



Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism

ISSN: 1995-4875

CRFM SPECIAL PUBLICATION No. 34

CRFM ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS POLICY (2025)

CRFM Secretariat | Belize, 2025

CRFM SPECIAL PUBLICATION No. 34

CRFM Environmental Social Safeguards Policy 2025

<https://crfm.int/>

<https://www.youtube.com/TheCRFM>

<https://www.facebook.com/CarFisheries>

<https://twitter.com/caribfisheries>

CRFM Secretariat
Belize
2025

CRFM SPECIAL PUBLICATION NO. 34

CRFM Environmental Social Safeguards Policy 2025

© *CRFM* 2025

All rights reserved.

Reproduction, dissemination and use of material in this publication for educational or non-commercial purposes are authorised without prior written permission of the CRFM, provided the source is fully acknowledged. No part of this publication may be reproduced, disseminated or used for any commercial purposes or resold without the prior written permission of the CRFM.

Correct Citation:

CRFM, 2025. CRFM Environmental Social Safeguards Policy 2025. CRFM Special Publication No. 34, 22p.

ISSN: 1995-4875

ISBN: 978-976-8293-78-7

Published by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Secretariat
Belize and St. Vincent and the Grenadines

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE	5
2.	ESS POLICY STATEMENT.....	7
3.	ESS POLICY PRINCIPLES	9
4.	SAFEGUARD PRINCIPLES	10
5.	THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS	13
6.	MONITORING, REVIEWING AND AMENDING THE POLICY	19
	Glossary.....	20

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- 1.1. The Caribbean is home to some of the world's most biodiverse marine ecosystems, including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds—all of which are crucial to the health of the region's fisheries and broader social and economic development. Unsustainable fishing practices, habitat destruction, and climate change pose significant threats to these ecosystems.
- 1.2. The marine and other living aquatic resources in the CRFM Member States are also a vital source of livelihood, foreign exchange earnings and food for millions of people, particularly for small-scale fishers and coastal communities, including communities which are economically and socially vulnerable.
- 1.3. The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) has therefore, brought into effect this Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Policy to ensure that the CRFM's activities are undertaken in such a way that negative environmental and social impacts are minimized to the extent possible, through appropriate planning and mitigation measures, if it is not possible to avoid them completely.
- 1.4. The overall objective of the CRFM ESS Policy is to promote the sustainable use of Caribbean fisheries and the development of aquaculture; protect the livelihoods of coastal and fishing communities; and conserve and protect marine ecosystems and biodiversity.
- 1.5. The ESS Policy would align the CRFM with international best practices and standards, enhance the CRFM's ability to access and manage global funding, and promote regional cooperation. Most importantly, it would secure the long-term economic, social, and environmental health of the Caribbean's fisheries sector, contributing to the resilience and prosperity of the region; and ensure that the projects and activities which are developed and/or implemented by the CRFM and Member States are environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, and economically viable.
- 1.6. The ESS Policy will serve as a guiding framework to manage environmental and social risks, enhance the positive impacts of CRFM activities and projects, and ensure compliance with relevant national, regional, and international safeguard principles and standards.

1.7. More specifically, the CRFM's ESS Policy will seek to:

- (a) ensure that the CRFM integrates environmental and ecological considerations into all fisheries and aquaculture research, development and management actions, helping to conserve these habitats, protect biodiversity, and maintain fish stocks at safe biological levels for future generations;
- (b) protect the rights, welfare and livelihoods of fishing and coastal communities by promoting inclusive and equitable sustainable development, ensuring that all projects and initiatives implemented by the CRFM do not disproportionately harm the most vulnerable groups but instead contribute to poverty reduction, social equity and improved welfare of the communities; and
- (c) avoid, reduce and mitigate harm to the environment and society by incorporating environmental and social concerns as an integral part throughout the process of development and implementation of CRFM actions and projects from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation.

