

**Nepal Skill Initiative Project ( NSIP)**

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY**

**Board Approval: January,2024**

**Next Review: January,2026**

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

The communities in which NSIP works depend on the natural environment for their survival and sustenance. This includes access to healthy food, clean water, adequate shelter and sustainable livelihoods. Such access is enshrined in their fundamental 'Human Rights'.

Increasingly, the environment that this population is dependent upon, is under increasing stress. The situation is exacerbated by the increasing impact of climate change and the associated frequency and intensity of natural disasters. Effective and responsive environmental planning and management in this context is critical to the long-term reduction of poverty and improved social development to better ensure that the most disadvantaged people to retain access to their main sources of food, water, incomes and livelihoods.

This Policy is consistent with the Nepal Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* and guidelines. NSIP is obligated to assess whether its programs will cause, or are likely to cause, a significant impact on the environment, and take steps to avoid and/or mitigate, monitor and report on any negative impacts. This Policy is also guided by UN agency guidelines and frameworks of relevant international NGOs.

NSIP is committed to making a positive and sustainable contribution to the Himalayan natural environment and the communities within which we work.

## 2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All NSIP programs are designed and implemented according to the following guiding principles:

1. **Do no harm:** By protecting and safeguarding natural habitats, rare and endangered native wildlife, and cultural heritage. This will also include the health, welfare, and livelihoods of the communities in which NSIP works, with a focus on vulnerable groups that includes women, children and people with a disability. This includes applying pollution prevention and control technologies and practices; avoiding the use of hazardous materials; and providing safe and healthy working conditions that prevent accidents, injuries and disease to workers, local communities and animals, both domestic and wild.
2. **Assess and manage environmental risk and impact:** NSIP will assess potential strategic, operational and program related environmental risks when designing and implementing projects and ensuring that those activities likely to have environmental impacts are properly managed and monitored.

3. **Disclose information transparently:** NSIP will apply transparency principles to all information on environmental considerations and providing access to this information in an accessible form and language.
4. **Consult stakeholders:** NSIP will conduct meaningful consultation with community stakeholders, including women and vulnerable groups, along with an accessible complaints mechanism to ensure individuals and community concerns on environmental issues and impact of NSIP programs are heard and appropriately addressed and resolved.
5. **Work with partners:** NSIP will comply with Nepal Government environmental laws, standards and/or policies. This will include supporting the capacity of partners/stakeholders to develop and implement environmental governance frameworks as appropriate. NSIP will also harmonize its approaches with other international development partners to enhance development effectiveness, reduce transaction costs, and encourage collaborative behavior.
6. **Promote improved environmental outcomes:** NSIP will work towards maximizing the environmental benefits of NSIP programs and avoiding adverse environmental impact. Through its programs, NSIP will promote where possible: environmentally sustainable practices; awareness and education on the need to protect the natural environment and its natural ecosystems and resources; and responsible citizenship and operations in regard to the environment.

### **3.0 RISK**

NSIP assesses environmental risk at a strategic operational and program level as part of the organizational assessment process.

Strategic environmental risks include but are not limited to:

- ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities,
- climate and natural systems and processes,
- natural and physical resources,
- qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas,
- heritage values of place; social, economic and cultural aspects of the above including those related to indigenous peoples.

The NSIP strategic risk register is reviewed annually and quarterly where risk ratings change or additional risks are identified.

### **OPERATIONS AND PROGRAM RISK**

Potential environmental impacts of all NSIP programs will be considered to ensure the integration of environmental protection and to effectively manage any adverse environmental impacts.

**Concept/Proposal and Design Phases:** To assess and manage the environmental impacts of each program or project, and what actions are necessary, NSIP will undertake a number of steps to categorize the project or program. This involves a checklist of the following:

- Will the project involve the use and alteration of environmentally sensitive land?
- Will it have a land use component?
- Will it adversely affect sustainable land use practices?
- Will it adversely impact any endangered species or ecosystems?
- Will it involve building of infrastructure?
- Will it involve the use of significant amounts of non-renewable energy?
- Will it involve use of significant amounts of water?
- Will it create a significant and unsustainable increase in demand for natural resources, especially local natural resources?

The checklist and the nature of the proposed project in relation to it will determine whether the project/program is designated as:

Category 1 A project with no potential for significant adverse environmental impact, i.e. projects not in an environmentally sensitive location or sector.

*If a project is determined to be in Category 1, an Environmental Assessment and Management Report is not conducted.*

OR

Category 2 A project with the potential to have a significant adverse impact on the environment.

*If a project is determined to be in Category 2, further Environmental Assessment will be undertaken and a Management Report produced.*

This report will include:

- Project description,
- Project area description,
- Potential environmental impacts,
- An Environmental Management Plan.

Further, there will be on going assessment of whether environmental issues are receiving due attention during the project design and implementation.

Category 2 projects may include proposed projects that are primarily environmental in nature and have environmental protection and sustainability as the major objective: i.e. specifically designed to deliver and implement environmental and sustainability improvements, or specific environmental protection and sustainability measures (e.g. protection of habitat or species; and renewable energy projects; sustainable water use projects).

**Implementation, monitoring and reporting:** Program management will ensure that identified environmental issues and risks are monitored during implementation of projects and environment issues and risks are assessed through partner reporting, field visits, and/or consultations. Project reports will highlight existing environment issues and risks as well as new ones that arise during implementation.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

NSIP's CEO will have operational responsibility for ensuring that NSIP systems and processes and those of partners/stakeholders meet the obligations of this Policy.

In applying the maxim of 'minimum impact – maximum benefit', all personnel will be expected and instructed to act in an environmentally responsible manner and to employ all reasonable measures to minimize environmental impact (e.g. proper use of energy and water; recycling and reuse where possible; use of sustainably produced and recyclable materials where possible).