

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

# UNISDR

## Social & Environmental Standards Framework

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## INTRODUCTION

The UNISDR Environmental and Social Standards Framework is an integral part of UNISDR's approach to mainstreaming social and environmental sustainability into all its programmes and projects. This allows for a consistent level of quality in UNISDR programming and ensures that positive social and environmental opportunities are leveraged as well as to avoid, minimize, mitigate and manage adverse social and environmental risks and impacts.

The framework outlines the requirements, process and tools that are required throughout the project cycle and establishes an accountability framework that includes a stakeholder response mechanism. All proposed UNISDR actions will be screened during both the concept development phase and the project approval phase to ensure that projects are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in accordance with applicable safeguard standards. This requirement will also be applied to all UNISDR implementing partners.

Through the application of this framework UNISDR enhances the consistency, transparency and accountability of its decision-making actions; improves performance and strengthens achievements of positive development outcomes; and identifies, avoids or mitigates environmental and social risks in order to enhance positive outcomes.

The framework is guided by three overarching principles:

- Principle 1: Human Rights
- Principle 2: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
- Principles 3: Precautionary Approach

The framework describes the purpose, scope and safeguard requirements of seven performance standards (PS):

- PS 1: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources
- PS 2: Labour and Working Conditions
- PS 3: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention
- PS 4: Community Health, Safety, and Security
- PS 5: Economic Sustainability
- PS 6: Indigenous Peoples
- PS 7: Cultural Heritage<sup>1</sup>

The procedures for implementation of the framework are described in the introduction to this section by providing the scope and approach of the procedures. The UNISDR Project Cycle Safeguards section provides an overview of the project cycle and the specific role of the Programme Finance Committee. The section on projects classified as *high or medium risk* describes the impact assessment, safeguard management plans and safeguards in project

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<sup>1</sup> Note: UNISDR has never and does not intend to become involved with projects relating to dams, land acquisition and involuntary resettlement. Should UNISDR decide to become involved in such a project in the future UNISDR will utilize UNEP and UNDP safeguard scope and safeguard requirements to manage the associated risks.

implementation. The final section on accountability mechanisms describes UNISDR disclosure requirements and stakeholder response mechanisms.

In developing this framework UNISDR sought to fully align with UN Environmental Management Group guidance, particularly “A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System” and drew upon the lessons and frameworks from the Green Climate Fund and other UN entities, particularly FAO, IFC, UNDP and UNEP.

This framework is intended for multiple audiences:

- 1) UNISDR staff and managers, particularly those managers that serve on UNISDR’s Programme Finance Committee (PFC) and approve project proposals.
- 2) Various implementing partners through which UNISDR accomplishes its objectives.
- 3) Other entities to which UNISDR may be accountable to, such as GEF and GCF.

## OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

### Principle 1: Human Rights

UNISDR adheres to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Statement of Common Understanding of the Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation and Programming (UN Common Understanding), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments. UNISDR's Environmental and Social Standards Framework is based upon a human-rights based approach: normatively based on international human rights standards and principles; and operationally to promote human rights through project management. A participatory multi-stakeholder engagement should be employed in all UNISDR projects throughout the entire project cycle, based on the following human rights principles:

- **Equality and non-discrimination:** All individuals are equal as human beings by virtue of the inherent dignity of each human. All human beings are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status.
- **Participation and inclusion:** Every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized.
- **Accountability and rule of law:** This requires accessible, effective and independent mechanisms and procedures of redress based on appropriate judicial and administrative mechanisms.

### Principle 2: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Gender equality and the empowerment of women is inherent to a human rights based approach and key to reducing disaster risk. UNISDR programmes and projects must be gender-responsive in their design and implementation and will therefore:

- **Identify and integrate** the different needs, constraints, contributions and priorities of women, men, girls and boys into its programming;
- **Ensure meaningful and equitable participation** of women and men to have access to the programme and project resources and receive comparable social and economic benefits;
- **Enforce anti-discrimination policies** to ensure that programmes and projects do not discriminate against women or girls or reinforce gender-based discrimination and/or inequalities.

### Principles 3: Precautionary Approach

UNISDR applies to its programmes and projects a science-based precautionary approach. As described in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, "Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." Therefore, UNISDR is responsible to anticipate and address harm before it is done in all its projects and programmes.

## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

### **Performance Standard 1: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources**

#### *Purpose*

To ensure that projects undertaken directly by UNISDR, or supported by UNISDR through implementing partnerships: conserve biodiversity; maintain and enhance the benefits of ecosystem services; promote sustainable management of living natural resources.