2. ESS POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1. This policy reaffirms the CRFM's commitment to protecting marine and other aquatic ecosystems and fisheries resources, supporting communities, and ensuring a sustainable, resilient and equitable future for aquaculture and fisheries across the Caribbean.
- 2.2. Recognizing the importance of marine ecosystems to regional and local livelihood and food security, the CRFM commits to integrating environmental and social safeguards into all its activities. This includes conserving biodiversity, fostering climate resilience, and promoting equitable access to resources and decision-making, particularly for vulnerable groups such as small-scale fishers, women, youth, and indigenous peoples.
- 2.3. The CRFM also emphasizes transparency, accountability, and alignment with international principles and standards, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By adopting the precautionary, ecosystem-based, inclusive and circular economy approaches, the CRFM seeks to prevent environmental harm, displacement, exclusion or marginalization of local communities or vulnerable individuals, and social disruption while promoting responsible and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development and management.
- 2.4. CRFM-supported activities and projects shall ensure adherence to the environmental and social safeguard principles and standards set out in this Policy to facilitate:
 - (a) the proper identification of the environmental and social risks;
 - (b) avoid, to the extent possible, any negative environmental and social impacts and where unavoidable, adopt appropriate minimization, mitigation, and compensation measures, and
 - (c) strengthen stakeholder and beneficiary engagement in identifying the issues and devising minimization and mitigation measures.
- 2.5. CRFM should support projects only if they comply with the principles and standards set out in this Policy and the international conventions, treaties, agreements and non-binding instruments to which CRFM Member States are parties or to which they subscribe (if such requirements are relevant to the project under consideration).

- 2.6. All grievances related to the CRFM's activities and projects on environmental and social grounds shall be recorded and reported through CRFM's Grievance Mechanism detailed in the Policy.
- 2.7. In order to achieve these efforts, CRFM shall strengthen its in-house capacity and the capacity of its project implementation partners to facilitate compliance with the Policy.

3. ESS POLICY PRINCIPLES

3.1. CRFM Secretariat recognizes that Caribbean countries are particularly prone and therefore vulnerable to natural, technological and biological hazard impacts. Also of great concern is access to potable water, water scarcity, epidemics, demographic changes, and rapid urbanization of populations, unsustainable fishing practices and use of marine resources, disasters, and environmental degradation. CARICOM Member States continue to be challenged by continuing food and energy insecurity, humanitarian and public health emergencies, displacement caused by volcanoes, earthquakes, migration, violence, and the adverse impacts of climate change—all of which exacerbate the disadvantages, vulnerabilities, and inequalities that women, particularly rural, indigenous and tribal women and their families face. CRFM shall work towards achieving the following ESS Policy Principles.

4. SAFEGUARD PRINCIPLES

- 4.1. Safeguard principles guide management of environmental and social impacts in the fisheries and aquaculture programme. Applying the principles helps ensure projects achieve positive development outcomes without harming the marine environment, people or communities.
- 4.2. Project design and implementation must meet the safeguard principles, which must be considered at each stage of CRFM's project management cycle: policy and planning; design and procurement; implementation and performance management; and review and evaluation. The safeguard principles underpin the successful application of the five environmental and social safeguards.
- 4.3. CRFM's Safeguard Principles:

Principle 1: Do no harm¹

- (a) Seek all possible ways to protect the rights, health, safety, and livelihoods of people, including, children, women, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.
- (b) Maintain the health, diversity and productivity of the marine environment.

Principle 2: Identify, assess and manage environmental and social impacts

- (a) Identify potential environmental and social risks and impacts early in the project design process, to ensure they are adequately assessed and managed in investment concepts, designs and implementation.
- (b) Avoid, or where avoidance is not possible minimize, mitigate or as a last resort, offset or compensate for negative impacts.
- (c) Assess and manage direct and indirect environmental and social impacts of the project in a way that is proportional to potential impacts.
- (d) Manage risks and impacts of the project through management plans and monitor and report on their delivery.
- (e) Consider how the marine environment or different groups of people are affected, including children, people of different genders, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. The assessment and management of potential impacts must consider these different needs.

