

PIN Environmental and Social Management System - summary

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People in Need's Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) - Summary

People in Need's Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) provides the framework through which People in Need identifies, assesses, manages, monitors, and reviews environmental and social risks across both its projects and its day-to-day country programme operations. It is designed to ensure that **interventions are environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, compliant with national legal frameworks, and aligned with international good practice and donor expectations**. The system is anchored in PIN's wider policy framework, including its Code of Conduct, including the Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy and the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy, Environmental Policy, Policy on Community Feedback and Response, Conflict Sensitivity Policy, and PIN's Approach to Locally-Led Action.

Core Standards and International Performance Standards

The ESMS is built around **seven Environmental and Social Standards** that apply across the project cycle, from design through implementation to closure. Together, these standards aim to prevent or mitigate harm to people, communities, and ecosystems; promote fairness, equality, and human rights; strengthen environmental stewardship and resilience; and ensure compliance with host-country law and regulatory frameworks. The standards also reflect PIN's commitment to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standards and other global frameworks such as the Core Humanitarian Standard, IASC commitments, and the Climate and Environmental Charter for Humanitarian Organizations.

Standard 1: Labour and Working Conditions requires fair treatment of staff, contractors, and partners, including safe working conditions, fair wages, reasonable working hours, occupational health and safety, prevention of forced and child labour, protection from harassment and exploitation, access to grievance mechanisms, and adequate training and equipment. This standard aligns with **IFC Performance Standard 2** on labour and working conditions.

Standard 2: Community Safety and Conflict Sensitivity requires projects to protect the health, safety, and security of affected communities and to avoid exacerbating local tensions, discrimination, or bias. It covers community hazards such as unsafe waste disposal, disease transmission, and psychosocial harm, and calls for conflict sensitivity analysis where risks are significant. This standard aligns with **IFC Performance Standard 4** on community health, safety, and security.

Standard 3: Safeguarding, Protection, Human Rights and Community Impacts requires protection of vulnerable people, including children and persons with disabilities, and establishes mandatory safeguarding systems for staff, partners, and contractors. It includes prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment; safe and confidential complaints and feedback mechanisms; responsible handling of personal data; respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights and Free, Prior and Informed Consent; protection of cultural heritage; and avoidance and mitigation of risks related to land acquisition, land use restriction, and displacement. This standard incorporates **IFC Performance Standards 4, 5, 7, and 8**.

Standard 4: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) promotes equitable access, participation, and benefits for women, men, girls, boys, and socially vulnerable and marginalised groups. It requires gender and social analysis in design and monitoring, inclusive decision-making, and measures to prevent gender-based violence and exclusion. While it is not mapped in the manual to a specific IFC Performance Standard, it reinforces the ESMS's broader human rights and non-discrimination commitments.

Standard 5: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention requires projects to use natural resources responsibly and minimise pollution, waste, emissions, and environmental degradation. It covers efficient use of water and energy, proper waste management, reduced carbon footprint, compliance with environmental laws, and sustainable procurement and circular economy approaches. This standard aligns with **IFC Performance Standard 3**.

Standard 6: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources requires projects to avoid or minimise impacts on protected areas, critical habitats, biodiversity zones, and natural ecosystems, and to prevent invasive species and unsustainable use of land and renewable resources. This standard aligns with **IFC Performance Standard 6**.

Standard 7: Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks is the overarching standard that requires environmental and social risks to be systematically identified, documented, mitigated, monitored, and reviewed throughout the project lifecycle. It requires integration of risk management into work plans, budgets, and monitoring systems and underpins the entire ESMS with accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. This standard corresponds to **IFC Performance Standard 1**.

Project-Level Risk Screening and Categorisation

At project level, the ESMS is implemented through environmental and social risk screening, mitigation planning, monitoring, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement. The screening process begins with a pre-screening to determine whether a project requires full screening. Projects may be exempt where they are part of an early emergency response, consist only of low-risk activities such as research or training, are governed by an equivalent donor tool, or fall below the EUR 500,000 threshold. Even where exempt, projects still remain subject to PIN's self-assessment through existing social inclusion and environmental risk tools.

