

# **Baseline Assessment of UNICEF Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Implementation**

## **Final Inception Report**

**UNICEF Evaluation Office  
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## List of Acronyms

CSI	Core Standard Indicator
CO	Country Office
DAPM	Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESARO	East and Southern Africa Region
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
MENARO	Middle East and North Africa Region
PGLT	Programme Group Leadership Team
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SESSP	Social and Environmental Sustainability Standards and Procedures
SMQ	Strategic Monitoring Questions
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP SES	United Nations Development Programme Social and Environmental Standards
UN EG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UN EMG	United Nations Environment Management Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

## Glossary

**Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Framework:** An ESS Framework defines how an organisation will tackle identifying, assessing, managing, and monitoring for environmental and social risks associated with programmes and/or projects. An ideal-typical ESS Framework, as defined by the UN Environment Management Group, should consist of five “building blocks”: an overall corporate commitment; a set of environmental and social standards; operational procedures, accountability mechanisms; and, monitoring, reporting and evaluation procedures.

**Environmental and social sustainability:** Environmental and social sustainability encompasses the protection of people’s lives and health, the economic basis of their livelihood and their ecological, social and cultural environment as well as the sustainable use of natural resources.

**Environmental and Social Standards:** A set of Environmental and social standards is one of the five building blocks of an ideal-typical ESS Framework. UNICEF has adopted a set of eight

Environmental and Social Standards in the draft SESSP. These are: labour and working conditions; resource efficiency and pollution prevention; community health, safety and security; displacement and involuntary resettlement; biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management; indigenous people; cultural heritage; and, climate change and disaster risk reduction.

**Environmental and social screening:** E&S screening is one of the first steps that an organisation takes in deciding on a risk level for a programme or project. Screening is one aspect of the operational procedures building block, within an overall ESS Framework.

## 1.0 Introduction

UNICEF is committed to increasing its contribution to social and environmental sustainability, and to recognizing and reducing the potential environmental and social risks associated with its programmes and projects.

Goal Area 4 of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025<sup>1</sup> (*Every child lives in a safe and clean environment*), along with the cross-cutting programme “climate action”, clearly describe the organization’s commitment to climate change and environmental issues, both to achieve its internal goals, and as a member of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). The organization’s strategic positioning and global engagement on climate change and environmental action, risk prevention, resilience and climate security are reflected in its commitment to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the 2015 Paris Agreement; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015—2030; and the 2019 UNICEF Climate and Environmental Sustainability Strategy<sup>2</sup>, Pillar 1 of which commits the organization to incorporate climate risks and low-carbon opportunity assessments into its own planning processes<sup>2</sup>.

The main way in which environmental, social, and climate issues are integrated into the planning processes of organizations such as UNICEF is through the introduction of what are known as environmental and social safeguard (ESS) procedures. ESS systems are put in place to identify and assess the environmental and social risks of an activity or project, categorize these risks, and implement measures to address them – including amending or cancelling an activity or implementing and monitoring mitigation measures. Not properly implementing ESS procedures carries significant programmatic risks, which is why they are increasingly a donor requirement and a growing organizational priority.

Since 2016, UNICEF has been developing its own ESS system. UNICEF recognizes that environmental and social sustainability is the right thing to do, reinforcing UNICEF’s commitment to sustainability, given its importance to children and the global commitment to SDGs. These safeguards are intended to ensure that UNICEF interventions do not result in harm to communities and/or their environments and that UNICEF meets its obligations and accountabilities towards the populations it serves. However, these procedures have not yet been rolled out across the organisation. As a consequence, UNICEF’s interaction with safeguards has been through application of other (usually donor) procedures, and as a result, the experience has been uneven. In order to better understand, scale up and improve UNICEF’s capacity and systems in this area, the Evaluation Office is conducting a baseline assessment of ESS implementation at global, regional and country levels, ensuring a broad and representative range of programming environments and contexts are considered. As UNICEF is in the final stages of finalizing its approach to ESS, this assessment will be a critical baseline to understand where the organization currently stands on ESS, how to scale up the practice in the future and what support is required for this scale-up. It will be the first such assessment undertaken in UNICEF.

The baseline assessment also recognizes that UNICEF already has significant social safeguard policies and procedures in place that, in principle, factor social issues risks into programming

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2022), Strategic Plan 2022-2025: Renewed Ambition towards 2030

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/documents/environment-fit-children-unicefs-approach-climate-change>

and project design. These include: the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Situations<sup>3</sup>; Accountability to Affected Populations<sup>4</sup>; the Child Safeguarding Policy<sup>5</sup>; UNICEF Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming (GRIP)<sup>6</sup>; the Strategy to Prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)<sup>7</sup>; and the UNICEF Procedure on Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus<sup>8</sup>. The assessment recognizes that any attempt to assess UNICEF's safeguards 'performance' needs to take account of the implementation of these procedures, and that the design of UNICEF's ESS system will need to link to these policies and procedures.

This Inception Report consists of six Chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the task. Chapter 2 provides additional background and context, focusing on the development of ESS in the UN system, and an outline of UNICEF's draft ESS system. Chapter 3 discusses the assessment's purpose, objectives and scope. Chapter 4 presents the proposed assessment methodology, focusing on: the assessment approach; assessment framework; assessment questions; data and information sources and collection methods; data analysis; risks, limitations and mitigation strategies; quality assurance; and, ethical considerations. Chapter 5 consists of a summary of the main observations from the inception phase interviews. Finally, Chapter 6 presents a proposed workplan and list of deliverables.

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<sup>3</sup> UNICEF (2022), Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Situations.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF (2020a), Accountability to Affected Populations: A Handbook for UNICEF and Partners

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF (2016), Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children. Executive Directive CF/EXD/2016-006

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF (undated), UNICEF Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF (2019a), Strategy to Prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF (2022a), UNICEF Procedure on Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus. Document Number: PROCEDURE/PG/2022/002

## 2.0 Background and Context

### 2.1 The Development of Environmental and Social Safeguards in the UN System

In 2012, the United Nations Environment Management Group (UN EMG) developed the Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System and conducted an inter-agency consultative process on the framework. In 2019, it developed a “Model Approach” with the aim of harmonizing efforts among UN entities to outline key requirements and processes for safeguard policies<sup>9</sup>.

The EMG Framework provides a basic architecture for integrating environmental and social sustainability measures into the three “entry points” of policies/strategies, programmes/projects, and operations/facilities. In 2014, the UN EMG produced an “Interim Guide”<sup>10</sup> which provided pointers for UN agencies wishing to conduct situation assessment and gap analysis as a first step towards implementing their environmental and social sustainability frameworks. The Guide defines a set of minimum essential building blocks needed to support the delivery of ESS measures within one or more of the three entry points.

More recently, and in line with the UN system-wide quarterly comprehensive policy review, UN agencies are now required to report on environmental and social standards indicators<sup>11</sup>. This requirement is also aligned with the system-wide Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN system adopted by the Chief Executives Board in October 2021<sup>12</sup>. Each UN agency is now expected to develop its own policy, adapting the model provided in accordance with what environmental and social sustainability means for its own work, within its specific mandate.

As a result of these UN-wide initiatives, in recent years, a number of UN entities have put in place or have started to adopt environmental and social safeguard procedures. These include UNDP, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNEP, IFAD, WFP, FAO, and WHO. It is possible to think of these agencies being placed along an “implementation continuum” as shown in Table 1.

Moving from left to right, the table places UN Women and UNICEF at the earliest stages of developing ESS measures. In the next column, WFP and WHO are categorized as having had some ESS measures in place for some time, but in an ad hoc and unintegrated fashion where the measures only apply to parts of the agencies’ operations.

Finally, at the far right of the implementation continuum, UNDP, IFAD, UNIDO, and UNEP have had a sophisticated set of ESS measures in place for many years. IFAD’s approach to ESS measures is quite different from the other agencies, as its mandate most closely resembles those of the multilateral development banks, where measures such as safeguards have been

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<sup>9</sup> UN Environment Management Group (2019), [Moving towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming](#). For a wider overview see also UN Environment Management Group (undated), [Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System \(ESS\)](#). The Model Approach consists of the set of UNSDCF Guiding Principles; procedures for operationalizing safeguard approaches; and a set of 8 thematic area environmental and social standards.

<sup>10</sup> UN EMG (2014), *Advancing the Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework in the United Nations System: Interim Guide*

<sup>11</sup> UN General Assembly (2020), UN system-wide quarterly comprehensive policy review. 75/233

<sup>12</sup> CEB (2021), [Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System 2020-2030](#).

in place for decades<sup>13</sup>. A more detailed comparison of UN agency adoption of ESS measures is presented in Annex 1.