¹ Proactively mitigating risks to and from agencies presence (including local partners), strategy and programmes (FAO)

Principle 3: Engage effectively with stakeholders

- (a) Be transparent about the project, its risks and impacts in a way that is timely, accessible, and culturally and socially suitable for the affected people.
- (b) Engage with affected parties and other stakeholders early in identifying and managing risks and impacts and continue this throughout the project.
- (c) Ensure consultations include affected parties, are inclusive, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, or intimidation, and enable meaningful participation.
- (d) Provide accessible and culturally appropriate grievance redress mechanisms and ensure that grievances are handled promptly, transparently, and without retribution or cost to the party that raised the concern.
- (e) Disclose information about the social and environmental performance of the project in accordance with CRFM's aid transparency commitments.

Principle 4: Work effectively with partners

- (a) Comply with partner country safeguard laws and policies and where possible build partners' capacity to develop and implement environmental and social governance systems.
- (b) Work with multilateral, bilateral, NGO and private sector development partners to ensure environmental and social impacts are managed in a way that is consistent with this policy.
- (c) Work with partners to manage safeguard risks to maximize the use of country systems and avoids duplication or unnecessary safeguard assessment and management planning requirements.

Principle 5: Promote improved environmental and social outcomes

- (a) Where possible, promote improved environmental and social outcomes by integrating ecologically sustainable development into projects.
- (b) Improve the implementation and outcomes of projects by effectively identifying and managing risks.

5. THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Six environmental and social safeguards must be considered when identifying and managing the potential environmental and social impacts of planned actions and projects.

5.1. Environmental protection

5.1.1. Negative impacts on the environment resulting from projects and activities can harm the people they are intended to help and undermine development outcomes. Protecting and conserving natural resources and maintaining ecosystems and biodiversity is fundamental to sustainable development and integral to the economic prosperity of coastal communities and Member States. In addition, environmental degradation can increase the vulnerability of communities to disasters, the impacts of climate change and economic shocks.

5.1.2. CRFM's actions and projects should:

- (a) Protect and conserve biodiversity and natural habitats, and avoid damaging or degrading ecosystem services and natural resources, including through habitat loss, degradation, invasive alien species, over-exploitation, hydrological changes, nutrient loading, and pollution
- (b) Adopt precautionary and ecosystems approaches to fisheries to facilitate the protection, conservation, management and sustainable use of living natural resources
- (c) Avoid the release of pollutants to air, water, and land; if they are released, minimize direct and indirect discharges
- (d) Promote circular economy² approaches and manage the generation of wastes. Where waste cannot be avoided, every effort should be made to reduce, recover and reuse waste. As a final option, treat, destroy, or dispose of waste in a manner that is safe for human health and the marine environment
- (e) Avoid the trade and use of hazardous substances that are subject to international bans or phase-outs (such as ozone depleting substances)

² The circular economy is a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated. In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, and composting. (Ellen McArthur Foundation).

- (f) Where feasible, use less hazardous substitutes, for hazardous materials not subject to an international ban (such as chemical lubricants, pesticides and herbicides)
- (g) Promote sustainable management of natural resources including through cleaner production and efficient use of resources
- (h) Avoid impacts on natural and cultural heritage, including historical sites, landscapes and traditions and apply internationally recognised practices to manage potential impacts.

5.2. Children, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups

- 5.2.1. Different people including children, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups may be affected by environmental impacts in different ways. They may also value different aspects of the environment. To be effective, the identification, assessment and management of environmental impacts need to consider the views and needs of different groups.
- 5.2.2. Projects and activities implemented by the CRFM should benefit people and communities. Poorly planned or implemented projects and activities can have adverse unintended impacts on people, including children, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as by affecting their access to resources and livelihoods or disrupting social networks. The development needs of people, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, should be considered in impact assessments and management plans. CRFM seeks to protect people, especially the most vulnerable, from any form of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in any of its work.
- 5.2.3. Impacts from initiatives of the CRFM can affect people and communities directly or indirectly, including:
 - a. Women
 - b. Children
 - c. Female or child-headed households
 - d. People with disabilities
 - e. Persons with low income
 - f. Elderly
 - g. Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities
 - h. Religious and linguistic minorities
 - i. People dependent upon the land of others for livelihood or residence

5.2.4. Assess and manage environmental and social risks and impacts

5.2.4.1. Consistent with its policies on protecting children, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups through its actions and projects, CRFM will:

