



UNOPS policy for sustainable infrastructure



With this policy, UNOPS is aligning itself with the UN-wide effort to create a sustainable future.

In our role as a central resource in the United Nations system for physical infrastructure development, UNOPS is committed to ensuring that the rights and living conditions of people are enhanced by the design and implementation of infrastructure projects in their communities.

This policy incorporates social and economic development and environmental protection into the design and implementation of all UNOPS infrastructure activities. Our project teams are required to consider gender, decent work, health and safety, accessibility for people with disabilities, the protection of cultural and environmental heritage and much more, both before and during project implementation. In this manner, UNOPS seeks to maximize positive outcomes for those impacted by infrastructure development and eliminate or mitigate any negative impacts.

This policy reflects UNOPS commitment to ensuring that all of our work attains the highest possible international standards of quality for partners.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Mattsson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Jan Mattsson
UNOPS Executive Director
Rio de Janeiro, June 2012
Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Contents

Introduction	1
Purpose	1
Standards for sustainable development	2
I. Human Rights	3
A. Public health, safety and security	4
B. Gender equality and the empowerment of women	5
C. Persons with disabilities	6
D. Indigenous peoples	6
E. Cultural heritage	8
F. Involuntary resettlement and displacement	8
II. Labour and decent work	10
A. Freedom of association	10
B. Forced labour	10
C. Child labour	11
D. Non-discrimination in employment	11
E. Health and safety in employment	12
F. Hours, wages and leave	12
III. The environment	13
A. Pollution prevention	14
B. Sustainable resource use	15
C. Climate change	15
D. Protection of biodiversity and prevention of land degradation	16
E. Environment and disaster risk reduction	16
IV. Transparency, accountability and anti-corruption	18
Glossary of terms	20
Endnotes	23

Introduction

“The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.”¹

United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development

“For the UN, health care, education, housing and the fair administration of justice are not commodities for sale to the few, but rather rights to which all are entitled without discrimination. And anything we do in the name of development should be designed to advance these rights, and at the very least, should do nothing to undermine their realization.”

Navanethem Pillay

*United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Presentation to the UN Chief Executives Board, Fall 2011*

1. The General Assembly has reaffirmed UNOPS role as a central resource in the United Nations system for physical infrastructure development.² As such, UNOPS is committed to ensuring that the design and implementation of infrastructure projects do not add to the burden faced by poor and vulnerable individuals and communities or contribute to the destruction of the environment, but that these activities instead provide opportunities for the recognition and enhancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the protection of the environment.
2. The World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 resulted in a renewed commitment to sustainable development and a pledge to build “a humane, equitable and caring global society, cognizant of the need for human dignity for all.”³ In 2010, the General Assembly reaffirmed that “sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects is a key element of the overarching framework for United Nations activities” and, in this regard, there is a “continuing need to ensure a balance among economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development.”⁴
3. Fulfilling the right to development requires a participatory process in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully achieved. This includes the right to a continuous improvement of living conditions. Infrastructure projects foster development, improving the living conditions of individuals and communities; however, development activities must not only focus on meeting the needs of the present, but also make certain that the rights and needs of future generations are also protected.

Purpose

4. This policy provides the framework to ensure that the development and living conditions of all segments of society are not put at risk, but enhanced by the design and implementation of infrastructure projects. In particular, it enables the identification of opportunities for sustainable infrastructure activities, while simultaneously facilitating the detection of socially or environmentally detrimental impacts associated with the design, development and implementation of infrastructure projects and the creation of methods to eliminate or mitigate these impacts.
5. In an attempt to achieve a more coherent, effective and efficient approach to system-wide activities, the United Nations Development Group adopted a statement of common understanding on a human rights based approach to development cooperation.⁵ In furtherance of the objectives contained within this statement, this policy incorporates a human rights based approach in UNOPS infrastructure activities, promoting respect for and recognition of the human rights principles and international standards contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

