ICIMOD

Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy

2020

A. Background and rationale

This document outlines ICIMOD's Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy (ESSP) which acts in support of ICIMOD's mission and vision and is aimed at enhancing the sustainable benefits from its work and avoiding unnecessary harm to the environment and affected communities. In its role as a regional intergovernmental knowledge centre, ICIMOD is devoted to the wellbeing and development of poor mountain people and conservation of the environment. This policy provides institutional guidance to assess environmental and social risks, to ensure safeguards and thus to mitigate any potential negative impacts as a result of the implementation of the Centre's work.

In line with ICIMOD's Strategy and Result Framework, the Centre's work may be broadly categorized:

1. **Knowledge creation and sharing:** Knowledge management and communications, data collection involving scientific analysis and modeling, use of remote sensing and geo-information technologies, technical assistance and advisory services

2. **Capacity building and networking:** Training and workshops, regional fora and conferences, policy dialogues, and creation and facilitation of regional networks

3. **Research and field based testing:** Action Research, field trials, establishing baselines, piloting and demonstration activities done often with communities and governments for further application and implementation

4. **Implementation and up-scaling:** Climate change adaptation and mitigation projects implemented through climate financing, private sector engagement or investment projects on sustainable mountain development.

ICIMOD anticipates there are potential environmental or social risks ranging from low to high among the categories 1-4 respectively. This policy will apply to all above categories of work.

B. Commitment

ICIMOD recognizes that there may be potential environmental and social risks and impacts arising from the implementation of its work and it therefore commits to implementing this policy and ensuring its integration with other existing institutional policies, strategies, procedures, including:

i) Strategy and Results Framework

ii) Gender and Equity Policy

iii) Partnership Strategy/stakeholder engagement

iv) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

v) Risk Management Framework

Along with the adoption of this policy, ICIMOD further undertakes appropriate measures to avoid, minimize, mitigate, and manage potential adverse environmental and social risks and impacts in programmes and research projects it implements directly as well as those implemented through its partners.

ICIMOD is committed to compliance with environmental and social obligations specified in statutory obligations, organizational policies and procedures, laws and regulations of its regional member countries, and relevant international treaties and agreements.

C. Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework

This policy requires that ICIMOD develop Environmental and Social Safeguard Guidelines, update the guidelines from time to time, and present these to the Programme Advisory Committee for review. The guidelines will elaborate operational aspects of the policy and institutional measures comprising an Environmental and Social Safeguards Management Framework consisting of the following mechanisms and stages:

- Environmental and social risk screening
- Environmental and social risk assessment
- Environmental and social safeguards plan
- Reporting, monitoring, and evaluation
- Grievance reporting and redressal mechanisms

Effective stakeholder engagement is a critical element in identifying, avoiding and/or mitigating negative environmental and social impacts. The policy requires stakeholder engagement and feedback, and the process will be elaborated in the guidelines.

Environmental and social risk screening

During the inception stage of projects including its design and formulation phases, ICIMOD screens work categorized as mentioned above in Section A to identify potential negative environmental and social risks and impacts. The screening considers the nature, extent, and complexities of the risks and impacts of the given activities or project. Accordingly, the appropriate type and level of environmental and social safeguard is determined. If no significant negative risks or impacts are identified, the process ends at this point.

Environmental and social risk assessment

If the screening process identifies potential negative environmental or social risks or impacts at high or moderate levels, a further assessment process is carried out, ensuring that the proposed activities support (i) meeting the environmental and social

safeguards pursuant to the standards of ICIMOD and this policy; (ii) assessment of alternatives to the programme, where required; and (iii) development of suitable preventive and mitigation measures including contingency planning for relevant environmental and societal dimensions.

Environmental and social safeguards plan

The environmental and social safeguards plan describes the set of mitigation measures developed during the environmental and social assessment together with an implementation schedule, institutional arrangements, and resources required for the implementation of the plan and requirements for its monitoring. The plan has necessary course correction measures through a bi-annual review process at the institutional level.

Reporting, monitoring, and evaluation

In line with ICIMOD's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework and the Risk Management Framework, the environmental and social safeguards plan is monitored and its implementation effectiveness evaluated. Monitoring also includes assessments of any changes that may create potential new environmental or social risks which may then also compel environmental and social risk assessment of previously low risk assessed programmes. Also in line with the Risk Management Framework, significant risks will be reported to the Board of Governors.

D. Grievance reporting and redressal mechanisms

For all programmes, a detailed grievance reporting and redressal mechanism ensures that complaints can be easily lodged and resolution provided for reported concerns or grievances. Each case is reviewed to understand whether a potential breach of social and environmental risk principles, standards, or procedures has occurred. Any stakeholder with any concern related to failure to properly implement this policy and its guidelines may file a complaint online or by email as per the procedures laid out in the guidelines.