



ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

**STANDARD ON CULTURAL
RESOURCES**

Introduction

UNESCO's (2002) definition of culture is the 'set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs'.

Cultural resources embedded in belief systems and traditional lifestyles are often the most valuable aspects of a landscape/seascape (hereafter 'landscape') for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This Standard ensures that cultural resources are appropriately considered, respected and protected and their destruction, damage or loss is avoided.

The Standard refers to 3 types of cultural resources:

1. **Tangible** – referring to tangible moveable or immovable objects, property, sites, structures, or groups of structures, having archaeological (prehistoric), paleontological, historical, cultural (e.g. sacred sites, burial sites), artistic (e.g. works of art), and religious values;
2. **Natural** – referring to unique natural features or tangible objects that embody cultural or spiritual values, such as sacred groves, rocks, lakes, and waterfalls. The difference between this category and tangible cultural resources is that the latter has been shaped and created by human activities;
3. **Intangible** – referring to intangible forms of culture that may be impacted by or are proposed to be accessed and/or used through WWF activities, such as traditional ecological knowledge or other forms of cultural knowledge, innovations, and practices of communities embodying traditional lifestyles.

Requirements

WWF will:

- Take care to fully understand the tangible, natural and intangible cultural resources of the landscape as perceived by Indigenous Peoples and local communities and any cultural resources that are recognised in national legislation or under relevant international environmental/cultural treaties and agreements;
- Analyse the tangible, natural and intangible cultural resources in relation to WWF activities and assess potential impacts on these resources. This may include access to said cultural resources; changes to customary ways of life; access and/or utilisation of traditional ecological knowledge;
- Where activities involve access and/or use of traditional ecological knowledge or any cultural knowledge associated with genetic resources, whether for commercial or non-commercial purposes, respect commitments in the [Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization](#). This includes adhering to corresponding national requirements and procedures (e.g. research permits), convening appropriate prior informed consent processes with affected communities and formalising mutually agreed terms on the fair and equitable sharing of benefits;

V2.0 revision for consultation - May 2021

- Avoid financing and/or implementing activities that could significantly damage or modify cultural resources. Where appropriate conduct field-based surveys using qualified specialists to evaluate cultural resources and co-develop (with communities) alternatives that avoid negative impacts;
- Avoid making decisions about important cultural resources without the full and meaningful consultation of the communities in question.

Mitigation Measures

- Where risk screening identifies that important cultural resources are at stake, and could potentially be negatively impacted, develop clear and inclusive mitigation measures that are included in the environmental and social mitigation framework (ESMF) (see the [WWF Standard on Environmental and Social Risk Management](#)).
- Where risk screening identifies potential impacts to the cultural resources of Indigenous Peoples the [WWF Standard on Indigenous Peoples](#) applies. Where potentially affected peoples are not officially recognised as Indigenous, but they are historically, socially and culturally distinct and have customary practices that are inextricably linked to nature, the principles of FPIC will be extended to them. Said peoples may include tribal, ethnic minority, nomadic, hunter-gatherer and pastoralist communities. For all other potentially affected non-indigenous peoples, the [WWF Standard on Stakeholder Engagement](#) applies.
- Where the use of cultural resources is in conflict with conservation aims (e.g. endangered species used for traditional medicine or a major pilgrimage site within a protected area) specific, culturally appropriate, mitigation actions must be co-developed.
- Provide for the use of 'chance find' procedures that include a pre-approved management and conservation approach for cultural resources that may be encountered unexpectedly during project implementation.