**Table 1: Environmental and Social Sustainability Measures: Implementation Continuum**

Early stages of initiation of ESS measures	ESS measures in place for some time, but only partial application	Full set of ESS measures in place for some time
UN Women, UNICEF	WFP, WHO	IFAD, UNDP, UNIDO, UNEP, FAO

## 2.2 The Development of the UNICEF ESS Structure

UNICEF built upon the system-wide efforts mentioned in Section 2.1, and designed its Strategic Framework on Sustainability for Children (2016-2017), issued in 2015, to be consistent with the UN EMG Framework. The UNICEF framework committed the agency to a significant strengthening of policy, programmes, advocacy, research, and engagement on environmental sustainability to deliver better results for children, especially the most disadvantaged.

The 2022-2025 UNICEF Strategic Plan elevated ESS to an organization-wide commitment, with a dedicated indicator for country offices to report on ESS implementation under the “decentralized and empowered internal governance and oversight” enabler<sup>14</sup>. To date, responsibility for the development of ESS policy and procedures has sat with the Division of Data, Analytics, Planning, and Monitoring (DAPM). Responsibility for implementation of safeguards procedures sits with the Programme Group Leadership Team (PGLT).

As UNICEF’s own systems are currently in development, offices have used other ESS procedures – namely those of donors and the World Bank – to meet these standards. In 2021, 26% (33<sup>15</sup> out of 129) country offices reported application of environmental and/or social standards to their projects and programming<sup>16</sup>.

Priority 2 of the UNICEF Strategic Framework on Environmental Sustainability for Children committed the organization to the piloting and rolling out of a set of social and environmental standards. UNICEF built upon good practices and drawn on lessons learned from the Model Approach, in addition to the policies and guidelines of other entities in the UN system, to develop its own Social and Environmental Sustainability Standards and Procedures (SESSP). The objectives of these standards are to: (i) strengthen the quality of programming by ensuring a principled approach<sup>17</sup>; (ii) avoid adverse impacts to people and the environment;

<sup>13</sup> It is probable that development banks developed ESS systems early on because their investments have been much larger than those of UN agencies, and focused predominantly on large scale visible infrastructure.

<sup>14</sup> E3.6. Percentage of country offices applying: (a) disability inclusive (b) environmental and social standards in UNICEF programmes in line with UNICEF/United Nations standards (QCPR)

<sup>15</sup> The country offices are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Niger, Nigeria, State of Palestine, Paraguay, Republic of Cameroon, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>16</sup> It is possible that this figure may be inaccurate, as it is entirely based on self-assessment, and is reliant on how staff have understood “ESS”, and how they have determined the extent of its application. The proposed online survey and staff interviews will attempt to refine this figure.

<sup>17</sup> The SESSP is grounded in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group’s (UNSDG) integrated programming principles for UN Sustainable Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). These are: leave no one behind; human rights; gender equality and women’s empowerment; sustainability and resilience; and, accountability.

(iii) minimize, mitigate, and manage adverse impacts where avoidance is not possible; (iv) strengthen UNICEF and partner capacities for managing social and environmental risks; and, (v) ensure full and effective stakeholder engagement, including through a mechanism to respond to grievances from project- affected people.

The draft UNICEF ESS system lists eight standards intended to be taken into account at the project/programme entry point:

SES 1: Labour and Working Conditions

SES 2: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention

SES 3: Community Health, Safety and Security

SES 4: Land Acquisition/Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement

SES 5: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management

SES 6: Indigenous Peoples

SES 7: Cultural Heritage

SES 8: Climate Change and Disaster Risks

Because these procedures have not been rolled out, this assessment will examine how, and to what extent, ESS has been applied by UNICEF, when working with donor procedures, such as those of KfW, the World Bank, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, etc. The outcomes of this assessment will provide inputs into the finalization, rollout and implementation of the draft ESS system and related guidance.

## 3.0 Purpose, Objectives and Scope

### 3.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this assessment is to assess the degree of the implementation of ESS procedures across UNICEF, identify the challenges and benefits associated with the implementation, and provide evidence and recommendations on the areas of support needed for further scale-up of the UNICEF ESS procedures.

It is intended to provide a snapshot against which implementation will be measured in the future, both through monitoring systems and future assessments. The assessment methodology is intended to be replicated annually throughout the phased rollout process to ensure that ESS implementation is continuing at the required pace as set in the Strategic Plan targets and milestones for ESS application. The assessment has the following objectives:

1. To assess and report on the current status of UNICEF implementation of ESS, including:
  - a. the degree of practice/implementation in various contexts, including programmatic, sectoral, humanitarian, developmental, and geographical
  - b. the range of standards triggered and tools used
  - c. engagement of partners
  - d. examples of successful and unsuccessful implementation of ESS
2. To identify challenges and facilitators for ESS implementation;
3. To extract lessons learned for ESS system roll-out, including positive examples of where ESS has reduced risk;
4. To assess staff and manager awareness, attitudes and motivations regarding ESS and its implementation;
5. To assess readiness and preparedness for ESS implementation;
6. To understand gaps and needs, and identify additional tools and support required;
7. To provide an indication of the degree of alignment between UNICEF’s proposed ESS system and those of the main donors.

The primary and secondary intended audiences for this assessment are outlined in Table 2, along with an indication as to how the assessment could be used.

**Table 2: Uses of the Baseline Assessment**

Primary Audience	Use
UNICEF senior management	Assists senior managers to understand the nature of risks posed by programming and projects and to define UNICEF’s level of ambition in regards to ESS. Provides impetus for the roll out of the UNICEF ESS, and an understanding of the scale and support required.
UNICEF staff and partners engaged in ESS implementation	Helps to raise awareness within the staff and partner, including implementing partners and third parties such as suppliers, cohort specifically responsible for UNICEF’s engagement with safeguards risk, and provides examples of good and bad performance.  Provides an indication as to how staff will be involved, once the ESS system is rolled out, and an indication of support required.

Secondary Audience	Use
UNICEF Executive Board	Provides an indication as to how UNICEF has been performing with respect to safeguards risks, and introduces them to the structure that will be used to evaluate the performance of UNICEF's own safeguards system, once it is approved.
UNICEF donors	Provides an indication as to how UNICEF has been engaging with donor safeguard procedures, and flags intention for roll out of the ESS system.
All UNICEF staff (operations and programming)	Helps to raise awareness across the organisation as to UNICEF's engagement with safeguards risk, and provides examples of good and bad performance. Provides an indication as to how staff will be involved, once the ESS system is rolled out, and an indication of support required.
National environment agencies	Assists national environment regulators to understand UNICEF's approach to the application of ESS procedures for projects undertaken in their country.

### 3.2 Scope

The assessment is global in scope and will cover all UNICEF offices at HQ, the seven regional offices, and all country offices. The primary clients at HQ are the Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring Division (DAPM), and the Programme Group Leadership Team, including Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reduction (CEED) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) units. The assessment will analyse how environmental and social safeguards have been applied in both development and humanitarian settings.

The assessment will not focus on guidance development and roll-out and other support given to implementation, although these areas will likely be reviewed in future evaluative work. The temporal scope covers the period of 2018-2022.

It is important to note that the assessment is intended to present a baseline of ESS implementation and is not a full evaluation. While UNEG norms and standards do not apply, the assessment will nonetheless adhere to principles from these norms and standards and adopt high levels of rigor and independence, while fulfilling its primary learning and utilization focus. It will be a light-touch exercise with full documentation of its methods for future replication, as the assessment is intended as a baseline against which future implementation status will be measured.

Moreover, this will not be an "impact evaluation", as understood by UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Impact Evaluation Guidance Document<sup>18</sup>. When the term "impact assessment" is used, it will be referring to the approach applied in ESS to assess the environmental and social risk associated with projects and programmes.

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<sup>18</sup> UN Evaluation Group (2013), Impact Evaluation in UN Agency Evaluation Systems: Guidance on Selection, Planning and Management

### 3.2.1 Any Changes in Scope/Focus Compared with ToRs

The ToR has provided a comprehensive basis upon which the consultant has developed its conceptual and methodological approach. Upon a series of conversations with the Evaluation Office, Management Team, Reference Group, and inception interviews, there are no major departures from the ToR in the scope. The main change to the scope is the inclusion of the objective 7 ‘to provide an indication of the degree of alignment between UNICEF’s proposed ESS system and those of the main donors.’ Moreover, the assessment sub-questions and methods have further been improved to match the updated scope. Lastly, as a result of the engagement with the Reference Group, the evaluation consultant will construct a Theory of Change (ToC) as one of the deliverables for this exercise.

