

## Environmental and Socioeconomic Sustainability Review Framework for UNMIL Projects and Activities

The purpose of this framework is to help guide UNMIL activities, project development and implementation in order to ensure stakeholder participation, select implementing partners, and inform monitoring and evaluation to maximize ‘doing good’ under our mandate. In this vein, it also aims to go beyond ‘do not harm’ principle. All projects, and activities generally, should be developed and implemented without negative effects on the environment or on social and economic welfare.

This framework has been developed in line with DPKO/DFS’ requirement under the Mission Environmental Action Plan 2017-2018 (MEAP) that project proposals – including QIPs - should include an assessment of potential environmental impact. The MEAP also emphasizes the need for integration into our activities of local cultural awareness and respect as well as protection of cultural rights. To this end, UNMIL developed this framework based on UNEP’s Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability Framework, established in 2015. Therein, UNEP interprets the term “environmental degradation,” as stated in 1992 in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, to encompass both negative impacts on the natural environment, and adverse social and economic impacts resulting from those impacts. A similar approach inspires this document. The framework’s measures will also help reduce reputational risk for UNMIL.

The framework is outlined through various considerations or ‘objectives’, followed by guidance on how to support and achieve them. Overall, priority is on prevention of harmful environmental, social and economic impacts. In some cases, if prevention is not possible, adverse impacts will be minimized, and positive impacts enhanced, through adequate environmental, social and economic planning and management by UNMIL or its implementing partner. Such management includes mitigation measures, monitoring through stakeholder consultations or field visits, institutional capacity-building, and evaluation. These must be reflected in implementation budgets and schedules, and assessed in mid-term and final reports.

The framework will steer UNMIL activities generally and UNMIL projects in particular. The Project Review Committee will use this framework when reviewing projects, including related stakeholder participation and selection of implementing partners, and advise accordingly. Components and project owners must consider this framework when recommending a project proposal and implementing partner to the Project Review Committee.

Early and broad stakeholder consultation greatly improves a project’s identification of potential environmental and socio-economic risks.

***Objective 1: Ensure that initiatives and projects undertaken directly by UNMIL, or supported by UNMIL through partnerships, do not adversely impact biodiversity, habitats, or ecosystem services, and avoid or minimize any adverse impact on priority ecosystem services of relevance to affected communities (e.g. land, water, forest, etc.).***

a) UNMIL will not support directly or indirectly any activity that will convert or degrade critical natural habitats, or habitats that are:

- Legally protected;
- Officially proposed for protection;
- Identified by authoritative sources for their high conservation value; or
- Recognized as protected by traditional local communities, where national legislation so allows.

b) UNMIL activities will be consistent with any officially recognized management plans for the area.

c) When planning activities in critical habitats, such as improved land management, the project will not have potential adverse impacts on the biodiversity and ecosystem services for which the critical habitat was designated.

d) Given the intimate relationship between Liberia's ecosystem services and the social cohesion of local communities, UNMIL-supported projects and activities will promote environmentally responsible projects and policies which do no harm and promote social peace.

e) The project or activity will not lead to a net reduction in the global, national or regional population of any critically endangered or endangered species (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>), or a net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. To this end, considerations will be given to:

- Minimization of habitat fragmentation, such as with biological corridors;
- Preference given to siting physical infrastructure investments on lands where natural habitats have already been converted to other land uses; and
- Restoring habitats during operations and after operations.

f) In projects and activities that could affect biodiversity, natural habitats, or ecosystem services or that involve the preparation of protected areas or ecosystem management plans, UNMIL or its implementing partners will consult with appropriate experts, potentially affected communities, local government and civil society organisations (CSOs), and other stakeholders.

g) UNMIL-supported activities will seek to avoid adverse impacts on soils, their organic content, productivity, structure and water-retention capacity, or to contribute to reversing land degradation.

h) UNMIL will implement measures to avoid the introduction or utilization of invasive alien species, whether accidental or intentional; and, in its activities, where relevant, UNMIL will take steps to mitigate and control their further spread.

***Objective 2: Promote more sustainable uses of resources, including energy and water; reduce project-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Avoid or minimize adverse impacts on human health and the environment originating from project activities through the use or management of hazardous chemicals and waste materials, including pesticides.***

a) UNMIL-supported projects and activities will consider technically and financially feasible approaches for the efficient use of energy, water, and other resources and materials.

b) UNMIL-supported projects and activities will consider technically and financially feasible options to reduce project-related GHG emissions, including alternative locations, the use of renewable or low-carbon energy sources, and sustainable agriculture, forestry and livestock management practices.

c) UNMIL and its implementing partners will avoid or minimize the potential for community exposure to hazardous materials and substances that may be released by an initiative. Where there is a potential for the public to be exposed to hazards, UNMIL initiatives will exercise special care to avoid or minimize their exposure by modifying, substituting, or eliminating the condition or material causing the potential hazards.

