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FAQ on environmental and social safeguards and risk screening

What are environmental and social *safeguards*?

Environmental and Social Safeguards are [a set of tools](#) that are applied throughout the programme cycle to identify and manage the risk of causing unintended harm to the environment or beneficiaries. The [safeguards toolbox](#) includes i.a.:

- the strategic assessment of environmental and social risks during the drafting of the CSPs;
- a risk screening tool for CSP activities;
- risk management plans, if needed;
- impact assessments, if needed; and
- complaints and feedback mechanisms.

What is environmental and social *risk screening*?

[Environmental and Social Risk Screening](#) is one of the tools in the [safeguards toolbox](#). It is a *quick* check of the design of an intervention to identify possible environmental and social risks in the design and their level of concern. The [screening tool](#) is applied by the person/entity that designs the intervention. It should be applied before the intervention is executed, as the screening might lead to a revision of the design or the inclusion of risk mitigation measures.

What is an environmental and social *impact assessment*?

The Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) is one of the tools in the [safeguards toolbox](#). It is an *in-depth* assessment of environmental and social risks in the design of an activity, their potential impacts, and possible mitigation measures. An ESIA is only needed for high risk interventions and should be carried out by independent consultants. Whether an intervention is of high risk and hence requires an ESIA depends on the outcome of the environmental and social risk screening.

Is the idea of environmental and social safeguards new in WFP?

Not entirely. Some safeguards have been in use in WFP since many years. Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) exist in almost all country offices. Environmental risk screening is already practiced in many country offices, in particular in asset creation and livelihood support activities (ACL) and climate adaptation and risk management activities (CAR), and to some extent also in smallholder agricultural market support activities (SMS) and school meals activities (SMP). Some country offices also conduct Environmental Impact Assessments when requested by the host government or donor.

However, different tools are in use and practices vary from one country office to another. For instance, some offices rely on tools mandated by the host government while others use tools proposed by the donor. The creation of a [WFP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework](#), with clear procedures for [Environmental and Social Safeguards in Programme Activities](#), aims at harmonizing the different practices and introducing the idea of safeguards in those country offices that have none in place yet. The [Framework](#) and the [Safeguards](#) posted on WFP Go are still living documents, but can be used already.

Is the application of environmental and social safeguards mandatory?

Safeguards are [a collections of tools](#), some of which are mandatory for all CSP activities:

- All new Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) should include a strategic assessment of the environmental and social risks of WFP's activities and operations in the country (section 5.3 of the [CSP template](#)).
- The CSP activities, once they are further designed for implementation, should be screened for environmental and social risks. They can be screened with the draft [WFP screening tool](#) or an alternative screening tool (a government tool, donor tool, or project-specific tool).

How and when should we screen CSP activities for environmental and social risks?

It is recommended that every intervention (part of a CSP activity) be screened for environmental and social risks, before it is implemented. The screening should be carried out by the person or entity that is designing the intervention (part of the CSP activity). This could be a WFP staff member or a cooperating partner. See the draft [WFP Safeguards](#) for detailed guidance. The guidance also includes the [WFP risk screening tool](#), that is available in [English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic](#).

Is it mandatory to use the WFP risk screening tool or can I use another tool?

It is not mandatory to use the [WFP risk screening tool](#), but it should be the default option. An alternative screening tool can be used in case it is mandated by the government or the donor, or in case it was negotiated by the different parties involved in the project.

Does a CO need specific capacity or expertise to screen activities for environmental and social risks?

In principle, if the country office or its cooperating partner has the capacities to design an activity in a sound manner, it also has the capacity to assess the environmental and social risks of this activity. The [WFP risk screening tool](#) can facilitate this task.

Does risk screening create an extra burden for activity managers?

Risk screening should be an integral part of the design of the intervention and should not be considered a separate process. It is, in the first place, meant to improve the design of the intervention. The application of the screening tool may require a couple of hours, but this should be considered an investment to improve the design of the intervention, rather than a burden. It is the responsibility of the WFP activity manager to make sure the environmental and social risks in interventions are identified and managed.

Where can we get technical support or training?

You can reach out to the [safeguards advisors in the Regional Bureaux and in HQ](#) for technical support or a dedicated training.

FAQ on cross-cutting indicator C.4.1 *“Proportion of FLAs/MOUs/CCs for CSP activities screened for environmental and social risks”*

Why are we expected to report on this indicator?

In 2017, [WFP committed](#) to screen all its CSP activities for environmental risks before implementation. This cross-cutting indicator measures to what extent screening procedures are already rolled out at country level.

Is this indicator relevant for all CSP activities?

Yes. As of the 2020 reporting cycle, this indicator is relevant for all CSP activities, as the indicator measures the roll-out of safeguard procedures for any CSP activity. The value of the indicator is calculated for each CSP activity separately, as per the [indicator methodology \(C.4.1, pp. 243-248\)](#). Considering the early stages of the roll-out of safeguard procedures in WFP, CSP activities without WFP transfers to beneficiaries or WFP service provision in the current reporting year are exempted from reporting on this indicator.