#### *Scope*

The applicability of this standard will be determined during the PFC screening and review processes. The standard applies to projects:

- Implemented directly by UNISDR or through partners;
- Located in critical or natural habitats or semi-natural habitats or that have such habitats within their potential areas of influence;
- That potentially impact on, or depend on, ecosystem services;
- That are intended to affect the implementation of biodiversity conservation measures or maintenance of ecosystem services, or that could have impacts on them, including on habitat restoration;
- That include the generation of living natural resources (e.g., agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry).

#### *Safeguard Requirements*

- UNISDR will not support directly or indirectly any activity that will significantly convert or degrade critical natural habitats and will avoid significant conversion or degradation of habitats that are: legally protected; officially proposed for protection; identified by authoritative sources for their high conservation value, or recognized as protected by traditional local communities, where national legislation so allows.
- Before engaging in a project that could result in the conversion or degradation of noncritical natural habitats, UNISDR will require: an analysis that shows there is no feasible alternative; an analysis that shows that the benefits of the project exceed the environmental costs; and compensation for the loss of habitat, usually in the form of carbon offset.
- Activities will not be planned in critical habitats<sup>2</sup>, such as restoration or improved management.

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<sup>2</sup> Critical habitats are a subset of both modified and natural habitats that require special attention. Critical habitats are areas with high biodiversity value, including any of the following features: 1) habitat of significant importance to critically endangered and/or endangered species; 2) habitat of significant importance to endemic and/or restricted-range species; 3) habitat supporting globally significant concentrations of migratory species and/or congregatory species; 4) highly threatened and/or unique ecosystems; and/or 5) areas associated with key evolutionary processes. Critical habitats include those areas that are 1) legally protected; 2) officially proposed for protection; 3) identified by authoritative sources for their high conservation value (such the World Conservation Union classification and the UNESCO world heritage sites); or 4) recognized as protected by traditional local communities.

- Projects must be legally permitted and consistent with any officially recognized management plans for the area.
- Activities will seek to avoid adverse impacts on soils, their organic content, productivity, structure and water-retention capacity, or to contribute to reversing land degradation.
- Measures to avoid the introduction or utilization of invasive alien species will be implemented whether accidental or intentional; and will support activities to mitigate and control their further spread.
- UNISDR will apply the precautionary approach (see Principle 3) in assessing and managing the impacts of all activities with potential adverse effects on biodiversity, natural habitats or ecosystem services.
- In projects that could affect biodiversity, natural habitats, or ecosystem services or that involve the preparation of protected areas or ecosystem management plans, UNISDR will consult with appropriate experts, potentially affected communities, local government, local and national NGOs, or other experts and stakeholders.
- With respect to impacts on priority ecosystem services of relevance to affected communities and where a UNISDR project has direct management or significant influence over such ecosystem services, adverse impacts should be avoided. If these impacts are unavoidable, UNISDR project will minimize them and implement mitigation measures that aim to maintain the value and functionality of priority services.

## **Performance Standard 2: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention**

### ***Purpose***

To ensure that projects undertaken directly by UNISDR, or supported by UNISDR through implementing partnerships:

- Promote more sustainable uses of resources, including energy and water.
- Reduce project-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Avoid or minimize adverse impacts on human health and the environment originating from project activities through the use or management of hazardous chemicals and waste materials.

### ***Scope***

The applicability of this standard will be determined during the PFC screening and review processes. The standard applies to projects:

- Implemented directly by UNISDR or through partners.
- That significantly consume or cause consumption of water, energy, or other resources, whether through its own footprint or through the boundary of influence of the activity;
- That generate or cause significant generation of GHG;
- That generate or cause generation of solid, liquid or gaseous hazardous waste;
- That use, cause the use of, or manage the use of, storage and disposal of hazardous chemicals, including pesticides.

### ***Safeguard Requirements***

- UNISDR projects will explore technically and financially feasible approaches for the efficient use of energy, water, and other resources and materials in line with the concept of “cleaner production”<sup>3</sup> and for using raw materials, energy, and water sustainably.
- UNISDR projects will consider alternatives and implement technically and financially feasible options to reduce project-related GHG emissions.
- When a UNISDR project includes a significant consumption of water, UNISDR will ensure that it does not have significantly adverse impacts. The project should consider alternative water supplies or water consumption offsets to reduce the total demand for water resources within the available supply.
- UNISDR will avoid or minimize the potential for community exposure to hazardous materials and substances that maybe released by a project. Where there is a potential for the public to be exposed to hazards, UNISDR projects will exercise special care to avoid or minimize their exposure by modifying, substituting, or eliminating the condition or material causing the potential hazards.

