

IFC Sustainability Framework Update

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the IFC Sustainability Framework?

The IFC Sustainability Framework, originally adopted in 2006, articulates IFC's strategic commitment to sustainable development. It consists of the Policy on Environmental and Social (E&S) Sustainability ([Sustainability Policy](#)), the Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability ([Performance Standards](#)), and the Access to Information Policy ([AIP](#)). It was developed to address the needs of private sector operations, complementing the World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies (now the World Bank Environmental & Social Framework), which were designed for public sector use.

Updated in 2012 to reflect evolving E&S issues and market trends, the IFC Performance Standards have become a global private sector benchmark for E&S risk management in emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs).

2. Who are the users of the IFC Performance Standards?

The IFC Performance Standards are used by over 150 organizations, including Equator Principles signatories, export credit agencies, and Development Finance Institutions (DFIs). Other users include IFC clients (past and present), co-financiers, and mobilization partners.

3. Why is the Sustainability Framework being updated?

The Sustainability Framework is being updated to modernize and align its E&S requirements with evolving practices, the increasing scale and complexity of the WBG's private sector financial products and portfolio, and lessons learned since the Framework's last update in 2012. This update process will provide an opportunity to:

- Integrate lessons learned since 2012 from E&S specialists, practitioners, clients, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Reflect an in-depth technical review of the PSs to modernize the language.
- Clarify the interaction between the PSs and applicable national laws, including in connection with any actual or perceived conflicts.
- Harmonize, as appropriate, the Sustainability Framework with more recent standards issued by other MDBs, with particular focus on the E&S standards included in the World Bank's Environmental & Social Framework.
- Integrate insights from the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) and the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO), including the lessons learned from CAO compliance investigations.

4. When can I participate in the Sustainability Framework update consultation?

Opportunities to participate in the consultation are described on the Sustainability Framework update webpage.

5. Will comments and personal information submitted during the stakeholder consultation process be made public?

A summary containing aggregated and de-identified data, including summaries of comments received without attribution, will be produced and made public following the end of Phases I and II. However, personal data and any identifiable stakeholder information will remain confidential and will be used solely for internal World Bank Group purposes, including contacting you for future consultations if you indicate interest.

6. Will the updated Sustainability Framework be translated?

English will be the primary language of the consultation process and documents will be disclosed in English. However, to ensure accessibility for a global audience, supporting documentation (such as summary presentations) will also be provided in World Bank Group official languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. The final Board-approved Sustainability Framework will be translated and made available in all World Bank Group official languages.

7. What are the Guidance Notes, and will they be concurrently updated with the Sustainability Framework Update?

The Guidance Notes offer guidance on the practical implementation of the requirements contained in the Performance Standards, including reference materials, and on good sustainability practices to improve project performance. However, the Guidance Notes are not intended to establish policy by themselves; instead, they explain the requirements in the Performance Standards.

The Guidance Notes will be reviewed and updated as appropriate after the Sustainability Framework update has been concluded. The timeline for completing this work is yet to be determined.

8. Where will the final version of the Sustainability Framework be posted?

The final version will be published on the consultation website and the [IFC Sustainability Framework webpage](#).

9. How are the EHS Guidelines related to the Sustainability Framework?

The EHS Guidelines, while not part of the IFC Sustainability Framework, are referenced in the Sustainability Policy and Performance Standards. They serve as technical reference documents and examples of Good International Industry Practice (GIIP) to support IFC's appraisal and supervision of supported projects. In

addition, IFC clients and their consultants use the EHS Guidelines to manage environmental, health, and safety risks in alignment with IFC's Performance Standards.

The EHS Guidelines are also referenced in the World Bank's [Environmental and Social Framework](#) and MIGA's [Performance Standards](#), and serve as a critical tool to support project appraisal and supervision by WBG Environmental and Social Specialists.

[Learn more about the EHS Guidelines.](#)

10. Is the ongoing update of the EHS Guidelines part of this Sustainability Framework update?

No, the WBG EHS Guidelines update is a separate initiative co-led by IFC, the World Bank, and MIGA. While this process runs in parallel with the Sustainability Framework update, it is expected to take several years longer to complete. The EHS Guidelines are being revised in phases, with specific industry sector EHS Guidelines updated at a time. Each updated version will be disclosed for consultation and subsequently published upon completion. For more information on the EHS Guidelines update, [click here](#).