- (a) Identify individuals and groups that may be affected by the project because of their disadvantaged or vulnerable status; this includes children and others.
- (b) Engage in a way that is relevant to the different interests and needs of potentially affected groups.
- (c) Seek to avoid negative impacts on children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including in managing health and safety responsibilities and preventing sexual exploitation abuse and harassment.
- (d) Implement measures so that any negative impacts do not fall disproportionately on children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and that they share the benefits and opportunities of the investment.
- (e) Minimize consequences, such as exacerbating existing risks of violence, social inequalities, conflict or disasters that may impact on children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

5.2.4.2. Where indicated by a risk assessment, potential impacts on people, including children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups should be identified and further assessed through an environmental and social impact assessment. The CRFM should ensure the development of an environmental and social management plan, guided by the assessment study, which should include practical measures to avoid or mitigate identified adverse impacts.

5.3. Gender and disability-inclusive development strategies

CRFM is committed to implementing strategies to ensure that projects and activities improve development outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

5.3.1. Gender affirmation

Development results cannot be achieved without pellucid attention to the different needs, interests, priorities and roles of women, men, boys and girls, and the relations between them. CRFM's requirements for integrating gender equality issues into its actions and projects are set out in the **Promoting Gender Equality in Recruiting & Hiring: Approaches for**

Consideration in the CRFM (2020). The guideline/policy³ recognizes the particular vulnerabilities caused by gender inequality, and the need to empower women and girls as leaders, implementers and decision makers. This strategy also goes beyond concepts of protecting women and girls, to promoting women and girls as key agents of change, implementers and leaders. Gender inequality and pervasive harmful gender norms mean that women and girls are often among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and need protective as well as empowerment measures that respond to the barriers they experience.

5.3.2. Disability-inclusive development strategy

CRFM recognizes that everyone is affected, if the most disadvantaged people are left behind and acknowledges that people with disabilities make up the largest and most disadvantaged minority in the world. It is the intent of this ESS Policy to ensure that people with disabilities are given high priority consideration in the CRFM's activities.

5.4. Displacement and resettlement

- 5.4.1. If a development project or initiative results in the displacement of communities, it is crucial to manage the process ethically, transparently, and in accordance with human rights principles.
- 5.4.2. Responsibility for managing displacement and resettlement rests with the government of the country where the project is undertaken.
- 5.4.3. Where CRFM directly supports the implementation of projects that may displace people, CRFM is responsible for ensuring that partner government agencies are aware of, agree to, and fully implement the requirements of this safeguard.
- 5.4.4. CRFM will discharge its responsibility primarily through support for effective assessment and planning in the preparatory stages of the project, and through its own field-based review of progress and evaluation of outcomes in the implementation stage. In all such cases, CRFM monitors the implementation process to support effective delivery of all required actions.

³ There is synergy and harmony with the CRFM Sexual Discrimination Policy

5.5. Indigenous peoples

- 5.5.1. Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.
- 5.5.2. Indigenous peoples often experience disproportionate rates of poverty, and increased risk of exclusion and marginalization. Social, economic and political power imbalances as well as spoken language may prevent indigenous peoples' equitable participation and access to benefits resulting from activities and projects. In addition, indigenous peoples may have diverse concepts of development based on traditional values, visions, needs and priorities.
- 5.5.3. CRFM is committed to providing opportunities to assist indigenous peoples in Member States, to overcome social and economic disadvantages, which would prevent them getting the intended benefits of projects and activities.
- 5.5.4. Where indicated by a risk assessment, potential impacts on indigenous peoples must be identified and assessed through an environmental and social impact assessment. Likewise, barriers that may prevent indigenous peoples—including indigenous women, girls and people with disability—from accessing and equally benefiting from the projects or activities, should be identified through these assessments.
- 5.5.5. Practical measures to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts should be included in an indigenous peoples plan or environmental and social management plan, and enable equitable access, participation and benefit from the investment.

5.6. Health and safety

- 5.6.1. CRFM aims to avoid negative impacts on the health and safety of people from its activities and projects, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Some

projects can expose communities and people, including children, people of different gender, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups to risks on their health and safety. Some projects can exacerbate underlying environmental and/or social vulnerabilities experienced by communities.

