

Social and Environmental Standards

1. UNDP programmes and projects adhere to the objectives and requirements of the [Social and Environmental Standards \(SES\)](#). The SES objectives are to: (a) strengthen the quality of programming by ensuring a principled approach; (b) maximize social and environmental opportunities and benefits; (c) avoid adverse impacts to people and the environment; (d) minimize, mitigate, and manage adverse impacts where avoidance is not possible; (e) strengthen UNDP and partner capacities for managing social and environmental risks; and (f) ensure full and effective stakeholder engagement, including through a mechanism to respond to complaints from project-affected people.
2. UNDP does not support activities that do not comply with national law and obligations under international law, whichever is the higher standard (hereinafter 'Applicable Law'). UNDP seeks to support governments to adhere to their human rights obligations and empower individuals and groups, particularly the most marginalized, to realize their rights and to ensure that they fully participate throughout UNDP's programming cycle.
3. UNDP applies the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) guiding principles for UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (Cooperation Frameworks). These principles form the normative foundation for the Cooperation Framework and integrated programming in all country contexts, with "**leave no one behind**" as the overarching and unifying principle. Leave no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first is at the core of programming and advocacy efforts across all UN agendas. This principle is further elaborated through the guiding principles of human rights; gender equality and women's empowerment; sustainability and resilience; and accountability. The SES reinforce a "principled" approach to all UNDP programming. UNDP screens and reviews its activities to maximize social and environmental opportunities and benefits as well to ensure that adverse social and environmental risks and impacts are avoided, minimized, mitigated and managed.
4. UNDP will ensure that compliance review and stakeholder response (or grievance) mechanisms are in place so that individuals and communities potentially affected by UNDP programmes and projects have access to effective mechanisms and procedures for raising concerns about the social and environmental performance of the programme and/or project. UNDP will ensure that its implementing partners and its own programme and project managers provide clear and constructive responses to potential grievances, correct non-compliance where it has occurred and share the results of grievance processes.
5. UNDP will ensure that the objectives and requirements of the SES are considered throughout the programming cycle. Opportunities to strengthen social and environmental sustainability are identified at the earliest stage of programme and project design, realized through implementation and tracked through monitoring and evaluation. Social and environmental opportunities and risks are addressed in an integrated manner, recognizing the interrelatedness of social and environmental issues.
6. UNDP ensures adherence to the SES for programming activities implemented using funds channeled through UNDP's accounts, regardless of implementation modality. In cases where

implementation of the SES is found not to be adequate, UNDP will undertake appropriate measures to address shortcomings.

7. UNDP programmes and projects may involve partners that contribute in-kind resources or parallel funding and apply their own policies and procedures to achieve common objectives. Therefore, while UNDP does not ensure compliance with the SES beyond those activities funded through UNDP accounts, the entire programme or project is reviewed for consistency with the requirements of the SES. All partners are bound to their respective commitments made within the partnership agreement (e.g., Country Programme Action Plan, Annual Work Plan, Project Document, Joint Programme Document or Letter of Agreement). UNDP is responsible for informing all implementing partners, responsible parties and relevant contract holders of their obligations to address the SES in their respective activities.
8. When the implementing partner is a government institution (National Implementation Modality or “NIM”), UN entity, inter-governmental organization, or non-governmental organization (NGO), it is responsible and accountable to UNDP for overall management of the project. UNDP remains ultimately accountable to its Executive Board and respective donor(s) for the sound use of financial resources channeled through UNDP accounts and must ensure the quality of its support. Implementation of the SES is therefore integral to UNDP’s quality assurance responsibilities.
9. Compliance with the SES is reviewed by UNDP throughout the programme and project management cycle as part of the Programming Quality Assurance system. The Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) is applied to identify potential social and environmental risks and determine the appropriate type and level of social and environmental assessment and management required. Projects that consist solely of any of the following functions or activities are exempt from the SESP requirement:
 - a. UNDP serves as Administrative Agent;
 - b. Preparation and dissemination of reports, documents and communication materials;
 - c. Organization of an event, workshop, or training;
 - d. Strengthening capacities of partners to participate in international negotiations and conferences;
 - e. Partnership coordination (including UN coordination) and management of networks; and/or
 - f. Global/regional projects with no country level activities (e.g. activities such as knowledge management, inter-governmental processes);
 - g. Development Effectiveness projects and Institutional Effectiveness projects.
10. UNDP’s social and environmental management system ensures the SES are applied through the programming cycle and includes the following elements :
 - a. Quality assurance and risk management;
 - b. Screening, assessment and management of social and environmental risks and impacts;
 - c. Stakeholder engagement and response mechanisms;
 - d. Access to information; and
 - e. Monitoring, reporting and compliance.