social risk screening or assessment. ▪ Provides the Secretariat as part of PIF submission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Overall preliminary risk rating for project or program b. Types of risks and, if available, risk ratings of identified type(s) c. Any early screening/assessment report(s) and / or any indicative plans/measures to address identified risks, if available. |
| GEF Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess, in its review, the availability and completeness of the indicative information, including associated documents (if any) ▪ Reports, annually, to the Council on the type and level (risk ratings) of environmental risks and impacts in GEF projects |

13. Based on Agencies' systems and procedures related to identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and potential Impacts, and based on preliminary screening and/or assessment, Agencies provides the Secretariat as part of PFD submission:

- Indicative information on the type and level of the identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the program (including the organization's risk ratings) and a description of any measures to address identified types and levels of risks; and
- Submit, if available, environmental and social assessments or equivalent.

Project Preparation (CEO Endorsement/Approval)

Relevant Policy Requirements⁷:

“At CEO Endorsement/Approval, Agencies provide additional information regarding the relevant Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts associated with the proposed project, and associated measures to address such risks and impacts, including any environmental and social assessments carried out, and any Environmental and Social Management Plans or the equivalent.”

14. Based on Agencies’ systems and procedures related to identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and potential Impacts, Agencies provide in the CEO Endorsement/Approval submission:

- (i) **Risk classification of the overall project:** Revise, if applicable, the overall risk rating provided at PIF stage, based on the Agency’s internal risk level classification systems.
- (ii) **Types and risk classification of the identified risks:** Update the types of risks identified at PIF stage and provide risk ratings of each identified type(s) of risk, based on the Agency’s internal risk level classification systems.
- (iii) **Available screening/assessment report(s):** Submit supporting documents, such as any final screening reports and or Environmental and Social Risk and Impact Assessment report(s).
- (iv) **Available management plan(s):** Submit any Environmental and Social Management Plans to address identified types and levels of risks. For projects and programs identified “High” or “Substantial” risk classification, supporting documentation such as a management plan is required (such as e.g. environmental and social management plans or frameworks, resettlement action plan or frameworks, livelihood restoration plan, indigenous peoples plan, natural resource management plan, and labor management procedure).

15. Minimum Standard 1 requires Agency systems to ensure that independent expertise, specialized knowledge and/or independent advisory panels are used in cases where the level and magnitude of risks and potential impacts is deemed high. This could occur with respect to any of the minimum standards including, among others, impacts that threaten the safety of communities, impacts on indigenous communities, impacts on Critical Habitat, physical relocation, and high probability of impacts on historical artifacts.

16. The Secretariat, in its review, assesses the availability and completeness of the updated information on environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project

⁷ Excerpt from Policy para 12.

or program, including associated documents (if any) and management plans to address identified type and level risks and impacts.

| Table 2: Roles and Responsibilities during Project Development (CEO Endorsement/Approval) | |
|---|--|
| Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project or program. ▪ Discloses relevant documents and informs/consults Stakeholders on information related to environmental and social risk screening, assessment and, if applicable, management plans. ▪ Provides the Secretariat as part of CEO Endorsement/Approval submission in the portal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Overall project or program risk rating b. Types of risks and risk ratings of each identified type(s) c. Any final screening or assessment reports d. Management measures or plans (if any). |
| GEF Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess, in its review, the availability and completeness of the updated documentation, including associated documents with regards to any measures to address identified risks and impacts. ▪ Reports, annually, to the Council on the type and level of environmental risks and impacts in GEF projects and programs. |

Project Implementation (MTR) and Completion (TE)

Relevant Policy Requirements⁸:

“Agencies provide information on the implementation of relevant environmental and social management measures at project mid-term, if applicable, and at project completion.”

17. Agencies oversee the implementation of relevant environmental and social management measures (including Environmental and Social Management Plans, or the equivalent) presented at the CEO Endorsement/Approval and continue to monitor the Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts in a manner proportionate to the project risk level identified at the CEO Endorsement/Approval. As circumstances could arise during the project implementation that may require revisions to the risk classifications and the management measures, Agencies should uphold robust project monitoring processes, including on-going engagement and open communication channels with stakeholders to pro-actively adjust risk classifications and management measures as needed.

⁸ Excerpt from Policy para 14.