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<sup>3</sup> Cleaner Production is defined as “the continuous application of an integrated preventive environmental strategy applied to processes, products, and services to increase overall efficiency and reduce risks to humans and the environment.” ([UNEP](#))



## **Performance Standard 3: Community Health, Safety, and Security**

### ***Purpose***

To ensure that projects undertaken directly by UNISDR, or supported by UNISDR through implementing partnerships anticipate and avoid adverse impacts on the health and safety of affected communities during the entire project life cycle from both routine and non-routine circumstances.

### ***Scope***

The applicability of this standard will be determined during the PFC screening and review processes. The standard applies to projects:

- Implemented directly by UNISDR or through partners;
- That may pose significant risks to human health and safety and to projects that seek to strengthen livelihoods<sup>4</sup>. Community health and safety refers to protecting local communities from hazards caused and/or exacerbated by project activities (including flooding, landslides, contamination or other natural or human-made hazards), disease, and the accidental collapse or failure of project structural elements.

### ***Safeguard Requirements***

- UNISDR will ensure that projects evaluate the risks to, and potential impacts on, the safety of affected communities during the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and establish preventive measures and action plans to address them in a manner commensurate with the identified risks and impacts. These measures will favour the prevention or avoidance of risks and impacts over their minimization and reduction.<sup>5</sup>
- Consideration will be given to potential exposure to both accidental and natural hazards, especially where the structural elements of the project are accessible to members of the affected community or where their failure could result in injury to the community.
- Structural elements will be designed and constructed by competent professionals and certified or approved by competent authorities or professionals and UNISDR will ensure that for projects with structural elements: 1) plans for project supervision, operation, and maintenance are developed and monitored; 2) independent expertise on the verification of design, construction, and operational procedures is used; and 3) periodic safety inspections are carried out.
- UNISDR will ensure that any implementing partners, in collaboration with appropriate and relevant authorities and third parties, will be prepared to respond to accidental and emergency situations in a manner appropriate to prevent and mitigate any harm to people and/or the environment.
- UNISDR will ensure that projects are gender-sensitive and consider how women's and children's health and safety could be particularly at risk.
- UNISDR will consider the differential impacts of emergency situations on women and men, the elderly, children, disabled people, and potentially marginalized groups, and strengthen the participation of women in decision-making processes on emergency

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<sup>4</sup> Standard 3: Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency, provides information on avoiding or minimize impacts on human health and the environment due to pollution are included in.

<sup>5</sup> Preventive and control measures shall be consistent with good international practice, such as the World Bank Group Environmental, Health and Safety Guidelines (EHS Guidelines).

- preparedness and response strategies. Appropriate information about emergency preparedness and response activities, resources, and responsibilities will be disclosed to affected communities.
- UNISDR will ensure that projects avoid or minimize the potential for community exposure to water-borne, water-based, water-related, and vector-borne diseases, and communicable diseases (e.g. HIV, TB and malaria) that could result from project activities, taking into consideration the differentiated exposure to and higher sensitivity of marginalized groups, including communities living in voluntary isolation. UNISDR will ensure that projects avoid or minimize transmission of communicable diseases that may be associated with the influx of temporary or permanent project labour.
  - Where UNISDR projects involve engagement of security personnel to protect facilities and personal property, security arrangements should be provided in a manner that does not violate human rights or jeopardize the community's safety and security.
  - UNISDR will ensure that potential risks posed by security arrangements to those within and outside the project area are assessed, that those providing security are appropriately vetted and trained, and that security arrangements are appropriately monitored and reported.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> UNISDR will do this in full compliance with the “Human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces” (A/67/775–S/2013/110).

## **Performance Standard 4: Indigenous Peoples**

### ***Purpose***

To ensure that projects undertaken directly by UNISDR, or supported by UNISDR through implementing partnerships foster full respect for the human rights, dignity, aspirations, culture, and natural resource-based livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples through taking into account Indigenous Peoples' views, needs and rights.

### ***Scope***

The applicability of this standard will be determined during the PFC screening and review process. The standard applies to projects implemented directly by UNISDR or through partners whenever Indigenous Peoples are or may be present in an area affected by a UNISDR-supported project. For the purpose of this standard, Indigenous Peoples is used to refer to a distinct social and cultural group possessing the following characteristics in varying degrees:

- Self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous cultural group and recognition of this identity by others;
- Collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats or ancestral territories in the project area and to the natural resources in these habitats and territories;
- Customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are separate from those of the mainstream society or culture; or
- A distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside.