d) UNMIL and its initiatives and implementing partners will promote the use of demand driven, ecologically-based biological or environmental pest management practices and the reduction of synthetic chemical pesticides in accordance with the Basel, the Rotterdam and the Stockholm Conventions. Procurement of chemical pesticides will only be supported when it is a component of integrated pest management (IPM) or integrated vector management (IVM) approaches. When chemical pesticides are included in IPM or IVM, UNMIL and implementing partners will select compounds that are low in human toxicity, known to be effective against the target organisms and to have minimal effects on non-target organisms.

e) UNMIL and its implementing partners will not utilize pesticides that fall into WHO Classes IA and IB, or formulations of products in Class II unless there are restrictions that deny use or access to lay personnel and others without training or proper equipment. Pesticides will be handled, stored, applied and disposed of in accordance with the FAO International Code of Conduct on Distribution and Use of Pesticides.

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4544e/y4544e00.htm>

f) UNMIL and its implementing partners will take measures to avoid the procurement or use in their projects of chemicals, including pesticides, specified as persistent organic pollutants identified under the Stockholm Convention.

***Objective 3: Ensure that UNMIL supports initiatives only where they address the adverse social and economic impacts that can result from involuntary resettlement, acquisition of land or other assets, or restrictions on the use of or access to land.***

a) Involuntary resettlement is understood to comprise both physical displacement of individuals or communities, and economic displacement through loss of assets or involuntary restrictions on access to legally designated parks and protected areas resulting in adverse impacts on the livelihoods of affected persons.

b) The standard applies in a wide range of situations that include:

- Acquisition of land or land use rights through expropriation or through negotiation when the buyer can resort to expropriation if negotiations fail;
- Involuntary restrictions on land use that deny a community the use of resources to which they have traditional or recognizable use rights;
- Restrictions on access to land or use of resources in the protected areas that are sources of livelihood; and
- Involuntary relocation of residents when a protected area is being established.

c) When UNMIL supports or plans a project that could result in displacement of persons, it will assess all viable alternative project designs to avoid, where feasible, or minimize the need for resettlement.

d) UNMIL support to Government initiatives and projects that involve resettlement must seek to restore and, whenever possible, *improve* the livelihoods and living standards of directly affected persons. Displaced persons and communities must be provided opportunities to derive appropriate development benefits from the project. Particular attention must be given to the needs of directly affected persons who are vulnerable, especially those below the poverty line, the landless, the elderly, women and children, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities, or other displaced persons who may not be protected through national land compensation legislation. Communities and persons directly affected by resettlement must be engaged in the planning and decision-making processes as well as during implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the resettlement.

e) More generally and positively, UNMIL should seek to support initiatives that raise public awareness on land rights and relevant corporate socioeconomic, environmental, and human rights responsibilities; and support equitable access to land and its benefits. Such efforts should be used as opportunities to consolidate social peace and advance reconciliation.

***Objective 4: Respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and take into account Indigenous Peoples' views, needs and rights, to avoid any harm and promote opportunities to improve their livelihoods.***

a) UNMIL must work to raise the awareness of the Government, and where applicable, help provide technical support, in order to strengthen their capacity to include Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests in environmental governance processes and procedures, working with the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), UN sister agencies and other relevant partners. *For purposes of Liberia, Indigenous Peoples are peoples who have historical continuity or association with a given region or part of a given region extending back prior to colonization or annexation; and/or have strong links to territories, surrounding natural resources and ecosystems.*

b) UNMIL will avoid projects that undermine or inadvertently weaken the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples. When Indigenous Peoples may be affected by a UNMIL-supported project, UNMIL or its implementing partners will carry out a relevant impact assessment; identify measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate any negative impacts; and agree on an approach that are acceptable to the potentially affected Indigenous Peoples.

c) Where the restriction of access of Indigenous Peoples to legally designated parks and protected areas is not avoidable, UNMIL will advise partners that potentially affected Indigenous Peoples fully and effectively participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of management plans for such parks, protected areas and species; and that these Peoples will share equitably in benefits from the parks and protected areas.

***Objective 5: Ensure community participation in project development and implementation, and that the public and affected communities have access to information and response mechanisms on the projects.***

a) UNMIL adheres to the principle of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in matters that affect them, based the Human-Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and, with respect to environmental matters, on Rio Principle 10. HRBA provides populations with greater opportunities to participate in shaping the decisions that impact on their human rights, and calls for:

- Participation;
- Accountability;
- Non–discrimination and equality;
- Empowerment; and
- Legality.