### 3.3 Assessment Questions and Sub-Questions

Based on the assessment purpose, objective, and scope, Table 3 presents a list of assessment questions and sub-questions. These are also included in an assessment matrix presented as Annex 2, where the questions and sub-questions are linked to indicators, data collection techniques and sources of information, data analysis methods, and relevant framework elements.

**Table 3: Assessment Questions and Sub-questions**

Assessment Question	Sub-questions
1. To what extent has UNICEF implemented ESS procedures?	What has been the coverage of implementation of ESS measures for programmes and/or projects across UNICEF Country Offices, regions, sectors, and operating contexts?
	How and to what extent have UNICEF offices registered their engagement with safeguard issues under the organization's reporting systems?
2. How have ESS procedures been implemented?	What are the driving factors/actors for ESS implementation (e.g. UNICEF office, donors, others)?
	What has been the nature of the relationship between HQ, Regional Offices and Country Offices with respect to the handling of ESS issues?
	To what extent, and how, have HQ, Regional Offices, and Country Offices relied on the safeguards expertise/capacity of partner donors?
	To what extent are UNICEF Country Office staff aware of the risk categories of specific projects?
	To what extent have monitoring and reporting mechanisms on safeguard commitments been in place and socialized among UN Country Offices for ESS mitigation measures?
	To what extent have implementing partners and communities been involved in ESS implementation?

	To what extent are Country Office staff involved in quality assurance?
	To what extent have project-level grievance mechanisms been put in place? How are they used and followed-up?
3. What are the key constraints or facilitators to ensure effective ESS implementation?	What factors have facilitated ESS implementation where present? What good practices exist that can be replicated?
	What are the existing challenges, constraints and key gaps to ESS implementation?
	What is the attitude and level of awareness among UNICEF staff towards ESS?
	What is the attitude and level of awareness among UNICEF management towards ESS?
	What is the level of accountabilities/responsibilities of staff and management for ESS implementation at HQ, Regional Office and Country Office levels?
4. What are the lessons learned and needs identified to scale up ESS across the organisation?	What are examples and lessons learned from cases in which ESS was implemented, and where ESS has reduced risk?
	To what extent is UNICEF positioned to roll-out and scale up ESS?
	To what extent are existing resources and support sufficient to support ESS implementation, and what additional support is needed?
	What are the organizational needs and additional support required to implement the ESS system and promote its utilization across UNICEF?
	What lessons can be learned from the implementation of other organizational requirements, such as the PSEA and HACT procedures?
5. Where do differences lie between UNICEF's draft ESS system and the safeguard requirements of partners/comparators?	How do the safeguard requirements of the main UNICEF donors compare (KfW, USAID, World Bank, EU)?
	What is the degree of alignment between UNICEF's proposed ESS system and those of the other key donors?
	What is the current situation of UNICEF's main donors in either developing or reforming their own ESS systems?

## 4.0 Methodology

The purpose of this section is to specify the overall approach, guiding framework, methodology and data collection tools that will guide the analysis, interpretation and the way in which the final deliverables will be framed.

### 4.1 Assessment Approach and Methods

The assessment will use **mixed method approach**, i.e., both quantitative and qualitative data, to answer assessment questions. In answering the questions, the assessment will use **triangulation**, i.e., draw on different data sources and collection techniques, to produce evidence and test the consistency of information. The assessment will be **utilization focused** to enable key stakeholders to obtain the baseline on the ESS, inform key decisions, and use evidence for further organizational improvements. Moreover, the assessment will be **participatory**, i.e., engage key stakeholders closely in order to foster stronger and meaningful participation and ownership of the assessment process and outputs. The assessment will integrate **gender, human rights, disability and equity** considerations throughout the process, including but not limiting to key informant interviews, the focus group discussions, and the online survey. A special attention will be given to **accessibility** of tools such as online survey using accessibility feature, making key deliverables accessible for screen reading software, and using accessible meeting platforms such Microsoft Teams and/or Zoom.

Even though there is no Theory of Change (ToC) and intervention logic for the ESS, one of the deliverables of the assessment will be construction of a ToC for the UNICEF's ESS implementation. As a result, the assessment will be **theory-focused**.

Furthermore, alongside the guiding assessment framework outlined in section 4.2, the assessment will use **benchmarking** process to compare UNICEF's ESS with that of other organizations, particularly other UN agencies, to understand where UNICEF stands vis-à-vis other agencies and what lessons learned could be harnessed to inform the future approach. At the same time, the assessment will provide the comparison of the safeguard requirements of the main UNICEF donors such as KfW, USAID, World Bank, and the EU.

### 4.2 Assessment Framework

In assessing how UNICEF has dealt with environmental and social safeguard issues, it is useful to consider how to define a fully functioning safeguards system. When it is clear what the elements of such an ideal-typical system are, it is then possible to examine to what extent UNICEF has had these elements in place when taking into account the potential risks associated with the projects that it funds directly, or in conjunction with partners. The model will be used as the assessment framework, which assists in the structuring of assessment criteria and key questions. Moreover, the section 4.3 provides further information on how the analytical framework can be applied with relative consistency across a set of criteria through scoring and rating system that can be replicated in future.

The primary goal of safeguards systems is to identify, mitigate, and monitor environmental and social risks. To achieve this goal, systems need to have a range of functions. Figure 1 presents the six elements that need to be in place for a safeguards system to be considered to be "functioning".

**Figure 1: Necessary Components of a Functioning Safeguards System**



unicef | for every child

*Author: Evaluation Consultant*

### **Policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability measures and M&E**

For the overall Framework to function, there needs to be an internal system, consisting of policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability measures and M&E, that addresses the requirements of the UN EMG Model Approach.

#### **Key constitutive components of this element are:**

- An overall organizational environmental sustainability policy;
- A set of environmental and social standards;
- A set of operational procedures that consist of specific processes used to implement the standards (examples include risk screening procedures and environmental assessment and management planning requirements);
- Accountability and transparency measures;
- Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation procedures;
- Awareness of staff and managers on policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability measures, and M&E procedures.

### **Quality assurance**

The system described above would need to have a set of quality assurance procedures to ensure that safeguards advice is reviewed before it reaches management level. Depending on its risk category after screening, it will sometimes be necessary for a programme or project to undertake an environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA), and/or produce environmental and social management plans (ESMP), or other specialized management plans. These studies and consequent documents can be technically sophisticated, and so they need to be produced by external consultants. These studies then need to be reviewed. Other

development agencies have established internal quality assurance systems by either allocating permanent staff, or by creating consultant rosters.

**Key constitutive components of this element are:**

- Quality assurance procedures in place to review impact assessments and management plans;
- Internal staff assigned to safeguards quality assurance and/or consultant roster in place;
- Functional separation between staff responsible for undertaking safeguards screening, assessment and management planning, and those responsible for review/quality assurance.

**Technical capacity and competency**

For the safeguard system to function effectively, organisations need a structure that defines the functions, responsibilities and powers for its application. This element includes managerial and administrative commitment, and personnel responsible for project implementation. Technical capacity is required to ensure that safeguard operational procedures are managed effectively. Staff or consultants need to have the technical background to be able to implement the risk screening procedure, and to undertake environmental and social assessment and management planning. As the safeguards framework matures, organisations should focus their capacity strengthening activity on the needs of partners and national requirements, so that they can both manage UNICEF's requirements for specific projects, and better manage national safeguard systems.

**Key constitutive components of this element are:**

- ESS focal points having sufficient safeguards background/capacity in regional offices and selected country offices;
- Project development staff with ESS training;
- Project managers with ESS training;
- Availability of guidance and systems to enable efficient delivery of safeguards requirements;
- Availability of training, professional development and capacity building opportunities;
- Visible lines of support from senior managers to safeguards staff.

**Resources**

Human, financial, and knowledge resources are a necessary pre-condition for the effective management of an ESS system. Evidence from the evolution of UN agency safeguard frameworks<sup>19</sup> has shown that safeguards staff resources need to be expanded over time. The first step is to establish ESS focal points in each Regional Office, and then to extend this staffing to Country Offices. Eventually, a separate, independent quality assurance capacity needs to be resourced. Clearly, the provision of human resources will require financial support. Knowledge resources also need to be applied over time.