Is this the same cross-cutting indicator on screening we had in 2019 and previous years?

No, formally speaking it is a new indicator, with [a new name and an updated methodology](#) to measure the extent to which CSP activities are being screened for environmental and social risks. The [methodology for screening itself has not changed](#) and is not affected by this new indicator.

As formally it is a new indicator, it needs to be added to the log frame of the CSP in COMET in order to be able to report on it. The old indicator is already deactivated so no action is required at CO level. It is however important to make sure that no value for the old indicator is entered in COMET for 2020, as this would make the old indicator reappear in the 2020 ACR.

As this is an indicator that was introduced towards the end of 2020, how should we report on baseline, follow up values and target values?

All COs are asked to insert baseline values (they should always be “zero”, every year again, for all CSP activities).

COs that have screened some of their CSP activities for environmental and social risks are strongly encouraged to report the 2020 follow-up values. COs that have not screened any of their CSP activities, or that have no meaningful values to report, can omit the 2020 follow-up values.

All COs are recommended to insert realistic target values for 2020, the next few years, and for the end-of-CSP. The end-of-CSP target would ideally be 100%, but lower values can be accepted in case the CSP is about to end in 2021.

CSP activities without WFP transfers to beneficiaries or WFP service provision in the current reporting year are exempted from reporting on this indicator (i.e. no baseline values, targets, or follow-up values required).

The WFP screening tool and procedure are available only in draft form, as a living document. Why are you already asking us to report on this indicator before the WFP screening tool and procedure are formally promulgated and rolled out?

In 2017, [WFP committed](#) to screen all its CSP activities for environmental risks before implementing them. We have to report on this commitment to our Executive Board.

Quite some country offices are already screening some of their CSP activities for environmental and social risks, using procedures and tools mandated by the government or the donor, or using the draft [WFP procedure and tool](#).

The final version of the [WFP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework](#), which includes the [procedure for risk screening of programme activities](#), is expected to be formally promulgated in 2021.

By making reporting on this indicator available to all COs and all CSP activities in the 2020 reporting cycle, we will get an overview of the extent to which WFP activities are being screened and how big the need for further capacity building is. [Regional Safeguards Advisors](#) are being put in place to support this roll-out.

My CO screens some CSP activities in collaboration with the host government. Can this be considered in the calculation of this indicator?

Yes, it is important to include all forms of screening - including screening carried out with the government - in your calculation of the indicator values. Further details about the screening process and the tool you are relying on [can be described in the 'Environment' section](#) of the Annual Country Report.

My CO currently does not screen its CSP activities for environmental and social risks. Should we report 'zeroes' or rather omit the indicator altogether?

The indicator should not be omitted in the current reporting year unless all CSP activities are designed in a way that they do not include WFP transfers to beneficiaries or service provision. Baseline values will have to be reported as '0' (zero), for each year, for all CSP activities. If your CO does not screen activities or does not have meaningful values to report, the 2020 follow-up values can be left blank. You will also have to insert realistic target values for the next few years and the end of the CSP (the end-of-CSP target would ideally be 100%).

If we report low or no follow-up values for 2020, will this give a bad impression?

No, it is simply an indication of the extent to which the screening procedure has been rolled out and quantifies the need for further capacity strengthening. As long as the [WFP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework](#) is not formally promulgated and the [WFP Safeguards for Programme Activities](#) not fully rolled out, we don't expect high follow-up values for 2020. Formal promulgation and roll-out are set for 2021.

However, some of our bilateral donors (e.g. KfW, UK FCDO, USAID) and all our multilateral donors (e.g. Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund) have strict requirements on environmental and social safeguarding of the activities they fund. By accepting their funding, COs have already signed up to applying environmental and social safeguards. If in the reporting year your CO implemented activities with funds from donors with such requirements, you should report on the environmental and social risk screening of the CSP activity funded by this donor in both quantitative terms ([by means of indicator C.4.1](#)) and qualitative terms ([in the 'Environment' section of the Annual Country Report](#)).

We would like to add a note in the ACR to explain why we have low/no 2020 follow up values. Can you suggest a text?

The CO can add this note: *"The promulgation and roll-out of the WFP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework, which includes provisions for environmental and social risk screening of CSP activities, was delayed because of COVID-19. This explains why the country office is reporting low targets and follow-up values for indicator C.4.1."*

What are acceptable target values?

If the CO is not used to screening interventions (i.e. part of CSP activities governed by an FLA/MoU/CC) for environmental and social risks, we recommend setting the target value for 2020 at 0%, and not to report 2020 follow-up values.