Similarly, Rio Principle 10 requires early consultation, access to information and the adequate opportunity to review materials and present comments prior to decisions impacting the environment. Thus, overall, UNMIL should disclose any environmental, social and economic risk assessments, stakeholder consultation reports, impact assessments, and risk management plans. Information should be in a format and language understandable to the stakeholders concerned, and consultations should be tailored to meet the needs of local communities, while also making information available on UNMIL’s website.

b) More specifically, in the preparation of projects, UNMIL will involve target populations in the planning phase where information on the community’s most pressing needs can guide critical decisions. Community representatives, including of marginalized communities, must be involved actively and meaningfully in the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies and activities that affect the communities. UNMIL will share project documents and management plans with sufficient leadtime to allow affected communities the opportunity to review and comment on these documents before their finalization. Comments and suggestions received should be responded to or incorporated in relevant project approach and risk management plans. Any revisions or adjustments to project documents during the course of project implementation will also be disclosed. The project documents and final report will be uploaded on the UNMIL website.

c) UNMIL will disclose on its website for the projects a Stakeholder Response Mechanism. This Mechanism, while respecting the UN’s privileges and immunities, will be structured to

resolve concerns promptly and at the lowest possible level of UNMIL's structure (e.g., within the responsible section) using a transparent consultative process that is, in accordance with UN standards, culturally appropriate and readily accessible. Thus, the website will provide spokesperson contact information to receive and forward any stakeholder concerns. The project owner will facilitate the resolution of stakeholder concerns and address stakeholder responses to environmental and social management performance.



***Objective 6: Ensure that benefits of UNMIL projects are socially-inclusive and sustainable, and that the projects avoid negative economic consequences during and after project implementation, especially for vulnerable and marginalized social groups in the targeted communities.***

a) UNMIL-supported projects will promote, as part of their design, planning, implementation and monitoring, the financial sustainability of the activities implemented, also including those that will occur beyond the project intervention period.

b) UNMIL and its implementing partners will undertake approaches that do not generate long-term economic burdens at the expense of short-term gains for subsets of a population.

c) UNMIL-supported projects will consider various project modality options and undertake approaches that do not generate welfare disparities, especially for the poor, during or beyond the project intervention period.

***Objective 7: Ensure through its MOUs that project partners comply with national fiscal and labor laws and with the objectives of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Standards.***

a) UNMIL implementing partners will have in place human resources policies and procedures appropriate to their size and workforce that set out their approach to comply with these standards and national laws. General standards are:

- Promote fair treatment, non-discrimination, and equal opportunity for workers in employment, accommodations, and working conditions or terms of employment;
- Protect workers, including vulnerable categories of workers such as children, women, and migrant workers, particularly in preventing and addressing their harassment, intimidation, or exploitation;
- Promote safe and healthy working conditions and the health of workers. *Responsibilities include identifying potential hazards to workers, providing preventive and protective measures and equipment, documenting and reporting of accidents and diseases, and planning for emergency response;*
- Does not employ forced or trafficked labor, including bonded labor. *The employer does not employ children in any manner that is exploitative, hazardous, or potentially harmful to the child's health or development, or that will interfere with his or her education.*  
***Children under the age of 18 will not be employed in hazardous work;***
- Promote compliance with national employment and labor laws that conform the above standards; and
- Comply with national laws, including in paying all taxes and custom duties as required.

***Objective 8: Protect tangible cultural heritage from adverse impacts of UNMIL-supported initiatives; support the preservation of cultural heritage; and promote equitable sharing of benefits from its use.***

a) An UNMIL project must avoid having adverse impacts on critical tangible cultural heritage. UNMIL projects should serve to enhance positive impacts on tangible cultural heritage, in particular through site selection and design.

b) UNMIL-supported projects and operations must be in compliance with relevant national law and the host country's obligations under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage.

c) UNMIL will consult with corresponding governmental authorities, relevant UN entities and CSOs, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders in the identification and protection or management of tangible cultural heritage that could potentially be negatively affected by a UNMIL activity.

d) UNMIL-supported initiatives should result in the enjoyment of cultural rights. They shall consider, where applicable, provision of communications and training on culture, traditions and human rights targeting traditional leaders, community-based organizations, and official institutions, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Information.

***Objective 9: Ensure the integration of gender and human rights perspectives in all UNMIL projects, and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in sustainable development.***

a) UNMIL will not support projects that result in unequal opportunity and treatment between women and men at national, regional and global levels. Where relevant, projects will promote equitable access and distribution of wealth.

b) In the preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects it supports, UNMIL will assess for potential differences in roles, benefits, impacts and risks for women, integrate gender perspectives, and aim for positive gender outcomes. Therefore, project proposals must demonstrate how women's specific needs are taken into account throughout the project's lifecycle.

c) UNMIL-supported projects should ensure promotion, protection and realization of human rights as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other, pertinent international human rights instruments.

d) UNMIL-supported projects and initiatives will seek to develop the capacity of "duty-bearers" and "rights-holders" to respectively **meet** their human rights obligations and **claim** their rights. UNMIL-supported projects and initiatives will serve to support accountability to the affected populations.