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.

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.
A borrower seeking the support from the Bank needs to identify and assess the environmental and social impacts and risks of its project, including those related to gender and vulnerability. This is done through the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the project, and the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP), when there is involuntary resettlement or compensation of project affected persons (PAP).

When designing a project to be submitted to the Bank for funding, the borrower needs to consult with project stakeholders, including project affected persons, especially vulnerable groups or individuals which may face harder conditions as a result of the project. Vulnerability can be related to factors such as gender, economic status, ethnicity, religion or health condition.

Gender is the social construct which distinguishes social, behavioral, and cultural attributes, expectations, and norms associated with being a woman or a man, a girl or a boy.

Gender assessments are conducted during the design of projects. For instance, the borrower needs to identify if there are any single female-headed households, widows, orphans, handicapped or indigenous peoples in the project area. Appropriate differentiated measures need to be crafted for them to ensure they are fully consulted and to avoid that adverse project impacts fall disproportionately on them. For instance, eligibility for compensation can specifically use gender vulnerability as a criteria. A resettlement process that ignores the specific needs and limitations that women face can increase gender inequalities, for example, by reducing women’s access to property or assets.
Process to address gender during environmental and social assessments of public sector operations at the AfDB

- **Project idea from the borrower**
  - **E&S screening**
    - E&S category proposed
  - **Gender screening**
    - Gender marker category proposed

- **Project identification**
  - Project Brief with key E&S impacts identified, as well as key gender issues to be tackled

- **Project preparation**
  - Project Concept Note (PCN) with key E&S information of the project and possible actions to tackle gender issues
  - Bank’s support to the borrower to finalize the ToR for the Environmental and Social Assessment and/or Resettlement Action Plan, including gender assessment and gender-inclusive consultations

- **Project appraisal**
  - Project Appraisal Report (PAR), with a Gender Action Plan and adequate mitigation measures
  - Bank’s support to the borrower to finalize the Environmental and Social Assessment and/or Resettlement Action Plan and final clearance according to the ISS requirements

- **AfDB Board approval**
  - Clearance and disclosure of ESIA/RAP
1. Description of the context of the intervention

The Bank supported a programme to rehabilitate the sanitation network of small municipalities in a Northern Africa country.

The Terms of Reference launched by the borrower to conduct the assessment of potential adverse environmental and social impacts included a gender assessment to identify:
- The potential impact of the investments on men and women users of sanitation services;
- The potential of these investments to increase women’s economic opportunities (time savings, health and employment improvements, others).

This was done through a household survey; women-only project end-users focus group discussions (FGD); and other mixed FGDs (ensuring 40% of women participants and encouraging the contribution of all).
2. What the gender assessment, as part of the ESIA process, proposed?

- Conduct local public consultations about the specific impacts of sanitations works within the program;
- Prepare a mapping of existing civil society organizations and use them to mobilize women during consultations and identification of measures to help the most vulnerable groups and individuals;
- Verify the land ownership within the family if any expropriation is needed, promoting negotiations to foster equal property rights, ensure that common lands used by women are affected and compensate accordingly;
- Encourage women engineers to participate in bids for sanitation construction works funded by the programme;
- Ensure the sanitation works are gender-sensitive (i.e. separate toilets for women and men, changing rooms, others).
- Promote committees composed by men and women to monitor construction works.
3. Overall learning from this experience

- The AfDB gender and social safeguards experts can support the borrower when drafting the ToR of the E&S studies of the project;
- The firm which conducts the E&S studies may want to include a gender expert to develop a gender-oriented action plan;
- Traditional assumptions about household divisions of labor sometimes prevent women from participating meaningfully. Their participation needs to be actively encouraged by the Bank and borrowers’ experts;
- There is need for the Bank to continue supporting the borrower during the implementation of the environmental and social mitigation measures, including the gender-oriented action plans.

4. Related IDEV’s evaluation recommendation (2019)

- Improve the support to borrowers and clients to manage E&S impacts and risks by establishing systematic cross-support linkages between the Bank's teams dealing with E&S safeguards and gender.
- 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.
- Developing additional tailored training on managing involuntary resettlement processes.