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<sup>19</sup> The most developed UN safeguards framework is held by UNDP, which has had its Social and Environmental Standards (SES) system in place for approximately 12 years (see Annex 1).

### **Key constitutive components of this element are:**

- Adequate human, including existence of ESS focal points in regional offices and country offices, and capital resources to support risk screening and possibly required assessment studies and management plans;
- Adequate human and capital resources to support post-approval compliance supervisions;
- Availability of a bank of good practice examples and ESS ‘help desk’ and training resources.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Effective stakeholder engagement, including awareness, is a fundamental aspect of an ESS system.

### **Key constitutive components of this element are:**

- Availability and use of procedures that provide meaningful stakeholder access to dialogue and decision-making;
- Availability and use of procedures that identify stakeholder priorities to better tailor project activities, opportunities and benefits;
- Availability and use of procedures that seek to ensure no one is left behind, and disadvantaged and vulnerable project stakeholders have a voice in project development and implementation;
- Availability and use of procedures that identify potential constraints and conflicts that could affect project effectiveness to do no harm and promote peacebuilding<sup>20</sup>;
- Availability and use of procedures that enable project staff to learn from and incorporate local knowledge to improve project design and avoid and mitigate project-related risks and impacts;
- Availability and use of procedures that provide a feedback and monitoring mechanism to ensure that projects achieve their intended results, and identify potential unintended consequences;
- Awareness of staff and managers on these procedures.

### **Emergency preparedness and response**

The main focus of the ESS framework is on “standard” projects where there is time to implement safeguard procedures according to an agreed schedule. However, in some situations, organisations need to react quickly in response to humanitarian emergencies. In these cases, Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans may need to be developed, and the standard ESS process needs to be adapted so that it can be implemented rapidly.

### **Key constitutive components of this element are:**

- Existence of Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans;
- Existence of safeguard procedures tailored to emergency response.

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<sup>20</sup> UNICEF (2022), [Conflict Sensitivity, Peace Building and Social Cohesion Guideline for WASH Programming in Ethiopia](#)

### 4.3 Proposed scoring and rating system

Scoring and rating systems are a common technique to ensure relative consistency across a set of criteria. The aim of the scoring and rating system for this exercise is to **demonstrate UNICEF’s positioning** vis-à-vis six elements that need to be in place for a fully functioning ESS system, **showcase areas of strengths and further improvement**, **obtain a visual snapshot** on the current standing, and **inform the roll-out and implementation** of the ESS going forward.

For the purpose of this assessment, it is essential to have a scoring and rating system in a way that (i) elements can be considered in relation to each other and (ii) elements can be considered in relation to themselves in future assessments. In order to achieve a systematic and rigorous approach to assessing, consistency is the key for rating and scoring. Therefore, the consultant will cross-check and validate the ratings with the evaluation manager and the management team to ensure consistency in interpretation and application. The findings will be validated with the Reference Group.

For the suggested rating system, the key constitutive components under each of the elements will be rated on a 5-point scale. The ratings will be informed by a weighed triangulation of data sources, i.e., online survey, KIIs, FGDs, desk review, analysis of secondary and administrative data, vis-à-vis benchmarking (Annex 1 and benchmarking process as a part of the methodology) and literature review. The weighting will be determined based on the quality of the data sources. The overall rating for the individual elements will be determined on the basis of an average across the ratings of their key constitutive components.

The 5-point scale that will be used for rating is the following:

- **Not in place:** The element/component is not in place to support the roll-out and implementation of the ESS.
- **Nascent:** The element/component is at the nascent stage to support the roll-out and implementation of the ESS, i.e., up to 35% of what needs to be in place.
- **Partially in place:** The element/component is partially in place to support the roll-out and implementation of the ESS, i.e., 36-65% of what needs to be in place.
- **Mostly in place:** The element/component is mostly in place to support the roll-out and implementation of the ESS, i.e., 66-95% of what needs to be in place.
- **Fully in place:** The element/component is fully in place to support the roll-out and implementation of the ESS.

**Table 4: The snapshot of elements, components, and rating application**

Element	Component	Rating	Overall rating
	An overall environmental sustainability policy for the organization	5-scale rating informed by weighted <sup>21</sup> triangulation of data sources vis-à-vis benchmarking and literature review	

<sup>21</sup> The weighting will be determined based on the quality of the data sources.

<b>Policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability measures and M&amp;E</b>	A set of environmental and social standards	Ibid.	Average of the ratings for the constitutive components
	A set of operational procedures that consist of specific processes used to implement the standards (examples include risk screening procedures and environmental assessment and management planning requirements)	Ibid.	
	Accountability and transparency measures	Ibid.	
	Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation procedures	Ibid.	
	Awareness of staff and managers on policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability measures, and M&E procedures	Ibid.	
<b>Quality assurance</b>	Quality assurance procedures in place to review impact assessments and management plans	Ibid.	Average of the ratings for the constitutive components
	Internal staff assigned to safeguards quality assurance and/or consultant roster in place	Ibid.	
	Functional separation between staff responsible for undertaking safeguards screening, assessment and management planning, and those responsible for review/quality assurance	Ibid.	
<b>Technical capacity and competency</b>	ESS focal points having sufficient safeguards background/capacity in regional offices and selected country offices	Ibid.	Average of the ratings for the constitutive components
	Project development staff with ESS training	Ibid.	
	Project managers with ESS training	Ibid.	
	Availability of guidance and systems to enable efficient delivery of safeguards requirements	Ibid.	
	Availability of training, professional development and capacity building opportunities	Ibid.	
	Visible lines of support from senior managers to safeguards staff	Ibid.	
<b>Resources</b>	Adequate human, including existence of ESS focal points in regional offices and country offices, and capital resources to support risk screening and possibly required assessment studies and management plans	Ibid.	Average of the ratings for the constitutive components
	Adequate human and capital resources to support post-approval compliance supervisions	Ibid.	

	Availability of a bank of good practice examples and ESS 'help desk' and training resources	Ibid.	
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>	Availability and use of procedures that provide meaningful stakeholder access to dialogue and decision-making	Ibid.	Average of the ratings for the constitutive components
	Availability and use of procedures that identify stakeholder priorities to better tailor project activities, opportunities and benefits	Ibid.	
	Availability and use of procedures that seek to ensure no one is left behind, and disadvantaged and vulnerable project stakeholders have a voice in project development and implementation	Ibid.	
	Availability and use of procedures that identify potential constraints and conflicts that could affect project effectiveness to do no harm and promote peacebuilding	Ibid.	
	Availability and use of procedures that enable project staff to learn from and incorporate local knowledge to improve project design and avoid and mitigate project-related risks and impacts	Ibid.	
	Availability and use of procedures that provide a feedback and monitoring mechanism to ensure that projects achieve their intended results, and identify potential unintended consequences	Ibid.	
	Awareness of staff and managers on these procedures	Ibid.	
<b>Emergency preparedness and response</b>	Existence of Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans	Ibid.	Average of the ratings for the constitutive components
	Existence of safeguard procedures tailored to emergency response	Ibid.	

#### 4.4 Data and Information Sources and Collection Methods

The assessment will include a document and literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, online survey, and analysis of secondary and administrative data.

##### 4.4.1 Data, document, literature review

Data and document review will have a dual emphasis. The initial focus will be on assessing which countries have reported implementing ESS procedures during 2021 and 2022. This will entail a review of reporting against the Strategic Monitoring Questions (previously) and relevant current Core Standard Indicator (CSI), bearing in mind that only 33 countries have reported, and that there may be deficiencies in how the indicator has been interpreted. This will be supplemented by a review of country programme documents and annual reports to determine the level of ESS implementation prior to 2022. This review will also allow for an initial mapping of implementation by country, region, sector and context. Moreover, UNICEF

administrative and secondary data will inform the analysis, particularly the element on resources where data on expenditures and human resources will be essential.

The second phase of document review will focus on a selection of safeguards-related documentation produced to date. This will focus on:

- environmental and social impact assessments;
- environmental and social management plans; and,
- special-focus assessments, such as biodiversity action plans, gender-based violence/protection from sexual abuse and exploitation/sexual harassment action plans, indigenous peoples plans, cultural heritage plans, resettlement action plans, livelihood actions plans, security management plans etc.

Literature review will be conducted as a part of the data collection to inform the best practices outside of UNICEF, particularly in relation to the benchmarking process.

