



ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

**STANDARD ON
ENVIRONMENTAL AND
SOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT**

Introduction

This Standard defines the steps WWF needs to take to identify and manage potential environmental and social risks and benefits associated with WWF funded activities in a landscape or seascape (hereafter 'landscape').

The objectives of this Standard are to (1) improve planning through the identification and selection of alternatives to enhance benefits, and to avoid or - if avoidance is not possible - minimize, mitigate, offset or compensate for adverse social and environmental impacts on affected communities; and (2) ensure effective management of environmental and social risks and opportunities within a landscape from conception to closure.

Requirements

1. Safeguards Risk Screening

The safeguards risk screening is the first step in WWF's safeguards process. All landscapes in which WWF works must be screened to (1) identify potential negative social or environmental impacts and (2) identify opportunities to strengthen design or implementation. The screening also determines the overall risk category of the landscape (see Categorization below).

The landscape lead (i.e. the person appointed by the implementing office to oversee activities) leads the screening process, working with their team. Beyond the proposed activities themselves, screening (i.e. due diligence) is also undertaken on partners and context i.e. socio-political and other 'enabling environment' factors that influence implementation. Once completed, the screening is submitted to a WWF accredited Environment and Social Safeguards Reviewer ("safeguards reviewer"), who will analyze the document, ensure the screening is comprehensive, take account of all likely risks, assign the risk category to the landscape and when satisfied, approve. The safeguards reviewer captures this review and approval via a categorisation memo, which will be publicly disclosed on the official WWF website (panda.org).

The landscape screenings and categorisation memos will be reviewed periodically (differing time frame depending on risk category) but also when new activities in the landscape are being proposed. Any updates to the categorisation memo will be disclosed on the official WWF website. More information on the process is available in the [Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework](#) document.

2. Risk Categorization

The safeguards reviewer will categorize the landscape into one of the following risk categories and record the outcome in the categorization memo. The memo shall clarify whether any additional assessment (e.g. an environmental and social impact assessment) is required, and if so, the scope and content of such.

- **Low-risk landscapes** are likely to have minimal to no social and environmental impacts. Examples of such activities include:

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- convening other organizations;
 - developing standards;
 - advocacy campaigns and multi-stakeholder platform work;
 - natural resource assessments and monitoring;
 - environmental and sustainable development analysis;
 - monitoring and evaluation exercises;
 - desk studies, workshops, meetings, scientific research, and field surveys (however, the nature of the research may require reclassification as medium risk);
 - research and extension in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, natural resource management, remote sensing, and geospatial analysis;
 - capacity development, communications, and outreach programmes, including training.
- **Medium-risk landscapes** have potential adverse social and/or environmental impacts. This includes funds from or related to WWF for field-based activities that support:
 - creation and management of government or private protected areas;
 - creation and management of indigenous and community conservation areas;
 - community-based natural resource management;
 - sustainable development activities for local communities, such as investment in livelihoods, community health and education;
 - construction of small-scale infrastructure, such as visitor amenities, ranger outposts and community facilities;
 - direct expenditures on measures to reduce negative environmental impacts in the field, including from forestry, fisheries and agriculture.

The above are medium-risk only if they occur in places that are not considered high-risk in the context of human rights abuses (see below).

- High-risk landscapes have the potential for significant adverse social or environmental impacts at scale or have compound, multiple risks including the potential for human rights abuses. These include activities that:
 - trigger multiple safeguards standards with no pre-existing mitigation;
 - activities that are proposed in [fragile or conflict- or violence-affected states](#); or
 - regions of states that have a history of systemic human rights abuses.

In addition, WWF maintains an **Exclusion List**¹, as set out in the Framework document, which lists activities that are considered ineligible for WWF and WWF supported activities. A landscape will not be screened and categorized until an excluded activity is removed.

3. Impact Assessments and Environmental and Social Mitigation Frameworks

The safeguards reviewer will use the results of the safeguards risk screening phase to determine:

- If any further impact assessments are required at the landscape level and what areas should be further assessed. Such impact assessments (e.g. social and environmental

¹ See [Exclusion List here](#)

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impact assessment, socio-economic impact assessment) are carried out to fill gaps in information and explore the potential impacts identified in the screening in more depth;

- If it is necessary to develop an environmental and social mitigation framework (at landscape level) or an environmental and social management plan (at activity level) and its scope. An environmental and social mitigation framework (ESMF), for example, can include measures to address access restrictions or impacts on Indigenous Peoples or if warranted, such issues can be addressed via dedicated plans. Please refer to the Framework document for further explanation.

The determination will be captured in the categorization memo.

If a landscape is categorised as **high risk**, independent environmental and social safeguards expertise must be engaged by the implementing office to lead further assessments and develop the mitigation framework or management plan. These will be reviewed by a safeguards reviewer and escalated to the WWF Conservation Quality Committee for final approval.

If a landscape is categorised as **medium risk**, the implementing office the implementing office will carry out the impact assessment and develop the mitigation framework or management plan with internal resources, however under certain conditions (e.g. planning for complex FPIC processes) an external expert may be contracted to support the development of specialized components of the assessment and mitigation measures. These will be reviewed and approved by the safeguards reviewer.

If a landscape is categorized as **low risk**, there is no requirement to undertake any further impact assessment or develop a mitigation framework, - unless new activities with a different risk profile are proposed for the landscape. After the categorization memo has been signed and disclosed, no further action is required for low risk landscapes.

Risk Category	Impact Assessment required	Mitigation Framework	Led by	Final reviewed and sign-off (in addition to local and donor approvals)
High	As specified in the cat memo	As specified in the cat memo	Independent (external) expert	Conservation Quality Committee
Medium	As specified in the cat memo	As specified in the cat memo	Internal (option for an external expert for specific aspects)	Designated safeguards reviewer
Low	No	No	N/A	N/A

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4. Accreditation under an International Financial Mechanism

Under a few specific circumstances, WWF may act as an accredited agency or entity for an international funding mechanism, such as the Global Environment Facility or Green Climate Fund. In these circumstances the general process outlined in this Standard is applied, but with a few distinctions for implementation. When WWF acts as an agency or entity in these arrangements WWF recognizes three fundamental differences:

1. The accredited WWF office will assume the role of assuring quality and appropriate application of the Framework document, but the responsibility applying and complying with the framework falls to the funding recipient;
2. Application of the safeguards will be at the project level, although informed by WWF's broader landscape level effort;
3. For all medium and high risk projects, an independent consultant will always be utilized.

WWF has developed a tool, the Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP), to detail how environmental and social safeguards are applied in these circumstances.

1. Disclosure

As outlined in the [Framework document](#), the categorization memo, additional impact assessments, the mitigation framework and any supporting documents will be publicly disclosed.