**The Integrated Safeguards System of the African Development Bank**

The African Development Bank Group adopted an Integrated Safeguards System (ISS) in December 2013 with the aim of ensuring the social and environmental sustainability of the projects the Bank supports through the protection of the environment and people from the potentially adverse impacts of projects. Through the ISS, the Bank also helps borrowers/clients to strengthen their safeguards systems and develop their capacity to manage environmental and social risks.

**ISS components**

The ISS consists of four parts: (i) an overall Policy Statement; (ii) five Operational Safeguards (OSs); (iii) technical guidance in the form of Environmental and Social Assessment Procedures (ESAP); and (iv) a set of Integrated E&S Impact Assessment (IESIA) guidance notes.

**Priorities of E&S management**

- Avoid adverse E&S impacts
- Minimise and or mitigate E&S impacts
- Compensate adverse E&S impacts
- Maximise potential development benefits

More information publicly available at [https://esa.afdb.org/pages/documents](https://esa.afdb.org/pages/documents)
With the approval of the Integrated Safeguards System (ISS), the Board of Directors of the AfDB mandated Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) to conduct an Evaluation of the ISS’s effectiveness in achieving the safeguards objectives four years after its adoption.


The Independent Evaluation of the ISS builds on that analysis with the aim of assessing the relevance and robustness of the ISS design; the efficiency of the systems, process, resourcing and incentives in place; and emerging effectiveness in achieving the safeguards objectives.

Disclaimer about this brief

This document builds on the key findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation and highlights some practices related to environmental and social management of development interventions to inspire project teams, both borrowers and clients and Bank’s staff. It is based on information reported in Bank’s and borrowers/clients’ reports. Factual issues have been verified with the Bank Management, but not in all cases IDEV verified on the ground the actual results of the environmental and social mitigation measures.
How vulnerability needs to be considered during project environmental and social assessments?

The AfDB safeguards system defines **vulnerable status** by identifying an individual or group’s likelihood of facing harder conditions as a result of involuntary resettlement (or other project-related environmental and social impacts) because of specific factors such as his/her gender, economic status, ethnicity, religion, language or health condition.

Depending on the context of the project, vulnerable individuals /groups may include female-headed households; those below the poverty line; the landless; indigenous peoples; those without legal title to assets; the handicapped; ethnic and religious minorities.

Identifying vulnerable individuals should be the result of careful analysis of the social and economic context, the presence of factors that may cause vulnerability and the capacity of the individual or group to cope or adapt.

The AfDB’s Integrated Safeguards System (ISS) highlights that **borrowers are responsible for protecting the physical, social and economic integrity of vulnerable groups or individuals** and for paying particular attention to health needs, particularly for women.

The ISS specifically mentions that Project Resettlement Action Plans should spell out the specific approach taken to **consult vulnerable groups** and to implement **appropriate differentiated measures** for them (ISS Guidance on Safeguards Issues, page 11 and Operational Safeguard 2).

1. Description of the context of the intervention

The Bank supported a sustainable forestry project in West Africa to restore degraded forest reserves which involved the physical displacement of more than 20 households, while others would lose farmland.

The borrower identified three groups of vulnerable people:

- female-headed households,
- households with sick and handicapped people and
- single-headed households.

They were consulted separately and their concerns considered to develop special provisions to ensure they also benefit fully from the livelihood support packages. For instance, these groups should receive specific assistance with the construction of their houses in the host community where they would be relocated, as they were not able to do it themselves, as the rest of the Project Affected persons.

2. AfDB’s Operational Safeguards triggered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Safeguards (OSs)</th>
<th>Applicability and Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OS1: Environmental and Social Assessment</td>
<td>OS1 and OS2 were triggered because of the magnitude of the project (restoration of more than 10,000 hectares) and the number of project affected persons, especially those that will no longer be able to farm land due to forest growth and plantation expansion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS2: Involuntary Resettlement, Land Acquisition, Population Displacement and Compensation</td>
<td>Triggered because there may be potential biodiversity impacts or impacts on areas providing ecosystem services which require careful assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS3: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services</td>
<td>Triggered because the project involves the use of some pesticides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS4: Pollution Prevention and Control, Greenhouse Gases, Hazardous Materials and Resource Efficiency</td>
<td>Triggered because the project involves the establishment of workforce (temporary and permanent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS5: Labor Conditions, Health and Safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4. Overall learning from this experience

In order to protect vulnerable groups from adverse environmental and social impacts of Bank-funded projects it is key to...

• identify vulnerable individuals and groups in the project area early in the identification process;
• assess how project activities would differently impact various social groups (men and women, boys and girls, and any other specific vulnerable groups depending on the project context);
• Include and budget as part of project costs differentiated and targeted measures for the effective participation and mitigation/compensation of vulnerable individuals or groups;
• Ensure the implementation of the agreed differentiated measures and assess the wellbeing of vulnerable groups after project implementation.

5. Related IDEV’s evaluation recommendation (2019)

- Making Stakeholder Engagement Plans mandatory for Category 1 operations;
- Developing additional guidance to: (i) better address the specific needs of project-affected vulnerable groups (gender aspects, gender-based violence and disability, among others); (iii) improve stakeholder engagement.
- Further developing the existing guidance to encompass the increasing complexity of involuntary resettlement processes;
- Improving the reporting on resettlement measures, including information regarding all RAP provisions and their effects on people’s livelihoods, beyond procedural aspects and monetary compensation of PAPs; and
- developing additional tailored training on the ISS requirements for specific lending products, deepening the training on managing involuntary resettlement processes.