#### 4.4.2 Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

Building on the work undertaken during the inception phase, more than 50 semi-structured interviews will be undertaken with key informants across all levels of the organization. Interview protocols for the different informant groups will be developed early in the assessment. Samples will be taken from the following stakeholder groups:

(i) HQ staff

- Directors or Deputy Directors responsible for relevant Programme Group sectors;
- Staff responsible for enterprise risk management;
- Staff responsible for specific social safeguarding policies and the draft ESS system;
- Nominated focal points for the ESS roll-out in each of the division/office.

(ii) Regional office staff

- Staff with existing and possible future safeguards responsibility across the Region.

(iii) Country office staff

- Staff with responsibility or experience in dealing with safeguard issues associated with programme development, including interaction with the safeguard procedures of partner donors. Also, senior management in COs with this responsibility.

(iv) Partner donors

- Staff from KfW, USAID, World Bank, and the EU who have had experience interacting with UNICEF over safeguard procedures.

To complement individual interviews, focus groups will help gather responses to assessment questions and sub-questions and inform recommendations. The focus groups will be focused on a specific topic that is complex in nature and requires additional inputs and discussion following the key informant interviews.

#### 4.4.3 Online survey

An online survey will be developed, and targeted towards all UNICEF Regional Offices, Country Offices, and HQ. The survey questions will be organised around the five assessment questions

presented in Table 3, guided by the necessary elements for the functioning safeguards system, and will consist of a set of categorical (dichotomous, multiple choice, and rating-scale questions), and open-ended questions. The survey questionnaire will be designed to capture various levels of readiness and awareness to identify, assess, and manage environmental and social safeguards risks.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis

Data from different sources will be analysed using different tools. The evaluation consultant will use standardized data collection template to ensure coherence of different data sources obtained and to apply consistent ratings and triangulation.

The assessment will use:

- **Descriptive analysis** to understand and describe the elements and components, provide statistics on quantitative data, as well as answer assessment questions. Moreover, responses from the survey will be presented using simple descriptive statistics.
- **Content analysis** will focus on identifying different lines of inquiry based on data coming from different sources and through the interactive process of discussion with the reference group.
- **Triangulation** will ensure that findings and conclusions are reliable and increase credibility, integrity, and defensibility of the assessment.

#### 4.6 Risks, Limitations, and Mitigation Strategies

Risk/Limitation	Mitigation
<p><b>Weak response to the survey</b></p> <p>Country Office staff are under considerable workload stress, and may find it difficult to assign the time to complete the online survey.</p>	<p>The survey will be directed to all UNICEF Offices, and the Deputy Country Representative in each Country Office. The Regional Offices will play an instrumental role in promoting the survey. It is not expected that responses will be required from each and every CO. However, efforts will be made to achieve a representative sample in each of the seven UNICEF regions. To stress legitimacy, the initial survey instrument will be emailed by the Director of the Evaluation Office. At least one follow-up reminder will be sent by the Evaluation Manager responsible for the baseline assessment, and by a relevant staff member in each Regional Office.</p>
<p><b>Weak response to the request for key informant interviews</b></p> <p>Because of excessive workload, informants could be reluctant to accept invitations for interview.</p>	<p>Indications during the inception interviews were that informants were keen to discuss safeguards issues, and so organising interview times was not difficult. To encourage participation, interview protocols will be developed for the following: HQ staff; Regional Office staff; Country Office staff; and partner donors. These will be emailed to informants, prior to the interviews.</p>
<p><b>Lack of secondary documents for review</b></p>	<p>There will be opportunities during key informant interviews to request ESS documents from interviewees. Where</p>

<p>One of the main information sources for the assessment is secondary documents, consisting of data records and ESS reports. There is a slight risk that it may be difficult to access ESS reports due to staff turnover, and because these documents are not held in a separate information collection system.</p>	<p>documents are available on partner donor websites, these will be accessed.</p>
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#### 4.7 Ethical Considerations

The assessment will be conducted in accordance with the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (2016), and the United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines. The assessment will also adhere to UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards (2017), UNICEF Policy on Personal Data Protection (2020), and UNICEF Standard on Information Security (2018). To ensure impartiality, the evaluation team will take into account the views of all interviewees and contacted stakeholders.

The consultant will seek to ensure that the methods applied in the assessment causes no physical or psychological harm to the participants. The consultant will strictly follow the obligation of assessments and evaluations: independence, impartiality, credibility, no conflict of interest, honesty and integrity, and accountability. The consultant will also observe the obligations towards the participants including respect for dignity and diversity, rights, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm.

Once the data and information has been collected and analyzed, the consultant will ensure that there is accuracy, completeness and reliability reflected in the presentations and reports, as per the UNEG guidelines. Further, transparency in accessibility of the data collected, presentations and reports will be taken into proper consideration.

#### 4.8 Management and Reference Group Roles

This Baseline Assessment of ESS is commissioned by UNICEF Evaluation Office. A staff member from the Evaluation Office Institutional Effectiveness section acts as the Evaluation Manager. The Evaluation Manager oversees and supervises the conduct of the assessment, ensuring independence, impartiality and transparency throughout the process.

The Evaluation Manager is supported by the Management Team that will be closely engaged during the assessment process. The Management Team will provide access to information and critical informants and support the coordination of the data collection. The team consists of the Evaluation Manager and representatives from three Divisions of the organisation, namely, Data Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM) and Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and Climate teams.

A Reference Group is established to support the management of the assessment and the assessment consultant, in an advisory capacity. The Reference Group consists of members from all organisational levels, and from external experts.

## 4.9 Quality Assurance

The assessment will meet UNICEF's expectations regarding quality of assessment processes and deliverables as articulated in the UNICEF-adapted UNEG Norms and Standards. This includes:

- ensuring the quality of data and information collected and integrity of analysis reflected in the assessment deliverables;
- ensuring that the data collection processes adhere to UNICEF-adapted UNEG Norms and Standards;
- ensuring that the qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered is comprehensive and robust enough to make an informed assessment in line with the assessment's objectives, and in support of the conclusion and recommendations; and,
- managing all data collection (e.g., interview processes, survey, and desk review of documentary sources relating to the subject of the assessment), analysis, reporting, and communication.

The assessment will employ a two-level process of quality assurance. Quality assurance at the level of the consultant will be ensured by an internal staff member of the consultant's company ([www.ddaconsulting.org](http://www.ddaconsulting.org)). This staff member will be external to the assessment team, and not involved in the assessment process. He will review all deliverables prior to submission to the UNICEF evaluation manager.

A second level of quality assurance of all deliverables will be undertaken by the UNICEF evaluation manager and the Management Team. They will be supported by a Reference Group, that will be responsible for the content quality control and feedback on key deliverables, including this Inception Report, preliminary findings, and final reports.

## 5.0 Preliminary Observations from Inception Interviews

### 5.1 Introduction

Eight interviews were held as part of the development of this Inception Report. The interviews were conducted by the consultant, together with a member of the Evaluation Office. Interviewees are listed in Annex 3, along with a set of questions provided prior to each meeting. The purpose of the interviews was to provide some initial direction for the assessment, by focusing on UNICEF's experience to date with safeguards application. Questions focused predominantly on effectiveness, and on internal capacity.

The interviews pointed towards limited, but ad hoc experience with safeguards, mostly in the East and Southern Africa region (ESAR), and the Middle East and North Africa region (MENAR). Within that region, most safeguards attention has been on WASH projects in Yemen, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, and with additional focus on Health, Education and Social Protection. Positive steps forward have been made in countries where donors have a special interest in partnering with UNICEF. For example, the World Bank has funded a safeguards unit in the UNICEF Yemen country office, to assist with identifying and managing environmental and social risks associated with three Bank projects. Pressure and support from KfW have also assisted in the development of the draft UNICEF ESS system, and the implementation of safeguards in KfW-supported projects in country offices like Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe.

While isolated examples were provided of successful engagement and interaction with safeguards issues, the overwhelming response from interviewees has been that safeguards issues are not high on UNICEF's agenda, and risks are consequently not being properly assessed or managed. Comments focused on the following seven concerns.

### 5.2 Lack of an Internal UNICEF Safeguards Approach

A number of interviewees indicated that the lack of an approved UNICEF-specific safeguards framework was holding back commitment to identification and management of environmental and social risks. It appears that the existence of the draft ESS system is not well known. Even if staff are aware of the draft, the fact that has still not been formally approved by management is seen as a disincentive. The concern about a lack of formal commitment to ESS extends to uncertainty about how safeguard issues should be investigated. For example, no UNICEF screening checklists, or other procedural guidance exists. As a consequence, if risk is investigated, then it tends to be through use of partner donor systems.