6. UNOPS Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) system supports a sustainability approach and enables UNOPS to meet organizational objectives.⁶ ERM requires the implementation of an organization-wide risk management process, establishes risk management responsibilities and provides a coherent methodology for its implementation. In line with UNOPS ERM system, this policy outlines, in broad terms, the social and environmental risks involved in the design and implementation of infrastructure projects and clarifies the necessity of monitoring risks and impacts throughout the project cycle.
7. Furthermore, UNOPS acknowledges that infrastructure projects, due to their nature and complexity, can present a high risk to the rights and living conditions of individuals and communities. This policy seeks to assist in the management of these risks.
8. Finally, this policy helps UNOPS better fulfil its mandate as a central resource for the United Nations system on infrastructure and enables UNOPS to serve as a model for sustainable development practice in the design and implementation of infrastructure projects.

Standards for sustainable development

9. Outlined below are a set of standards for sustainable development to be incorporated into UNOPS infrastructure activities. UNOPS will work in collaboration with governments, partners and donors to promote these standards. Due to the nature of UNOPS involvement in the design and implementation of infrastructure activities, not all standards included within this policy will be applicable in every project. There are four core subject areas that must be considered in the achievement of sustainable development practice:
 1. Human rights
 2. Labour and decent work
 3. The environment
 4. Transparency, accountability and anti-corruption

Each of these core areas include a series of specific issues to be contemplated in the design and implementation of infrastructure projects. Incorporating these standards into the project management structure will not only result in greater positive impacts for the communities in which UNOPS operates and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, but also result in significantly higher overall project success rates.⁷

I. Human rights

Introduction

10. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are derived from the dignity and worth inherent in all human beings by virtue of being human. All human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent⁸ and, in this regard, an individual may not consent to the contravention of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
11. Because of the inherent complexity and variability of infrastructure projects, human rights issues are both positively and negatively implicated in their design and implementation. As a member of the United Nations system, UNOPS is responsible for upholding the values contained in the United Nations Charter, including the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all human beings. Moreover, incorporating human rights concerns into the development framework will not only fulfil UNOPS obligations as a United Nations entity, but contribute to the viability and sustainability of all UNOPS infrastructure projects.
12. Respect for the principle of non-discrimination is a cross-cutting issue that should be considered in all aspects of the design, development and implementation of UNOPS infrastructure activities. The right to freedom from discrimination is enshrined in both the United Nations Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights, in addition to many other international human rights instruments. Despite significant progress in respect for this principle, discrimination remains a pervasive problem. Discrimination affects individuals and communities in all spheres of society; including in access to politics, education, employment, social and medical services, housing, law enforcement and the administration of justice.⁹
13. The term discrimination applies to any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on internationally recognized impermissible grounds which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁰ The following is a non-exhaustive list of impermissible grounds: race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, age, ethnicity, caste, disability, organizational membership, health status, sexual orientation or marital status.
14. The right to development¹¹ includes within its scope the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to the continuous improvement of living conditions, as provided for in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).¹² The right to an adequate standard of living is directly implicated by the development of infrastructure, whereas effective infrastructure is a pre-condition to economic development.

Objectives

15. UNOPS endeavours in all its projects to create an environment of respect for the core human rights instruments, including: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;¹³ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;¹⁴ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;¹⁵ the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination;¹⁶ the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women;¹⁷ the Convention Against Torture;¹⁸ the Convention on the Rights of the Child;¹⁹ the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;²⁰ the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;²¹ the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,²² the Stockholm Declaration²³ and The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (the 'Rio Declaration').²⁴ In addition, UNOPS will encourage respect for the principles and standards contained in the UN Global Compact and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 26000 on social responsibility through its engagement with companies and organizations.
16. In addition, UNOPS acknowledges the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces (HRDDP).²⁵ The policy prohibits the provision of support to non-UN security forces where there are "*substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of the receiving entities committing grave violations of international humanitarian, human rights or refugee law.*" Respect for these human rights instruments will ensure that UNOPS infrastructure activities contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