- 5.6.2. CRFM has an obligation under the International Labour Organization (ILO) regime to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers and others is not put at risk from work carried out on behalf of the organization. This may apply to projects depending on the nature of the project.
- 5.6.3. In addition to its obligations under the ILO regime, CRFM safeguards (including on child protection and environmental protection) seek to protect health and safety, including specific groups such as children, vulnerable or disadvantaged people.

6. MONITORING, REVIEWING AND AMENDING THE POLICY

- 6.1. The Executive Director is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and will review the implementation of it on a regular basis. He or she will assess its suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness and submit regular monitoring reports and recommendations for improvement to the Caribbean Fisheries Forum and Ministerial Council for consideration and decision-making.
- 6.2. Any gaps or need for improvements identified during the implementation of this Policy will be documented and submitted by the Executive Director to the Governance Bodies of the CRFM (the Caribbean Fisheries Forum and its Executive Committee, and the Ministerial Council) using the established procedures for oversight and decision-making.
- 6.3. Employees are encouraged to offer their feedback on this Policy if they have any suggestions for how it may be improved. Feedback of this nature should be addressed to the Executive Director.
- 6.4. The Forum and Ministerial Council of the CRFM will review the implementation of this Policy based on the monitoring reports submitted by the Executive Director and provide feedback and policy direction to the Executive Director to facilitate revisions when considered necessary.
- 6.5. This Policy may be amended at any time in order to improve its effectiveness and maintain its relevance to national, regional and international best practices and policies.

Glossary

Child or children - CRFM considers a child to be a person under the age of 18 years (Convention of the Rights of the Child).

CRFM worker - A CRFM worker is any person carrying out work in any capacity for the Secretariat, including work as an employee, a contractor or subcontractor, an employee of a contractor or subcontractor, an employee of a labour hire company assigned to work in the department, an apprentice or trainee, a student gaining work experience, or a volunteer.

Displacement - Displacement refers to both physical and economic impacts occurring because of development-induced land acquisition or restrictions on access to land or other resources that is imposed by a partner government on individuals, families or communities. Displacement can include both physical and economic displacement.

Ecologically sustainable development - Using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.

Environment - 'Environment' is defined as:

- (a) ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities;
- (b) natural and physical resources;
- (c) qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas;
- (d) heritage values of places; and
- (e) the social, economic and cultural aspects of a thing mentioned in paragraphs a, b or c.

Environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) - The process of identifying, predicting, evaluating a project's positive and negative environmental and social impacts as well as identifying ways of avoiding, mitigating or at last resort offsetting negative impacts.

Environmental and social management plan (ESMP) - A plan that is an output of the ESIA and details measures to avoid, mitigate or offset negative impacts of the proposed action.

Environmental and social management framework (ESMF) - A document that describes the scope of the potential environmental and social risks of activities and outlines the approach that will be taken to their identification, assessment and management.

Impact - An impact is a change to the environment, including people and communities, whether negative or positive, or wholly or partly resulting from a project's actions. A project can have direct and indirect impacts on the environment. Impacts may be cumulative (over time) or combined (more than one impact in one place).

Resettlement action plan (RAP) - The document that specifies the actions and procedures a responsible party will follow and will undertake to mitigate adverse effects, compensate for losses, and provide development benefits to persons and communities affected by an investment.

Vulnerable or disadvantaged - Vulnerable or disadvantaged refers to those who may be more likely to be adversely affected by the investment impacts and/or more limited than others in their ability to take advantage of an investment's benefits.

The CRFM is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is to “Promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region’s fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region”.

The CRFM consists of three bodies – the Ministerial Council, the Caribbean Fisheries Forum and the CRFM Secretariat. CRFM members are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

CRFM Secretariat | Headquarters

Email: secretariat@crfm.int

Tel: (501) 223-4443

Belize City, Belize

CRFM Secretariat | Eastern Caribbean Office

Email: crfmsvg@crfm.int

Tel: (784)-458-4269/456-4628

Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

www.crfm.int

www.youtube.com/TheCRFM

www.facebook.com/CarFisheries

www.twitter.com/CaribFisheries