### 5.3 Lack of Engagement

Lack of staff engagement and awareness is considered to be a problem. There is a perception that because the agency has a humanitarian focus, that "bad things" won't eventuate. However, environmental and social risk can be evident in the most green or socially progressive programme. An observation from the interviews is that because established ESS positions are rare and there are no fixed institutional arrangements inside the UNICEF COs, when a staff member with ESS experience and interest moves on to a new position, corporate memory is lost and often not replaced. There are no real safeguard "champions", so apart from staff at HQ, there is no one to push the draft ESS system approval and roll-out agenda.

#### 5.4 Fragmented Response

Some interviewees considered the fragmentation of responsibility, along with the multiplicity of tools and approaches, to be the main challenges with regard to institutionalizing a consistent safeguards function within UNICEF. The perception is that the function is fragmented at both HQ and Country Office levels. At HQ there is split responsibility between PG and DAPM with regard to development and implementation of the draft ESS system. Perhaps more challenging is the fact that UNICEF already has some procedures in place for social safeguard issues (See Section 1). There is differentiated responsibility for the PSEA (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) policy, child safeguarding, approaches to dealing with Gender Based Violence, and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Policy.

#### 5.5 Lack of Integration of Social and Biophysical Issues

UNICEF's initial safeguards focus has been mainly on WASH and climate change projects, but with some additional focus on Health, Education and Social Protection. Other sectors have not been as well engaged. In addition, the WASH and climate change focus has meant that the emphasis has tended to be on biophysical issues. Section 1 has made it clear that UNICEF has developed and implemented a number of strong social policies. However, staff tend to treat the requirements of these policies as "stand-alone", and so they tend not to be integrated into the draft ESS system. In fact, it was suggested that the social sectors think that they already implementing environmental and social safeguards, when it is clear that they are focused only on specific social safeguard issues, such as PSEA, child safeguarding, or gender-based violence. The bringing together of biophysical and social safeguard issues within a united ESS system is likely to be a challenge.

#### 5.6 Lack of Awareness, Capacity and Support Systems

The problem of lack of engagement, outlined in Section 5.3, is arguably influenced by a combined lack of awareness, capacity, and support systems. There are no clear signals that environmental and social safeguards need to be addressed, and there appears to be a lack of engagement at the senior level in HQ. ESS tends to be seen as a donor condition, and few staff see any value beyond that. Some programmes rush to accept donor funds, and concomitant safeguard requirements, without understanding the implications for staff time and budget. There appears to be limited awareness of the skills required to properly undertake safeguards identification, assessment, and management. There is uncertainty about who is responsible at the Country Office level, with no obvious personal accountability, or fixed institutional arrangements. On top of this, there is a lack of support mechanisms in place. There is no roster of ESS experts, no guidance templates, and so every Country Office seems to be "starting from Zero".

#### 5.7 Poor Quality Assessment and Management Planning Work

Where project risk screening has been taking place, and where moderate and high-risk projects have been identified, Country Offices have usually been hiring consultants to produce environmental and social impact assessment studies, and management plans. An initial review of these plans has indicated that they are generally of low quality, and that they have been produced under severe time constraints, and with inadequate budget.

## 5.8 Lack of Experience with Donor Expectations

Due to UNICEF's overall lack of experience with E&S safeguards, staff have an uneven relationship with the safeguard expectations of more experienced donor partners. Because UNICEF does not yet have its own safeguards system in place, it is required to interact with the donor's system. These can vary considerably, and so Country Office staff will rarely have enough experience with the full range of donor procedures. This can lead to UNICEF being at a disadvantage, and potentially agreeing to undertake more safeguards work than it should.

## 6.0 Workplan and Deliverables

The assessment is divided into three phases: 1) inception, 2) data collection and analysis, and 3) reporting and communication.

During the inception phase, the evaluation consultant reviewed available information and data and conducted inception interviews to draft this report as a roadmap for the assessment, complemented by inputs from the Reference Group.

The data collection and analysis phase will follow, which is when primary and secondary data is collected and duly analysed, whereupon preliminary findings and conclusions will be presented to the Reference Group for their validation and feedback.

Finally, the report drafting and dissemination phase will follow when the final report will be produced. The recommendations will be co-created in a participatory manner through the workshops conducted with the Reference Group.

The assessment will result in four deliverables:

- (i) Final Inception Report;
- (ii) Draft Assessment Report;
- (iii) Final Assessment Report;
- (iv) Tools for future assessments/evaluations of the ESS;
- (v) Construction of the Theory of Change.

Scheduling is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Work Schedule and Timing of Deliverables**

	Jan	February				March					April				May				June				
Task	26	3	10	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	
<b>Inception</b>																							
Internal comment period																							
<b>Initial Data, Literature, and Document Review</b>																							
Initial mapping of implementation, based on SMQ response																							
<b>Key Informant Interviews &amp; FGDs</b>																							
Development of interview sample																							
Refinement of interview questions																							
Undertake interviews																							
Analysis of interview outcomes																							
<b>Online Survey</b>																							
Development of survey instrument																							
Delivery of questionnaire																							
Analysis of survey outcomes																							
<b>Secondary document review</b>																							
Collection of documents																							
Analysis of documents																							

	Jan	February				March					April				May				June			
Task	26	3	10	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23
Meetings with the ERG (validation, co-creation)																						
Deliverables																						
Completion and approval of Inception Report		x																				
Submission of draft assessment report																	x					
Comment period																						
Submission of final assessment report																				x		
Submission of future assessment/evaluation template																					x	
Construction of the Theory of Change															x	x	x	x				

## Annex 1: Comparative Analysis of the Implementation of Environmental and Social Safeguard Measures

	UN Women	WHO	WFP	UNOPS	UNEP	UNIDO	IFAD	UNDP
<b>Level of activity at entry points</b>								
Strategy/policy <sup>22</sup>	Gender mainstreaming is required in the development of UN Women policies/strategies. No mention of environmental mainstreaming.	Requirement to mainstream gender as well as health equity considerations into all work of WHO. The former is reflected in the WHO gender mainstreaming strategy (endorsed in World Health Assembly Resolution 60.25). The latter in WHA67.12.	No clear activity related to consideration of environmental or social issues in strategy/policy development.	Environmental considerations incorporated into procurement policy, and into organizational reporting (through initiation of GRI sustainability reporting).	Mainstreaming of environmental sustainability across the UN system will be an aim of the expanded ESES. This document also supports the use of Strategic Environmental, Social and Economic Assessment as part of UNEP policy approval.	No clear activity related to consideration of environmental or social issues in strategy/policy development.	The Social and Environmental Standards encourage the integration of environmental, social and climate considerations in agency's high level Strategic Framework.	The Social and Environmental Standards encourage the application of Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment to programme screening, but not to the agency's own policies or strategies.
Programme/project	No activity to date	Not being applied across all WHO programmes and projects. At project level, only applied on a pilot basis to a selected group of projects. Application of environmental safeguards is however extensive for these projects.	Environmental Review Guidelines exist, but not often applied. Recently developed ESS screening and assessment for projects funded through climate change financing mechanisms.	Comprehensive for projects through EMS and Sustainability Marker.	Comprehensive.	Comprehensive.	Comprehensive.	Comprehensive
Facilities/operations	Recent limited activity	Some activity, and in some areas extensive. Drafting a green procurement policy.	Greening Logistics Initiative.	Detailed and extensive.	Leading UN system-wide efforts on management /facility foot printing through	Not extensive.	Very sophisticated approaches to the greening of HQ and other facilities.	Some activity in the following areas: Greening UNDP

<sup>22</sup> An analysis of the degree to which environmental and social implications of the agency's policies and strategies at different levels are examined