### ***Safeguard Requirements***

- UNISDR will avoid projects which will undermine or inadvertently weaken the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples.
- When Indigenous Peoples may be affected by a UNISDR -supported project, UNISDR and its implementing partners will carry out a relevant impact assessment; identify measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate any negative impacts; and agree on an approach that are acceptable to the potentially affected Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples should be informed of their rights and all available options in terms of their benefits and mitigation measures.
- When Indigenous Peoples may be affected by a UNISDR-supported project, UNISDR and its implementing partners will prepare an Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP). The planning process will involve Indigenous Peoples in an assessment of potential socioeconomic impacts and risks, and apply the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). Full consideration should be given to options preferred by the potentially affected Indigenous Peoples and to options designed to enable Indigenous Peoples to benefit from the project in a culturally appropriate and feasible manner. Key elements of the IPP should include
  - an action plan to ensure that potential, adverse impacts on indigenous peoples are avoided, minimized, mitigated or compensated in a culturally appropriate manner;
  - a plan for consultations throughout the project;
  - a stakeholder response procedure;
  - a budget and financing arrangement to deliver the plan; and
  - mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

## Performance Standard 5: Cultural Heritage

### *Purpose*

To ensure that projects undertaken directly by UNISDR or indirectly through implementing partnerships protect tangible cultural heritage, support its preservation and promote the equitable sharing of the benefits of its use.

### *Scope*

The applicability of this standard will be determined during the PFC screening and review processes. This standard applies to any project:

- Implemented directly by UNISDR or through partners.
- Activity that is either known at the outset to have the potential to negatively influence tangible cultural heritage,<sup>7</sup> that is determined during an impact assessment to be likely to have such adverse impacts, or that proposes to use cultural heritage for commercial or other potentially adverse purposes.

### *Safeguard Requirements*

- A project will avoid adverse impacts on critical tangible cultural heritage. When avoidance is not feasible, the safeguard management plan must include measures to minimize or mitigate those adverse impacts.
- Projects must be in compliance with relevant national law and the host country's obligations under the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*.
- A procedure must be put in place for any project involving land clearing or excavation in which there are indications of undetected physical cultural heritage.
- Where a project proposes to use tangible cultural heritage of local communities for commercial or other purposes, the communities must be informed of their rights under international and national law and of the scope, nature and consequences of the project.
- Consultation with corresponding governmental authorities, relevant UN entities, relevant NGOs, local communities and relevant experts will take place in the identification and protection or management of tangible cultural heritage that could potentially be negatively affected by a UNISDR project.
- Where a UNISDR project site contains cultural heritage or prevents access to previously accessible cultural heritage sites being used by, or that have been used by, potentially affected communities within living memory for long-standing cultural purposes, the UNISDR project should allow continued access to the cultural site or provide an alternative access route, subject to overriding health, safety, and security considerations.
- Projects should incorporate mitigating measures to address adverse impacts and to enhance positive impacts on tangible cultural heritage.

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<sup>7</sup> Tangible cultural heritage is defined by UNESCO as movable cultural heritage (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts); immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites) and underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities), which are considered worthy of preservation for the future. These include objects significant to the archaeology, architecture, science or technology of a specific culture (The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Culture and Natural Heritage. The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization meeting in Paris, 17 October to 21 November 1972, at its 17th session).

## **Performance Standard 6: Economic Sustainability**

### ***Purpose***

To ensure that projects undertaken directly by UNISDR, or supported by UNISDR through implementing partnerships avoid negative economic consequences during and after project implementation, especially for vulnerable and marginalized social groups in targeted communities and that benefits are socially-inclusive and sustainable.

### ***Scope***

The applicability of this standard is established during PFC screening and decision-making process. The standard applies to projects that:

- Implemented directly by UNISDR or through partners;
- Focus on economic aspects of disaster risk reduction;
- May have adverse effects on economic viability and sustainability of communities and people.

### ***Safeguard Requirements***

- UNISDR projects will promote financial sustainability through the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of the projects' activities, including beyond the duration of project intervention.
- UNISDR projects should consider the full economic costs of various project modalities and undertake approaches that do not generate long-term economic burdens at the expense of short term gains for subsets of a population.
- UNISDR projects should take into consideration a variety of project modalities and undertake approaches that do not generate welfare disparities, especially for the poor, during or beyond the project intervention period.

