

**GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING GEF AGENCIES’
COMPLIANCE WITH POLICIES ON
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS,
GENDER EQUALITY, AND STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT**

Summary	These Guidelines sets out procedural steps and guiding principles for assessing Agencies' compliance with the minimum standards contained in the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards, the Policy on Gender Equality, and the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement.
Approved by	GEF CEO
Approval Date	March 1, 2019
Effective Date	March 1, 2019
Applicability	All GEF Partner Agencies
Related Documents	<p>Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum Fiduciary Standards for GEF Partner Agencies (GA/PL/02)• Monitoring Agencies Compliance with GEF Policies (ME/PL/02)• Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF/C.55/07/Rev.01)• Policy on Gender Equality (SD/PL/02)• Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/PL/01) <p>Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidelines on Gender Equality (SD/GN/02)• Guidelines on the Implementation of the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/GN/01)• Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy (GEF/C.52/Inf.06/Rev.01)
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Introduction

1. These Guidelines set out procedural steps and guiding principles for assessing Agencies' compliance with the minimum standards contained in the *Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards*¹, the *Policy on Gender Equality*², and the *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement*³.

Relevant Policy Requirements

2. The policies on environmental and social safeguards, gender equality, and stakeholder engagement set minimum standards for Agencies' policies, procedures, systems, and capabilities. These minimum standards are contained in Annex I.A of the *Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards*⁴, Paragraph 19 (a)–(e) of the *Policy on Gender Equality*⁵, and Paragraph 16 (a)–(f) of the *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement*⁶.

3. The three policies provide that the Secretariat facilitate an assessment of Agencies' compliance with those minimum standards, to be presented for Council review and decision no later than December 31, 2019.

4. The *Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards*⁷ further sets out that the assessment consider Agencies' relevant policies, procedures, guidelines, and systems, and evidence of their effective implementation; and that the Secretariat prepare publicly available and easily accessible guidelines for the assessment process.

5. For each of the three policies, if an Agency does not meet one or more of the minimum standards, the Agency, in consultation with the Secretariat, develops a concrete, time-bound action plan to achieve compliance. The Secretariat, on behalf of the Agency, submits the action plan for review and approval by the Council. The Council decides whether the Agency may continue to seek GEF financing while it implements the time-bound action plan.

6. Finally, once an Agency has been found to meet all Minimum Standards, the Agency and the Secretariat carry out periodic reporting and monitoring of compliance using the modalities set out in the *Policy on Monitoring Agencies' Compliance*⁸.

¹ GEF/C.55/07/Rev.01 (http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.07.Rev_.01_ES_Safeguards.pdf)

² SD/PL/02 (http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Gender_Equality_Policy.pdf)

³ SD/PL/01 (http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Stakeholder_Engagement_Policy.pdf)

⁴ GEF/C.55/07/Rev.01 (http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.07.Rev_.01_ES_Safeguards.pdf)

⁵ SD/PL/02 (http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Gender_Equality_Policy.pdf)

⁶ SD/PL/01 (http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Stakeholder_Engagement_Policy.pdf)

⁷ GEF/C.55/07/Rev.01 (http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.07.Rev_.01_ES_Safeguards.pdf)

⁸ ME/PL/02 (<http://www.thegef.org/documents/monitoring-agency-compliance-gef-policies>)

Procedures for Assessing Agencies' Compliance

7. The Secretariat facilitates an assessment of Agencies compliance as follows:
 - a. **Agencies' self-assessment:** Based on a checklist prepared by the Secretariat, Agencies compile evidence of their compliance with applicable minimum standards and submit such evidence to the Secretariat, clearly indicating whether it includes any information that is restricted from public access in accordance with Agencies' policies on information disclosure.
 - b. **Secretariat's screening:** The Secretariat screens the evidence provided by the Agencies for clarity, completeness, and relevance. The Secretariat requests Agencies to amend or complement their submissions to enable a complete assessment, if necessary.
 - c. **Expert assessment:** Consistent with the indicative competency requirements contained in Annex I, the Secretariat hires an expert or experts to assess, based on the evidence compiled and screened by the Secretariat, whether Agencies meet applicable minimum standards. Should the expert assessment find that an Agency does not meet one or more of the minimum standards, the expert or experts make recommendations on how the Agency could achieve compliance.
 - d. **Preparation of action plans:** If the assessment finds that an Agency does not meet one or more of the minimum standards, the Agency develops and submits to the Secretariat a concrete, time-bound action plan to achieve compliance, taking into account any expert recommendations.
 - e. **Report to the Council:** The Secretariat prepares, for Council review and decision, a report on the findings of the assessment, including any Agency action plans.
8. Should an Agency be required to present a time-bound action plan in accordance with Paragraph 7.d above, the Agency's would be reassessed against relevant minimum standards at a later date consistent with the agreed action plan.

Guiding Principles

9. The assessment of Agencies' compliance is carried out in accordance with the following principles:
 - a. **Impartiality:** All Agencies are assessed in a balanced and unbiased manner and all final conclusions made by impartial experts.
 - b. **Transparency:** The assessment process will be carried out in a transparent manner, with clear communication, timely responses to queries, and – to the

extent feasible – based on public and easily accessible evidence, with due protection of information shared in confidence.

- c. **Reasonable assurance of effectiveness**⁹: The assessment considers Agencies' relevant policies, procedures, guidelines, and systems, and evidence of their effective implementation. With respect to the latter, the assessment seeks reasonable assurance of effectiveness based on a sample of implementation experience, rather than a comprehensive review of Agencies' operations. Depending on the requirement against which compliance is assessed, an appropriate sample could include e.g. three recent project or program design documents or monitoring reports.

- d. **Comparability**¹⁰: The assessment aims to ascertain whether Agencies' policies, procedures, and systems are comparable and equivalent to the GEF's minimum standards in their effect, notwithstanding differences in structure and terminology. With respect to environmental and social safeguards, for example, if higher-level exclusion rules preclude certain activities, the Agency is not required to have in place procedures to manage the risks associated with such activities.

⁹ This principle reflects the approach approved by the Council as part of the policy on *Minimum Fiduciary Standards for GEF Partner Agencies* (GA/PL/02 [http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Fiduciary_Standards.pdf])

¹⁰ Ibid.

ANNEX I: INDICATIVE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR EXPERTS

Each Agency is assessed by an expert that meets the following competency requirements in all relevant areas – environmental and social safeguards, gender equality, and stakeholder engagement – or multiple experts that collectively meet the requirements in all relevant areas:

- An advanced degree in a field relevant to environmental and social safeguards, gender equality, and/or stakeholder engagement in international development;
- A minimum of 10 years of experience with environmental and social safeguards, gender equality, and/or stakeholder engagement in international development;
- Knowledge and experience of international development agencies' policies, procedures, and systems related to environmental and social safeguards, gender equality, and/or stakeholder engagement, particularly the multi-lateral development banks and/or United Nations agencies;
- Knowledge or experience of assessing agencies' policies, procedures, and systems related to environmental and social safeguards, gender equality, and/or stakeholder engagement is an asset;
- Excellent analytical skills;
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills in English;
- Working knowledge of other UN languages is an asset.