If the CO is already used to screening some of its interventions (i.e. parts of CSP activities governed by an FLA/MoU/CC) for environmental and social risks, we recommend setting target values for 2020 that are in line with the actual level of screening, and to report also the 2020 follow-up values.

In either case, we would expect that the target values for the next few years grow gradually, in order to reach 100% at the end of the CSP (unless the CSP ends in 2020 or 2021)

Can we set the annual target for 2020 at 0%?

Yes, it is recommended to set the 2020 target for CSP activities where no screening has ever taken place at 0%.

If, to the contrary, some of the FLAs/MoUs/CCs under a CSP activity were screened for environmental and social risks in 2020, it is recommended to insert a 2020 target value that is in line with the actual 2020 follow-up value.

If our CSP ends in 2020 or 2021, can the end-of-CSP target be set at a value that is lower than 100%?

Yes. The 100% target value is the rule for new CSPs, but in the case 2 or less years are left of the I/CSP, annual targets increasing at a rate of 20% are also acceptable.

Why should the baseline for this indicator always be "zero", every year again, and for every CSP activity?

The extent to which CSP activities are screened does not increase in a cumulative manner from one year to another. Year after year, every new design needs to be screened. Therefore, the baseline is always zero. However, as screening becomes a regular practice, COs are expected to set annual targets that gradually increase to reach 100% of screening by the end of each CSP – as per [WFP's commitment](#).

If we report a baseline value of zero percent, a 2020 annual target of zero percent, and no 2020 follow-up value, is this useful?

This is very useful because it helps put together an overall picture of the extent to which COs are screening their CSP activities for environmental and social risks. This overall picture will help us quantify the amount of time and resources that are needed for the roll-out of the WFP Safeguards and it will help us direct our attention to the COs and CSP activities with the greatest need.

In 2020 we have not screened any of our activities for environmental and social risks. Can we still screen them, in order to improve our performance on this indicator in 2020?

No, you cannot retroactively screen interventions (parts of CSP activities) for environmental and social risks, especially if the design of the intervention can no longer be adjusted. Only interventions whose design is not final yet and whose implementation has not started yet could still be screened for environmental and social risks. We do not expect you to modify signed FLA/MoUs/CCs in December.

We have multi-year FLAs/MoUs in place that have never been screened for environmental and social risks. Can we still screen them?

It depends on the setup of the FLA/MoU. In some cases, the partner, with whom WFP has signed the multi-year agreement, is expected to present an annual work plan and budget to WFP. This annual work plan can

be screened for environmental and social risks. As soon as this would happen, the multi-year agreement can be counted as 'screened'.

Can we simply replace the old indicator in the log frame with the new indicator?

There is no function in COMET to replace indicators. The old indicator is already deactivated and if no values are reported for 2020 it will not appear in the 2020 ACR. To use the new indicator, however, it has to be manually added to the log frame by the country office. No additional approval is needed for this.

I can add the new indicator in the log frame but I cannot remove the previous one. Is this an issue?

No, it is not. As long as no data is reported for the old indicator in the 2020 reporting cycle, it will not appear in the 2020 Annual Country Report.

We have already inserted the 2020 data in COMET, but we used the old indicator. What should we do?

You have to manually add the new indicator to the log frame. No formal approval is required to perform this action. You will then have to re-insert the data using the new indicator and ensure no data is reported against the old one.

How many combinations do I have to create in COMET to report on this indicator?

The data reported on this indicator needs to be disaggregated per CSP activity. This means that values can be reported for each CSP activity that is implemented through at least one FLA/MOU/CC. CSP activities without WFP transfers to beneficiaries or WFP service provision in the current reporting year are exempted from reporting on this indicator.

Our CSP only includes country capacity strengthening activities and has no tier-1 beneficiaries. Should we report on this indicator?

It depends. Only CSP activities without WFP transfers to beneficiaries or without WFP service provision in the current reporting year are exempted from reporting on this indicator (i.e. no baseline values, targets, or follow-up values required).

Does this indicator also apply to Service Provision activities that have no tier-1 beneficiaries?

If the service provision is delivered through Field Level Agreements (FLAs), Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), or Construction Contracts (CCs), these agreements would have to be screened for environmental and social risks, and therefore this indicator applies.

Are there any COs or CSP activities that are exempted from reporting on this indicator in 2020?

This indicator is applicable to all CSP activities that are implemented through at least one Field Level Agreement (FLA), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), or Construction Contract (CC). Only CSP activities without WFP transfers to beneficiaries or without WFP service provision in the current reporting year are exempted from reporting on this indicator (i.e. no baseline values, targets, or follow-up values required).

Where can we get additional support?

For support on environmental and social risk screening of CSP activities, you can reach out to the [safeguards advisors in the Regional Bureaux and in HQ](#). For support on the indicator itself, you can reach out to jan.cherlet@wfp.org, julian.gomez@wfp.org, or vera.mayer@wfp.org.