## **Performance Standard 7: Labour and Working Conditions**

### ***Purpose***

To ensure that projects undertaken directly by UNISDR, or supported by UNISDR through implementing partnerships comply with national labour laws, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the objectives of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Standards:

- To promote fair treatment, non-discrimination, and equal opportunity for workers;
- To promote compliance with national employment and labor laws, which comply with the mentioned standards;
- To protect workers, including vulnerable categories of workers such as children, women and migrant workers;
- To promote safe and healthy working conditions and the health of workers; and
- To avoid the use of forced labor or child labor.

### ***Scope***

The applicability of this standard will be determined during the PFC screening and review processes. The standard applies to projects:

- Implemented directly by UNISDR or through partners;
- That may have adverse impacts on labour and working conditions of communities, in particular most vulnerable groups.

### ***Safeguard Requirements***

- Implementing partners must have in place human resource policies and procedures appropriate to their size and workforce that set out their approach to comply with these standards and national laws.
- Implementing partners must provide workers, including migrant workers, with clear and understandable information on their rights under national law and any collective agreements that may be in place. The implementing partner will respect the terms of any collective agreement and, where such agreements do not exist or do not address working conditions, will provide reasonable working conditions<sup>8</sup> and terms of employment.
- Implementing partner's policy will articulate principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunity in employment, accommodations, working conditions or terms of employment, access to training, job assignment, promotion, termination of employment, and disciplinary practices.
- Implementing partners commits to take measures to prevent and address harassment, intimidation, and/or exploitation, especially in regard to women and children and migrant workers.

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<sup>8</sup> Reasonable working conditions and terms of employment could be assessed by: 1) conditions established for work of the same character in the trade or industry concerned in the area/region where the work is carried out; 2) collective agreement or other recognized negotiation between other organizations of employers and workers' representatives in the trade or industry concerned; or 3) conditions established by national law.

## PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

### Introduction

UNISDR's Environmental and Social Standards Framework is fully integrated into the existing project review, approval and management cycle. This section describes the procedures, tools and guidelines for all risk categories of projects. It provides UNISDR Project Managers (PM) with details on the required processes in the event their projects is classified as *moderate or high risk*. UNISDR staff will be trained in the following procedures for implementation; despite that to-date, all of UNISDR's projects fall into the *low risk* category.<sup>9</sup>

UNISDR's work can be broadly described by its three Strategic Objectives:

- 1) **Coordination and Monitoring:** to coordinate, monitor and review the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- 2) **Knowledge and Information:** To inform risk-sensitive decision making through applied knowledge and understanding of risk
- 3) **Catalysing Actions:** To build resilience through catalysing actions by stakeholders.

### Scope

UNISDR and implementing partners are required to fully comply with this framework and prioritize the prevention of harmful environmental, social and economic impacts. If such prevention is not possible, they should minimize adverse impacts and enhance positive impacts through adequate environmental, social and economic planning and management, including mitigation measures, monitoring, institutional capacity building, and the provision of sufficient resources (human, time, budget).

UNISDR will consider the use of a host country or partner's safeguards system only if UNISDR has determined that such system complies with UNISDR's overarching and thematic safeguard standards and objectives. In such an event, UNISDR will review relevant policies and the host country or partner's capacity throughout the concept development phase and project approval phases. In a circumstance where UNISDR is considering the use of a country or partner system, this fact will be disclosed and justified prior to the project's submission for review and approval by the Programme Finance Committee (PFC).

Procedures for implementing these safeguards will be the same regardless of the type of project. However, the level and nature of scrutiny will vary depending on the potential impacts associated with a given project.

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<sup>9</sup> *Activities with potential limited adverse environmental and/or social risks and/or impacts that are few in number, generally site-specific, largely reversible, and readily addressed through mitigation measures .*

## UNISDR Project Cycle Safeguards

### *Programme Finance Committee Screening Process*

All UNISDR projects are screened by the Programme Finance Committee (PFC) regardless of whether UNISDR is the implementing agency or not. The template, to be completed by the Project Manager (PM), includes an assessment of potential environmental and social risks among other criteria such as alignment with strategic objectives and project design. UNISDR encourages early and broad stakeholder consultation to ensure that the project is demand-driven and potential safeguard risks are identified. UNISDR projects generally require donor approval at the project proposal preparation phase, and as such the environmental, social and economic implication of a proposed project must be examined by the PM and PFC at the concept development stage.