18. Based on Agencies' systems and procedures related to identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and potential Impacts, Agencies provide in the MTR report (if applicable):

- (i) **Progress made in the implementation of the management measures** as outlined at CEO Endorsement/Approval.
- (ii) **Any revisions to the overall project risk rating and or the identified types of risks or risk ratings** as outlined at CEO Endorsement (described in box 2) based on any additional assessments or information gathered during implementation.
- (iii) **Any revised or new assessment reports or management plans.**

| Table 3: Roles and Responsibilities during Project Implementation (MTR) | |
|---|---|
| Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supervises the implementation of environmental and social management measures. ▪ Monitors the environmental and social risks and impacts. ▪ Provides the Secretariat as part of MTR submission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Progress report on implementation of management measures b. Any revisions to identified risks c. Any revised/new reports. |
| GEF Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reports, annually, to the Council on the type and level of environmental risks and impacts in GEF projects and programs and the management of such risks and impacts during project implementation. |

19. Based on Agencies' systems and procedures related to identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and potential Impacts, Agencies provide in the TE report:

- (i) **Analysis of the implementation of management measures**, as outlined at CEO Endorsement/Approval, **including findings on the effectiveness of management measures and lessons learned.**
- (ii) **Any revisions to the identified types and levels of risks** (if applicable).

20. Agencies engage with the OFPs and relevant stakeholders to capture knowledge and share/disseminate lessons learned.

REPORTING ON GRIEVANCE CASES

Relevant Policy Requirements⁹:

“Agencies report promptly to the Secretariat any cases reported to their respective accountability, grievance, and conflict resolution mechanisms in connection with GEF-financed projects or programs, which these mechanisms have determined to be within the scope of their review, and how such cases have been addressed consistent with the requirements set out in Minimum Standard 2” of the Policy.

“The Secretariat promptly makes available on the GEF website the information reported by Agencies and notifies the Council as new information is made available, and presents a summary of such information as part of its annual reporting on the implementation of this Policy. “

21. Agencies report to the Secretariat on each grievance case involving GEF-financed projects or programs promptly¹⁰ after the Agencies determine the case is within the scope of their mechanism’s review, based on Agencies’ policies and procedures. These reports to the Secretariat provide:
- (i) **Summary** of the grievance case and its status, and a link to the relevant Agency website (if available).
 - (ii) Up-to-date information on how the case is being addressed, for example, **actions** taken or planned, with the expected time frame.
 - (iii) Associated documents (a link to the relevant Agency website, if available).
22. The Secretariat promptly notifies the Council upon the receipt of such grievance cases from the Agencies and makes available on the GEF website in the Conflict Resolution section up-to-date information on the grievance cases in accordance with the applicable policy on information disclosure. As any new material/substantial information becomes available (e.g., findings from an investigation by the Agency, important progress and actions in addressing the claim), the Secretariat promptly notifies the Council.
23. Where the Secretariat is made aware of allegations of non-compliance with the Policy related to a GEF-funded project, the Secretariat notifies the relevant Agency of the allegations for consideration of appropriate actions.
24. The Secretariat report to the Council annually the summary of these grievance cases and the actions taken in addressing the claims.

⁹ Excerpt from Policy para 15 and 17.

¹⁰ The term promptly in paragraphs 21 and 22 is intended to mean in a short time-frame and without delay.

GEF SECRETARIAT PORTFOLIO MONITORING AND REPORTING

Relevant Policy Requirements on portfolio monitoring and reporting¹¹:

“The Secretariat reports annually to the Council on the implementation of this Policy, including the type and level of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts identified in GEF-financed projects and programs and the management of such risks and impacts during project implementation and at project completion. In addition, the Secretariat promptly makes available on the GEF website the information reported by Agencies and notifies the Council as new information is made available, and presents a summary of such information as part of its annual reporting on the implementation of this Policy.”

25. The Secretariat compiles relevant data and information and report to the Council annually. These reports include analysis and summary on:

- (i) **Overall risk classifications** of the projects and programs.
- (ii) **Types and levels** of identified Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts and management.
- (iii) **Grievance cases** brought to Agencies’ accountability, grievance, and conflict resolution mechanisms which are determined to be the within the scope of their review (refer to Reporting on the Grievance Cases section).

¹¹ Excerpt from Policy para 17.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Policies

- *Minimum Fiduciary Standards for GEF Partner Agencies (GA/PL/02)*
- *Monitoring Agencies Compliance with GEF Policies (ME/PL/02)*
- *Policy on Monitoring (GEF/C.56/03/Rev.01)*
- *Evaluation Policy (GEF/ME/C.56/02/Rev.01)*
- *Project and Program Cycle (OP/PL/01)*
- *Policy on Gender Equality (SD/PL/02)*
- *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/PL/01)*

Guidelines

- *Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy (GEF/C.52/Inf.06)*
- *Guidelines on Gender Equality in GEF Projects and Programs (SD/GN/02)*
- *Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/GN/01)*

DEFINITIONS

CEO Approval means the approval of a fully developed Medium-Sized Project or Enabling Activity by the GEF CEO.

CEO Endorsement means the endorsement of a fully developed Full-Sized Project by the GEF CEO.

Council means the 32 members that make up the GEF Council as set out in the Instrument.