	UN Women	WHO	WFP	UNOPS	UNEP	UNIDO	IFAD	UNDP
		GHG emissions reporting in the context of wider GHG reporting in the EMG.  Use of environmental management systems in regional offices and HQ, albeit to a varying degree. One regional centre, in Jordan, is LEED certified	GHG emissions reporting.  Energy Efficiency Programme.  LEED design of HQ.  Commitment to EMS development.		Sustainable UN (SUN) efforts and coordination of and support for UN system-wide monitoring mechanism on electricity, travel, procurement, water and paper consumption etc.			Climate neutrality  Sustainable Procurement  Environmental Management System
<b>Adoption of UNEMG Model Approach building blocks</b>								
Corporate commitment	Developing a sustainability policy.  Commitment to gender mainstreaming through “ownership” of the UN System Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP).  No staff dedicated to ESS work, although a short-term person worked on facility greening during summer 2015.	Overarching commitment is in 12th Global Programme of Work.  Now looking at incorporating a stronger commitment in revised corporate ethics, risk, and compliance framework.  Dedicated ESS staff, active mostly at the programme/project level.	Social equality and protection elements are well integrated into WFP’s mission and key corporate documents such as the Strategic Plan.  Environmental values are not articulated in the basic organizational documents, although they are evident in the Environment Policy (1998).  Dedicated staff, active mostly at the facilities/operations entry point.	Commitment at all three entry points. At policy/strategy level most significant are Strategic Plan (2014-2017), and Organizational Directive 40 (policy on environmental management of infrastructure).  No “free-standing” ESS policy.  Dedicated staff, especially at the facilities/operations entry point.	Environmental, Social, and Economic Sustainability Framework (ESES).  Dedicated staff, active at the programmes/projects and facilities/operations entry points.	Integrated Safeguard Policy Statement within Environmental and Social Safeguards Policies and Procedures.  Dedicated ESS staff required. (Related tasks with specific ESS advisors in Technical Branches, under GEF Coordination )	Embedded within Strategic Framework  A number of dedicated ESS staff, at the programmes/projects and facilities/operations entry points.	Embedded within Strategic Plan. Clear at programmes/project entry point through Social and Environmental Standards. Emerging commitment at facilities/operations level.  At each stage of the Programme Management Cycle, application of the SES will be reviewed as part of UNDP’s quality assurance process

	UN Women	WHO	WFP	UNOPS	UNEP	UNIDO	IFAD	UNDP
Performance/ quality standards	Environmental and social performance standards in draft form	Environmental or social performance/quality standards defined but not yet at a corporate level, except in relation to gender.	WFP has adopted various UN and external E&S performance standards, although gaps exist. Developing an Environmental Management System.	Performance standards most evident at the project and facilities entry points. Embedded in the EMS for infrastructure.	9 thematic safeguard standards are contained in the ESES.	The ESSPP contains 7 programmatic operational standards, and 2 framework safeguard standards.	13 “guidance statements” contained within the (SECAP). SECAP is supported by additional knowledge products (How-to Notes covering various sectors and Country Climate and Environment profiles).	Social and Environmental Standards are comprised of: the Overarching Policy and Principles, Project-Level Standards, and the Policy Delivery Process.
Operational procedures	No integration of environmental issues into project cycles as yet. Gender is mainstreamed into programming. Early activity in greening of facilities.	Clear operational procedures exist regarding the mainstreaming of gender considerations into the work of WHO. Safeguards and environmental management procedure, but only on a pilot basis on a sub-set of projects.	Safeguards were produced in the Environmental Review Guidelines (1999), but these are seldom adhered to. Programme Guidance Manual attempts to institutionalize environmental practices in interventions. Green Logistics Initiative, new construction guidelines and “Greening our Emergency Response” operate at facilities/operations level. Recently developed ESS screening and assessment for projects funded through climate change financing mechanisms.	A range of operational procedures at the project level, including EMS, H&S management system, sustainability marker, gender mainstreaming toolkit.	Operational procedures at the project entry point are provided in Chapter 3 of the ESES. The ESES is supported by additional guidance (the ESES Guidance Note), and by the ESE Review Note.	Operational procedures exist in Section 3 of the ESSPP, at the project entry point for project screening and assessment.	Detailed operational procedures for E&S assessment contained within the SECAP. Additional operational procedures at the project level include gender and targeting approaches and tools.	Detailed operational procedures at programme/project entry level through application of the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure.

	UN Women	WHO	WFP	UNOPS	UNEP	UNIDO	IFAD	UNDP
Accountability mechanisms	Yet to be drafted	Developing an Access to Information Policy. No formal grievance or complaints mechanism in place to address environmental and social sustainability issues. Such issues are addressed on a case by case basis as needed. WHO's Office for Internal Oversight Services does not currently have expertise to conduct audits related to ESS performance.	No dedicated grievance redress mechanisms.  Agency is committed to the IASC AAP Framework (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Accountability to Affected Populations Framework); Community-based/Partner Consultations; Country Office-led Grievance Model.	Information Disclosure Policy, Accountability Framework, Internal Audit and Investigations Group.	Access to Information Policy (2014) and ESES: Stakeholder Response Mechanism (approved in February 2015). The Evaluation Office's standard Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR) includes ESES aspects as part of evaluation criteria. Audit is carried out by Office for Investigation and Oversight (OIOS).	ESSPP OS 8 focuses on Information Disclosure. ESSPP OS 9 focuses in Accountability and Grievance Systems. These OSs have yet to be fully tested as no issues have been registered. The agency is also conducting a Transparency Initiative.	Complaints Procedure came into effect on January 1, 2015. IFAD Policy on Disclosure.	Social and Environmental Compliance Unit and Stakeholder Response Mechanism (2015)
Monitoring systems	Reporting on GHG emissions only	Reporting on E&S sustainability measures within the context of the pilot. Gender issues reported broadly, however wider ESS issues not yet integrated into wider corporate performance reporting mechanism.	Some ESS indicators have been incorporated into WFP's programme performance management system and strategic management results framework.  Gender is in the Management Results Framework and the Strategic Results Framework  The Annual Performance Report contains gender indicators for programmes, gender and ethnicity indicators for staff	Developing a sustainability reporting system through application of the Global Reporting Initiative.	Chapter 3 of the ESES outlines monitoring requirements at the project entry point.  The Office for Operation plans to report periodically on the overall, aggregate status of ESES implementation.  UNEP project information is captured in Project Information Management System (PIMS). The system is being revised to incorporate ESES screening, assessment and	The GEF Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) is currently the principal reporting tool that is used on yearly basis for UNIDO-GEF projects.	Quality Enhancement and Quality Assurance processes for projects and programmes.  Results and Impact Management System: reporting at corporate and at project levels.  Portfolio Review and Completion guidelines have been revised and give environment, social, and climate change as one of the key areas for reporting.	The SES is included as one of seven quality criteria within the Quality Assurance Framework for UNDP Projects.

	UN Women	WHO	WFP	UNOPS	UNEP	UNIDO	IFAD	UNDP
			and an indicator for GHG emissions.		follow up information.			

## Annex 2: Assessment Matrix

<b>Q1. To what extent have UNICEF offices implemented ESS procedures?</b>			
<b>Sub-questions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Relevant Framework Element</b>	<b>Data Collection Technique and Source of Information</b>
1.1 What has been the coverage of implementation of ESS measures for programmes and/or projects across UNICEF Country Offices, regions, sectors, and operating contexts?	<p>Number of offices presenting evidence of implementation of ESS measures</p> <p>Implementation statistics according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sector</li> <li>- region</li> <li>- operating context (e.g., emergency, development, urban, rural)</li> <li>- risk category</li> <li>- assessment and/or management tool applied</li> </ul>	Policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability, M&E	Document review and online survey
1.2 How and to what extent have UNICEF offices registered their engagement with safeguard issues under the organization's reporting systems?	Number of countries with a common understanding of the CSI reporting requirement	Policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability, M&E	Key informant interviews, document review, online survey
<b>Q2. How have ESS procedures been implemented?</b>			
2.1 What are the driving factors/actors for ESS implementation (e.g. UNICEF office, donors, others)?	<p>Proportion of ESS initiatives driven by UNICEF offices</p> <p>Proportion of ESS initiatives driven by partner donors</p> <p>Proportion of most often applied donor system</p>	All elements	Online survey, document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions

	Proportion of ESS initiatives driven by national implementing partners		
2.2 What has been the nature of the relationship between HQ, Regional Offices and Country Offices with respect to the handling of ESS issues?	Number of times that ESS requirements been driven predominantly by Regional Offices	Technical capacity and competency, resources, stakeholder engagement	Key informant interviews, focus group discussions
2.3 To what extent, and how, have HQ, Regional Offices, and Country Offices relied on the safeguards expertise/capacity of partner donors?	Proportion of ESS initiatives driven by partner donors	Technical capacity and competency	Online survey, key informant interviews
2.4 To what extent are UNICEF Country Office staff aware of the risk categories of specific projects?	Number of Country Offices that can point to examples of project E&S risk categorization	Technical capacity and competency	Online survey, key informant interviews
2.5 To what extent have monitoring and reporting mechanisms on safeguard commitments been in place and socialized among UNICEF Country Offices for ESS mitigation measures?	Number of Country Offices where staff participate in monitoring and reporting on safeguard commitments	Policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability, M&E	Online survey, key informant interviews
2.6 To what extent have implementing partners and communities been involved in ESS implementation?	Proportion of ESS initiatives where implementing partners and/or communities have been involved in ESS implementation	Stakeholder engagement	Online survey, document review
2.7 To what extent are Country Office staff involved in quality assurance?	Number of Country Offices where staff are involved in the quality assurance of safeguards work	Quality assurance	Online survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions
2.7 To what extent have project-level grievance mechanisms (GRM) been put in place? How are they used and followed-up?	Number of projects have GRMs in place For those that have GRMs in place, number that have been used  For projects that have GRMs in place, number of grievances that are followed up	Stakeholder engagement	Online survey, key informant interviews
<b>Q3. What are the key constraints or facilitators to ensure effective ESS implementation?</b>			