At the concept development stage the PFC will assign each project a risk level of high, moderate or low risk. In the event a project is classified as moderate or high risk, a safeguard management plan and impact assessment will be required during project preparation. The safeguard management plan and impact assessment will be integrated into the project's design and management. If the PFC identifies a project as high risk it is unlikely that the project will pass the concept development stage.

The PFC process for determining the appropriate level of risk (direct, indirect, cumulative and associated impacts) and the corresponding management approach is called screening<sup>10</sup>. This screening is based on the project description of the physical, biological, socio-cultural and economic setting, and the potential impacts and risks. The screening process identifies the standards that will apply at both the concept development and project approval phases. Throughout the project cycle the list of related standards may increase or decrease. UNISDR's PFC screening will place a proposed project in one of three categories:

**High risk:** Activities with potential significant adverse environmental and/or social risks and/or impacts that are diverse, irreversible, or unprecedented.<sup>11</sup> It is highly unlikely that the PFC will approve a project that is high risk, largely due to the fact that the nature of the work and the mandate of UNISDR rarely addresses such projects. If approved, the safeguard management plan should be carefully monitored and reported to the stakeholders during project implementation.

**Moderate risk:** Activities with potential limited adverse environmental and/or social risks and/or impacts that are few in number, generally site-specific, largely reversible, and readily addressed through mitigation measures.<sup>12</sup> The PFC will approve a project that is moderate risk, but to date has not approved a project that would be categorized as moderate risk.

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<sup>10</sup> Screening is inevitably based on imperfect and incomplete information. Estimating the potential negative impacts depends on informed professional judgment regarding the significance and complexity of potential impacts (i.e. magnitude or intensity, geographic extent, duration of the potential risk, reversibility, probability and manageability of impacts).

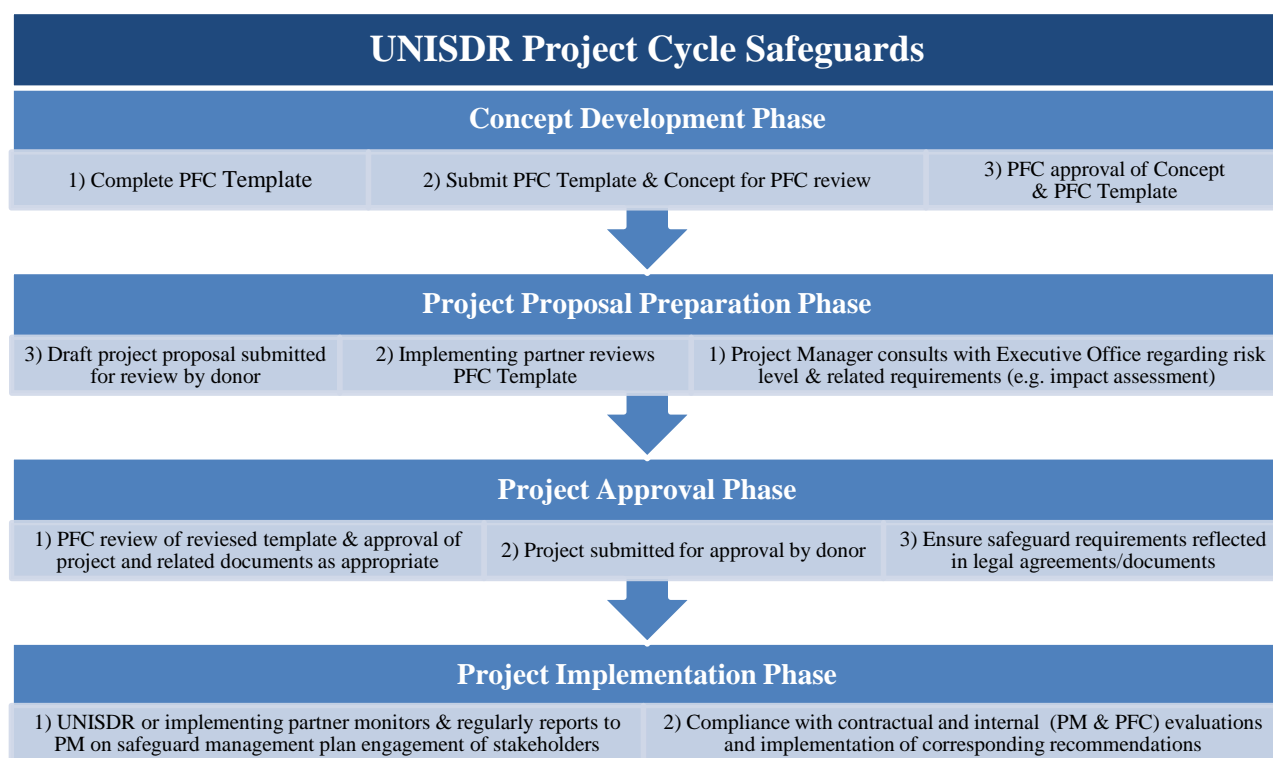
<sup>11</sup> Category A of *Guidelines for Operationalization of the Fit-for-purpose Accreditation Approach* (GCF/B.08/02). Examples of high risk projects are: large coastal defenses, large-scale tourism and retail development, large dams and other impoundments designed for holding back or storage of water.