Critical Habitat means a Habitat with high Biodiversity value, including (i) Habitats of significant importance to Critically Endangered or Endangered species, as listed on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of threatened species or equivalent national approaches, (ii) Habitats of significant importance to endemic or restricted-range species, (iii) Habitats supporting globally or nationally significant concentrations of migratory or congregatory species, (iv) highly threatened or unique ecosystems, and (v) ecological functions or characteristics that are needed to maintain the viability of the Biodiversity values described in (i) to (iv).

Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Groups or Individuals means those individuals or groups who, by virtue of, for example, their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, physical, mental or other disability, social, civic or health status, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic disadvantages or indigenous status, and/or dependence on unique natural resources, may be more likely to be adversely affected by the impacts of a project or program and/or more limited than others in their ability to take advantage of its benefits.

Environmental and Social Impact means any change, potential or actual, to the physical, natural, or cultural environment, and related impacts on surrounding communities and workers, resulting from a project or program, including direct, indirect, cumulative and transboundary impacts and the impacts of Associated Facilities, and including both adverse and beneficial impacts.

Environmental and Social Risk means a combination of the probability of a certain hazard occurrence and the severity of impacts resulting from such an occurrence.

Environmental and Social Risk and Impact Assessment means an assessment of the project or program's potential environmental and social impacts and risks that is appropriate to the nature and scale of the potential impacts, including comprehensive environmental and social impact assessments for projects with significant risks, strategic or regional impact assessments for programs, and more limited assessments for projects of limited scope and potential impact.

Environmental and Social Management Plan means a document that identifies the Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts that are relevant for a project or program, and measures to anticipate, avoid, prevent, minimize, mitigate, manage, offset or compensate any adverse Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts, to monitor such risks and impacts

throughout the project or program life-cycle, and to enhance environmental and social outcomes.

Full-Sized Project (FSP) means a GEF project financing of more than two million US dollars.

Gender-Based Violence means any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed differences between male and female individuals, including acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering; threats of such acts; and coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Gender Equality means the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and of girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Indigenous Peoples¹² means people belonging to a distinct social and cultural group characterized in varying degrees by (i) self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous social and cultural group and recognition of this identity by others; (ii) collective attachment to geographically distinct Habitats, ancestral territories, or areas of seasonal use or occupation, as well as to the natural resources in these areas; (iii) customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture; and (iv) a distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside. "To varying degrees" reflects the fact that some characteristics may be less, or no longer, evident, but have been present and are relevant in identifying Indigenous Peoples.

Instrument means the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility, effective July 7, 1994 and as amended.

Medium-Sized Project (MSP) means a GEF project financing of less than or equivalent to two million US dollars.

Mid-Term Review (MTR) means an assessment of a project's or program's performance and results, carried out for adaptive management purposes at the midpoint of a project's or program's intended duration.

Monitoring means the continuous or periodic, standardized process of collecting and analyzing data on specific Indicators to provide decision-makers, managers, and Stakeholders with

¹² This clarification is intended solely for the purpose of this Policy, given that there is no universally accepted definition of Indigenous peoples, and given that these terms and concepts are subject to national legislation and to the different national circumstances of each country, taking into account that many countries have specific interpretations for terms and concepts that already apply within their jurisdictions. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions.

information on progress in the achievement of agreed objectives and the use of allocated resources.

Operational Focal Point (OFP) means a government official nominated by a GEF Participant (as defined by the Instrument) who acts as the principal contact point for GEF activities in the country.

Program means a longer-term and strategic arrangement of individual yet interlinked projects that aim at achieving large-scale impacts on the global environment.

Program Framework Document (PFD) means the document that sets forth the concept of a Program that is proposed for GEF financing.

Project Identification Form (PIF) means the applicable document that sets forth the concept of a Full-Sized Project or Medium-Sized Project that is requesting GEF financing.

Secretariat means the GEF Secretariat that services and reports to the GEF Assembly and the Council as set out in the Instrument.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another; and, specifically in the case of Sexual Abuse, the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Stakeholder means an individual or group that has an interest in the outcome of a GEF project or program or is likely to be affected by it, such as local communities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations, and private sector entities, comprising women, men, girls and boys.

Stakeholder Engagement means a process involving Stakeholder identification and analysis, planning of Stakeholder Engagement, disclosure of information, consultation and participation, monitoring, evaluation and learning that begins as early as possible and is carried out throughout the project cycle, addressing grievances, and with on-going reporting to stakeholders.

Terminal Evaluation (TE) means an Evaluation of a project's or program's design, performance, and results, carried out at the end of implementation.

Work Program means a group of Full-Sized Projects and/ or Programmatic Approaches that is presented for Council approval in a Council meeting.