3.1 What factors have facilitated ESS implementation where present? What good practices exist that can be replicated?	Description of facilitators. Description of good practice examples	All elements	Key informant interviews and online survey
3.2 What are the existing challenges, constraints and key gaps to ESS implementation?	Description of existing constraints to ESS implementation	Resources and technical capacity	Key informant interviews
3.3 What is the attitude and level of awareness among UNICEF staff towards ESS??	Staff awareness of ESS requirements, on a Likert scale	Technical capacity and competency, stakeholder engagement	Key informant interviews and online survey
3.4 What is the level of awareness among UNICEF s management of ESS?	Management awareness of ESS requirements, on a Likert scale	Technical capacity and competency, stakeholder engagement	Key informant interviews and online survey
3.5 What is the level of accountabilities/responsibilities of staff and management for ESS implementation at HQ, Regional Office and Country Office levels?	Staff awareness of the draft UNICEF ESS system are UNICEF staff, on a Likert scale	Technical capacity, stakeholder engagement	Key informant interviews and online survey
<b>Q4. What are the lessons learned and needs identified to scale up ESS across the organisation?</b>			
4.1 What are lessons learned from cases in which ESS was implemented, and are there examples of where ESS has reduced risk?	Description of positive and negative “lessons learned”	Policies, standards, operational procedures, accountability, M&E Resources Technical capacity	Key informant interviews and focus group discussions
4.2 To what extent is UNICEF positioned to roll-out and scale up ESS?	Extent of readiness to roll-out, as measured on a Likert scale	All elements	Key informant interviews and focus group discussions
4.3 To what extent are existing resources and support sufficient to support ESS implementation, and what additional support is needed?	Level of resource support for ESS implementation, as measured on a Likert scale	Resources	Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

4.4 What are the organizational needs and additional support required to implement the ESS system and promote its utilization across UNICEF?	List of organisational needs and type of additional support needed	All elements	Key informant interviews and focus group discussions
4.5 What lessons can be learned from the implementation of other organizational requirements, such as the PSEA and HACT procedures?	Description of lessons learned from existing UNICEF safeguard procedures	All elements	Key informant interviews and focus group discussions
<b>Q5. Where do differences lie between UNICEF's draft ESS system and the safeguard requirements of partners/comparators?</b>			
5.1 How do the safeguard requirements of the main UNICEF donors compare (KfW, USAID, World Bank, EU)?	Qualitative description of donor safeguard differences	All elements	Document review
5.2 What is the degree of alignment between UNICEF's proposed ESS system and those of the other key donors?	Grading donor procedures according to level of effort	All elements	Document review and key informant interviews
5.3 What is the current situation of UNICEF's main donors in either developing or reforming their own ESS systems?	Qualitative description of differences between ESS system requirements and those of donor partners	All elements	Document review and key informant interviews

## Annex 3: Inception Interview Template

### Baseline Assessment of UNICEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Implementation

#### Inception Interview Questions

##### Inception Interviewees

1. Consultant, Multi-Consult Norway
2. WASH specialist, Programme Group - WASH, UNICEF
3. Safeguard specialists, UNICEF Yemen Country Office
4. Senior Advisor, WASH and Climate specialist, UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
5. Chief Programme Implementation Unit, DAPM, UNICEF
6. Public Partnerships manager and specialists, PPD, UNICEF
7. ESS Programme Manager, DAPM, UNICEF
8. Policy specialist, Office of Research and Foresight, UNICEF

##### Purpose of the Baseline Assessment

A baseline assessment of UNICEF's implementation of environmental and social safeguards (ESS) is being undertaken by the Evaluation Office and a consultant, between December 2022 and June 2023. The purpose of the assessment is to:

1. Assess and report on the current status of UNICEF implementation of ESS, including:
  - a. the degree of practice/implementation
  - b. the range of tools used
  - c. engagement of partners
2. Identify bottlenecks and facilitators for ESS implementation
3. Extract lessons learned for the roll-out of UNICEF's own ESS system, including positive examples of where ESS has reduced risk.
4. Assess staff and manager awareness, attitudes and motivations regarding ESS and its implementation
5. Assess readiness and preparedness for ESS implementation
6. Understand gaps and needs, and identify additional tools and support required

An inception report is currently being drafted. A series of interviews is being undertaken to inform the inception report, and structure the baseline assessment.

##### Questions for the Inception Interviews

1. Please briefly describe your position/role within UNICEF
2. Please briefly describe your engagement/involvement with environmental and social safeguards issues and procedures to date. To what extent have you followed donor-driven safeguards, as against national systems or UNICEF's own draft Social and Environmental Sustainability Standards and Procedures?
3. Do you think that UNICEF's engagement with environmental and social risk assessment and safeguard procedures has been effective? If not ... why not?

4. Can you provide any examples of where attention to safeguards issues has been effective, or ... conversely ... where projects have confronted problems because safeguards issues were not properly dealt with?
5. What are the key constraining factors to effective implementation of UNICEF's approach to dealing with environmental and social risk?
6. Are there any UNICEF policies and/or procedures already in existence that touch on safeguards issues?
7. What questions would you like to see addressed in this Evaluation Office baseline assessment?
8. Can you recommend specific people who should be interviewed as part of this assessment?

## Annex 4: List of Documents Reviewed during the Inception Phase

CEB (2021),	Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System 2020 – 2030
KfW (2019),	Sustainability Guideline: Assessment and management of Environmental, Social, and Climate Aspects: Principles and Procedures
KfW (2020),	Regional support on environmental and social safeguards BMZ-No.: 2020.18.232
UNICEF (2016),	Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children. Executive Directive CF/EXD/2016-006
UNICEF (2017),	Inception Report: Outcome Evaluation of the Education Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF) – Phase I and II
UNICEF (2017b)	Inception Report: Evaluation of the CARD and UNICEF Cash Transfer Pilot Project for Pregnant Women and Children in Cambodia
UNICEF (2019),	Review of the Draft UNICEF Social and Environmental Safeguards: Summary of Suggestions for Revision (November)
UNICEF (2019a),	Strategy to Prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
UNICEF (2020)	Climate and Environment Readiness Assessment.
UNICEF (2020a)	Accountability to Affected Populations: A Handbook for UNICEF and Partners
UNICEF (2022)	Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Situations
UNICEF (2022a),	UNICEF Procedure on Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus. Document Number: PROCEDURE/PG/2022/002
UNICEF (2022),	UNICEF Environmental and Social Standards (Draft)
UNICEF (2022),	UNICEF Procedure on Environmental and Social Standards in Programme Implementation: Document Number: DAPM/PROCEDURE/2022/XXX
UNICEF (2022),	Strategic Plan 2022–2025: Renewed Ambition towards 2030
UNICEF (2022),	Conflict Sensitivity, Peace Building and Social Cohesion Guideline for WASH Programming in Ethiopia
UNICEF (2023),	Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation (EAFE) of the UNICEF Positioning to Achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025
UNICEF (undated),	UNICEF Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming
UNICEF (undated)	ES Risk Screening Checklist – Revised FNW
UNICEF ( ...),	Social and Environmental Screening Notes for Donor Proposals (SESN)
UNICEF (...),	High/moderate Risk Projects Implementation Guidance
UNICEF (...),	Accountability and Grievance Mechanism Guidance
	Standards for UN Programming
UN EMG (2014)	Advancing the Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework in the United Nations System: Interim Guide

UNEMG (2019), Moving towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social  
UNEMG (undated), Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System  
UNEG(2013), Impact Evaluation in UN Agency Evaluation Systems: Guidance on  
Selection, Planning and Management  
UNGA (2020), UN system-wide Quarterly Comprehensive Policy Review. 75/233

## Annex 5: Terms of Reference

The full terms of reference for the assessment can be accessed here: [Terms of Reference](#)