<sup>12</sup> Category B of *Guidelines for Operationalization of the Fit-for-purpose Accreditation Approach* (GCF/B.08/02). Examples of moderate risk projects are: energy efficient buildings, forest management,



**Low risk:** Activities with potential limited adverse environmental and/or social risks and/or impacts that are few in number, generally site-specific, largely reversible, and readily addressed through mitigation measures.<sup>13</sup>

A final approval by the PFC of the project proposal including a revised PFC Template and, as necessary, a Safeguard Management Plan, is required prior to official submission to donors. In the final approvals process the PFC reviews the potential environmental and social risks in all the project documents based on the UNISDR’s Environmental and Social Standards Framework. The PFC will also review the capacities of the potential implementing partners for their level of compliance with this framework. Legal agreements with implementing partners who have been successfully screened by UNISDR’s Grants Committee will contain language necessary for ensuring the implementation of all relevant safeguards.



adaptation of farming systems and low emissions power generation (small, medium and large).

<sup>13</sup> Category C of GCF *Guidelines for Operationalization of the Fit-for-purpose Accreditation Approach* (GCF/B.08/02). Examples of low risk projects include activities to support development of: policies, regulations or rules; plans and studies; databases; capacity building workshops, and trainings; and knowledge disseminations.

## **High and Medium Risk Project Procedures**

### ***Impact Assessments (for high and medium risk projects)***

Environmental, social or economic impact assessment provides the scope, complexity and degree of the potential impacts, which helps to guide the project in avoiding, mitigating and/or minimizing them. It helps to identify and address potentially significant economic and social risks. This could avoid potential problems that could otherwise cause substantial delays, significant costs, public tension or adverse reputational risks to UNISDR.

Impact assessments of potential impacts must be coordinated or harmonized with national requirements and procedures that apply to the relevant project. Impact assessments should ensure that projects do not inadvertently undermine national requirements or international obligations.

UNISDR and its implementing partner, as appropriate, must compare national requirements, international obligations and those of UNISDR and adopt the more stringent of these requirements (e.g., if UNISDR's screening process would call for a site-specific impact assessment but national regulations require a full impact assessment, then UNISDR or its partner should prepare a full impact assessment).

### ***Safeguard Management Plans (for high and medium risk projects)***

Often, all of the requisite safeguard measures that the project implementers must carry out will not be known up front. It is important that all moderate to high risk projects continuously monitor during implementation for indications of the need for additional environmental, social or economic safeguard measures. It is likely that a safeguard management plan will describe the known mitigation or enhancement measures and describe studies that must be undertaken to monitor for others that may emerge as the project evolves. The latest safeguard management plan for every UNISDR project will be publicly disclosed on UNISDR's website and the plans must include what information should be disclosed by whom and when.

A site and context specific safeguard management plan is normally a by-product of an impact assessment; however, it can be prepared as a stand-alone risk management instrument without carrying out an impact assessment. This is normally the case for projects in the moderate risk category, where the typical impacts of the operation under review are relatively well understood through stakeholder consultations or field visits.

Safeguard management plans should identify the actions necessary to avoid adverse impacts, and the agencies or organizations responsible for implementing and funding those actions. The management approach must be site-specific and explain the measures for mitigation, locations, target communities, monitoring and institutional capacity development, implementation schedules, and cost estimates.

### ***Project Implementation (for high and medium risk projects)***

During project implementation, Project Managers and implementing partners are responsible for ensuring that the actions specified in safeguard management plan are carried out and reported on regularly via progress reports and relevant project implementation reviews required by partners or donors. Independent experts may be involved in the monitoring of projects and in ensuring compliance with the project safeguard management plans, which are reviewed periodically for any relevant updates and adjustments. UNISDR must address compliance concerns and other grievances in a timely manner, through UNISDR's stakeholder response mechanism, even after project closure.