Projects that are not exempt undergo full screening during design. This includes analysis of community needs, vulnerable groups, GESI (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion), conflict sensitivity, environmental sustainability, land and natural resource impacts, stakeholder interests, Indigenous Peoples' presence, and relevant national legal frameworks. Screening must involve staff who understand the operational context, relevant technical experts, partners where applicable, and consultation with affected stakeholders.

Following screening, projects are classified as **Category C (low risk)**, **Category B (medium risk)**, or **Category A (high risk)**. Category C projects require compliance with good practice but no dedicated management plan. Category B projects must either be redesigned to reduce risk or proceed with an **Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP)** that sets out mitigation measures, responsibilities, timelines, and monitoring arrangements. Category A projects must either be terminated, redesigned to lower risk, or subjected to an **Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA)** before approval, with the ESIA

findings translated into a comprehensive ESMP. Mitigation measures must then be integrated into work plans, budgets, procurement, partner agreements, and monitoring systems. Monitoring findings must be reviewed regularly, and mitigation measures must be revised if new or underestimated risks emerge.

The ESMS also applies to projects with sub-grants. If sub-granted activities are already clearly defined at the time of project screening, they are covered by the main project's assessment. If their content, locations, or implementers are not yet known, they must undergo their own screening. Small sub-grants below EUR 20,000 for low-risk awareness-raising or community activities may be exempted, subject to written justification and approval. PIN remains ultimately responsible for ensuring that sub-granted activities comply with its environmental and social standards.

Stakeholder Engagement, Accountability, and Inclusion

Stakeholder engagement is a core element of the ESMS and runs throughout the project cycle. It includes stakeholder analysis, consultations, engagement planning, information disclosure, referral mechanisms, feedback tracking, and complaints management through the Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRM). The purpose is to improve project design and implementation, identify risks and mitigation measures, support transparency and accountability, and ensure that affected people can participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them.

The ESMS places particular emphasis on safe, inclusive, and culturally appropriate engagement with vulnerable and marginalised groups. Consultations should take into account gender, age, disability, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic barriers to participation. Where Indigenous Peoples are involved, engagement must respect traditional decision-making systems and follow the principles of **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)**. Information disclosure must be accessible, understandable, nondiscriminatory, and provided in appropriate formats and languages. Complaints, safeguarding concerns, and requests for assistance must be linked to confidential follow-up and referral pathways.

Country Programme Operations

The ESMS also sets up priorities for PIN's internal country programme operations. On the **environmental side**, it focuses on ensuring establishment of management system for greening operations, sustainable procurement, more eco-friendly transport, energy efficiency and renewable energy, waste reduction and safe disposal, and water saving. Country programmes are expected to plan, monitor, and report on these priorities using tools such as Environmental Work Plans, annual checklists, environmental indicators, and emissions measurements.

On the **social side**, the priorities focus on integration of GESI considerations in all PCM phases, operationalization of safeguarding and prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment principles, equitable access to benefits and resources, fair labour and working conditions, and strong community engagement, accountability, and conflict sensitivity. Country programmes are expected to apply GESI and vulnerability analysis, Safe, Inclusive and Accountable programming approaches, conflict-sensitive and do-no-harm principles, accessible feedback systems, and inclusive recruitment and staffing practices.

These priorities are monitored through SIA work plans, CFRM reports, social indicators, and learning reviews.

Capacity Building, Oversight, and Appraisal

Finally, the ESMS is intended to be a living system supported by capacity building, oversight, and periodic appraisal. PIN builds capacity through staff induction, thematic training, coaching and mentoring, and support to local partners so that staff and partners can identify, assess, mitigate, monitor, and report on environmental and social risks consistently. Oversight takes place at both project and global levels: project design, screening, ESMPs, and ESIAAs are reviewed by senior country programme staff, while regional directors and the Programme Strategy and Impact Department verify compliance before proposals are submitted and through biannual country programme reviews. The ESMS is also subject to regular review and continuous improvement through user feedback, minor updates to tools and templates, broader consultations when needed, and a more comprehensive evaluation every five years to strengthen the system over time.

