
Environmental and Social Safeguards: Review and Monitoring Guidelines for Forest Trends Projects

Guidelines

Forest Trends has established these guidelines to ensure that any unintended adverse environmental and social consequences of proposed projects and programs are identified and evaluated prior to making a final decision to proceed, and that appropriate safeguards measures to avoid or minimize environmental and social impacts are put in place when necessary.

Process

The following outlines a specific set of steps related to environmental and social impact assessment and monitoring that will be undertaken for any major-scale Forest Trends project and program. These procedures conform with GEF, World Bank and USAID requirements for social and environmental safeguards and gender mainstreaming, and encompass assessment of potential impacts on: natural habitat, indigenous peoples, women, local communities with particular attention to vulnerable groups, involuntary resettlement and physical cultural resources. In addition to applying these procedures when called for, it is also Forest Trends' intent to test and refine these procedures over time to further strengthen their effectiveness in the field.

The process of carrying out the environmental and social review and monitoring procedures include the following steps:

1. Preparation of an Environmental and Social Impact Screening. For all large projects, an internal screening will be conducted by an appointed ESIA Review Team working in conjunction with the project team. This screening will entail reviewing proposed project activities and an initial assessment of whether there is potential for adverse impacts in relation to the social, gender and environmental safeguard and mainstreaming issues (outlined above) which would require additional assessment. A screening tool will be filled out by the Review Team.
2. Additional Research and Documentation. If called for, the ESIA Review Team and the project team will identify areas from the screening where more research and documentation will be required to reach an assessment of the potential impacts.
3. Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Decision. The ESIA Review Team will work with disinterested experts from inside or outside of the project team to identify which potential impacts are significant and will necessitate an Environmental or Social Impact Assessment. The project will be assigned a categorization of A, B, or C, described as follows:
 - Projects are classified as Category A if they are likely to have significant adverse social or environmental impacts that are sensitive, diverse, or unprecedented.
 - Projects are classified as Category B if they are likely to have potential adverse social and/or environmental impacts, but these impacts are less significant than category A and can be properly addressed and/or mitigated in the project.
 - Projects are classified as Category C if they are likely to have minimal to no social and environmental impacts.
 - Categorization of the project based on the screening will be publicly and appropriately disclosed.
4. Consultation and Community/Stakeholder Outreach. Appropriate consultations with potentially-affected groups – including indigenous peoples, local communities, and women and men of different ages, ethnicities and status – will be carried out as early as possible in the process, to solicit their informed participation in project design and as a basis for continuing consultations to address issues that may affect them over the course of the project.

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5. At a minimum, consultation for Category A projects should take place during the scoping phase and at the draft ESIA stage prior to step 8 below, "Decision." For Category B projects consultation at a minimum should take place at the stage of the draft ESMP and prior to Decision step 8 below
 6. **Disclosure.** All disclosures, will be made available in a timely manner in a place accessible to key stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and other local communities, in a form and language understandable by them. This disclosure includes all draft Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, ESMPs, mitigation plans and all other documents including Indigenous People's Plans, Resettlement Plans, and results of all stakeholder consultations. This must take place prior to review of the ESIA and any decisions are made.
 7. **Preparation of an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA).** This step will inform project design, implementation, and monitoring. An Environmental and Social Impact Assessment shall be prepared for all identified significant impacts of Category B projects to further evaluate safeguard issues determined to be relevant to the proposed project. A full ESIA will be conducted for Category A projects. The ESIA will be designed to understand potential impacts to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate adverse impacts, and enhance benefits, including through alternative project designs. The ESIA will be conducted by an independent (consulting or partner) evaluator if deemed necessary.
 8. **Action Plan and Mitigation Plan.** If the ESIA results in a finding that there are potential social, gender and/or environmental impacts that can be avoided, minimized or mitigated (Category B), the specific measures to address this should be included in any action plan that results from the regular planning for the project. In parallel to the action or mitigation plan, all appropriate Indigenous Peoples' Life Plans or Resettlement Plans should also be developed and additional stakeholder consultations with affected communities should be carried out.

The action plan, or a more specific mitigation plan if called for, and all appropriate Indigenous Peoples' Plans and Resettlement Plans, should include the following elements:

- Specific measures to provide culturally and economically appropriate benefits to potentially affected groups and/or at minimum to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects. Measures should include capacity development and training measures, an implementation schedule, and cost estimate.
 - All project and program planning to address adverse social or environmental impacts must be developed with the participation of multiple stakeholders, including local NGOs, indigenous peoples and local communities (women and men, and including vulnerable and at-risk groups), and include consultation and consent procedures in keeping with relevant Forest Trends policies.
9. **Decision.** Upon review of the ESIA, the ESIA Team will decide whether the ESIA and mitigation plans fully and adequately address all identified impacts and whether proper consultation and disclosure has taken place. Only after the ESIA has been accepted can design of the project be finalized and can the project be approved. The decision will be submitted formally in writing to the project team and to Forest Trends leadership, and thereafter will also be publicly disclosed.
 10. **Monitoring plan.** Every project should have a monitoring plan to be informed by the planning for that project and by the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). The monitoring plan should include specific provisions for monitoring compliance with mitigation measures identified in the ESIA, to address negative environmental and social impacts and enhance positive ones, and where appropriate include gender disaggregated monitoring.
 11. **Accountability mechanisms.** For projects with projected social or gender impacts, a grievance mechanism exists within Forest Trends and can be utilized as part of the overall monitoring and evaluation plan for the project.