At the mid-term of a project, a mid-term review or mid-term evaluation will assess whether the environmental, social and economic risks are being vigilantly managed and monitored, and whether the UNISDR safeguard plans have been complied with. Corrective measures will be proposed as relevant. At the end of the project a final evaluation will undertake a similar exercise. It will also assess long term impacts, if relevant.

UNISDR will monitor the projects it supports for compliance with safeguard management and enhancement measures, by means of self-monitoring reports from implementing partners as well as, when appropriate, supervision missions by UNISDR staff or external experts. Instruments such as safeguard management plan, project implementation reports and other progress reports will be utilized and updated whenever possible to include provisions for such monitoring.

UNISDR's Senior Managers will maintain oversight at the programme level. Based on the inputs from the Senior Managers, UNISDR's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer will periodically report on the overall, aggregate status of Safeguard Management Plan implementation. UNISDR will conduct compliance and quality of supervision evaluations on a periodic basis, including institutional evaluations of the implementation of UNISDR's Environmental and Social Standards Framework.

## **Accountability Mechanisms**

### ***Disclosure Requirements***

UNISDR adheres to the principle of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice, based on Rio Principle 10. This principle includes early consultation, access to information and the adequate opportunity to review materials and present comments prior to decisions. Details on what information should be disclosed by whom and when are explained in the safeguard management plans.

Effective implementation of this framework depends in part and to varying degrees on stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders can engage in a meaningful way only if they are appropriately informed. UNISDR will disclose documentation related to the Environmental and Social Standards Framework implementation according to the guidelines below and expects its implementing partners to do the same:

- In a format and language understandable to the stakeholders concerned.
- Sufficiently before the PFC review and approval to allow for inputs and reviews by the stakeholders.
- On UNISDR's website and through any or all of the following additional locations, depending on the nature of the operation: electronic copies on implementing partner's website or national agency website, hard copies in the project area, in other forms of information disclosure, as appropriate.

The PM must disclose impact assessment, impact assessment and management plans well ahead of PFC reviews and approvals of the projects to allow affected communities the opportunity to review and comment on these documents before the finalization of the project documents. Comments and suggestions received should be responded to or be incorporated in relevant project approach and risk management plans. UNISDR will address all communications from stakeholders in the course of project formulation and before project review.

If a project is revised or its mid-term evaluation identifies new and additional issues, or concludes that the safeguard management instrument was not fully implemented, then the management plan may need to be redone and re-disclosed. UNISDR will disclose all revised safeguard management plans and/or other consultation reports. Implementation and monitoring of safeguard management instruments should be reported and disclosed at least once a year. Outcomes of any stakeholder response or non-compliance review will also be made publicly available.

### ***Stakeholder Response Mechanism***

UNISDR projects all have advocacy and outreach components to keep the public informed about upcoming activities and to catalyse action on disaster risk reduction. This outreach also allows the public to raise issues and propose solutions.

UNISDR also has a Stakeholder Response Mechanism to receive and facilitate the resolution of stakeholder concerns and address stakeholder responses to environmental and social management performance. This mechanism, while respecting the UN's privileges and immunities, is structured to resolve concerns promptly using a transparent consultative process that is, in accordance with UN standards, culturally appropriate and readily accessible. The aim of the mechanism is to ease accessibility to UNISDR by affected stakeholders and to enable UNISDR to respond in an independent, transparent and timely manner.

Stakeholders are encouraged to publish, upload and email comments, critique and suggestions to UNISDR through its two websites:

- [www.unisdr.org/contact](http://www.unisdr.org/contact)
- [www.preventionweb.net/english/about/design](http://www.preventionweb.net/english/about/design)

UNISDR's corporate website ([www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)) provides direct access and contact details for UNISDR headquarters, regional and liaison offices. The official UNISDR email is checked on a daily basis by a designated and trained website moderator.

The website moderators reviews the stakeholder messages and has the responsibility for managing the Stakeholder Response Mechanism. The website moderator is tasked with sending the message to the most appropriate UNISDR staff member in regards to level and expertise to respond to the message. Any compliance concerns and grievances will be registered with UNISDR's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer reports directly to the Chief of the Executive Office and operates in an independent manner from UNISDR programme and project management. The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer will compile any cases for the PFC to address dispute resolution and compliance review through a compliance review process to review and respond, as appropriate, in cases where UNISDR may not be in compliance with its Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework. The PFC will advise responsible project staff, particularly project managers on procedures and best practices for handling compliance concerns and grievances. The PFC also has the right to begin a grievance redress process that provides people affected by UNISDR projects access to appropriate and flexible dispute resolution procedures.