17. UNOPS strives to design and implement infrastructure projects in a manner that promotes full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all people, and with particular consideration for vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups and their environment. In particular, UNOPS will ensure respect for the principle of non-discrimination in all infrastructure activities within its sphere of influence.
18. The Declaration on the Right to Development proclaims that the *“human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development.”*²⁶ In this respect, UNOPS endeavours to make certain that local communities, paying particular attention to those that are particularly vulnerable and marginalized, are able to achieve meaningful participation in projects that affect their rights.
19. Furthermore, UNOPS activities aim to prevent, mitigate or remedy adverse impacts on individuals, communities, and their environment resulting from the design and implementation of infrastructure projects and identify opportunities for positive impacts on individuals and communities and their environment in all UNOPS infrastructure activities.

A. Public health, safety and security

20. Infrastructure projects, by their nature, can give rise to significant impacts on the health, safety and security of local communities and individuals and their environment. The design and implementation of these projects creates a distinct potential for social and economic benefits, but also a considerable risk for harm. In particular, UNOPS activities in conflict and post-conflict areas or in areas at risk of natural disaster require a more detailed assessment and identification of related risks.
21. Impacts on the health, safety and security of affected communities may occur in the areas of environment and resources, land, transport, construction site security, structural defects, release of hazardous materials and security arrangements. Insufficient safeguards in these areas may adversely affect the ability of local communities to enjoy fundamental human rights.

Scope

22. In cooperation with partners and third parties, UNOPS endeavours to design and implement infrastructure projects in a manner that prevents or, where this is not possible, mitigates adverse affects to the health, safety and security of affected individuals and communities and their environment. Of equal importance, UNOPS seeks to identify opportunities for the improvement of the health, environment,²⁷ safety and security of those impacted by infrastructure activities.
23. When it is necessary to incorporate security arrangements into project activities, UNOPS attempts to ensure that all security members, including third party contractors, respect national and international principles of human rights, law enforcement and the use of force.
24. UNOPS seeks to ensure that parties responsible for building site safety and security incorporate relevant mechanisms to protect the public health, safety and security of surrounding communities.
25. In situations where UNOPS is involved in emergency response activities, it will identify methods for the protection of the health, safety and security of vulnerable individuals, with consideration for the country context.
26. UNOPS strives to mitigate the exposure or spread of water-borne and vector-borne diseases associated with the design and implementation of infrastructure projects. Furthermore, UNOPS attempts to identify mechanisms to eliminate or minimize existing threats to communities from the exposure or spread of disease.
27. Environmental degradation and climate change pose a threat to the health, safety and security of communities. UNOPS will help partners mitigate the causes and impacts of climate change and overall environmental degradation by designing and implementing low carbon and climate resilient infrastructure.
28. The development of infrastructure improves communication and accessibility to national territory, fosters trade and is a cornerstone of development; however, facilitating accessibility and communication can also lead to increased security risks

for certain segments of the population, including marginalized and vulnerable groups. In this regard, UNOPS will consider the potential security risks of infrastructure development and seek to ensure that these activities do not increase security risks for affected populations.

29. All efforts to identify, prevent or mitigate adverse effects to the health, safety and security of affected individuals and communities and their environment will be conducted with respect for the principle of transparency. In particular, UNOPS encourages the engagement of affected communities in meaningful consultations with regard to their environment, health, safety and security.

B. Gender equality and the empowerment of women

30. Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women confirms the obligation to “ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.”²⁸

31. In recognition of the rights contained in the convention, Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) calls for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The following language clarifies the concepts contained within this goal:

Gender equality describes the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male.

*Empowerment means that people – both women and men – can take control over their lives: set their own agendas, gain skills (or have their own skills and knowledge recognized), increase self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-reliance. It is both a process and an outcome.”*²⁹

32. Approaches to infrastructure that empower women lead to more sustainable projects; in particular, by enhancing productivity and income for families and increasing access to markets, education, skills training and economic opportunities.
33. The failure to integrate a gendered approach in infrastructure activities can create serious adverse social impacts. Infrastructure activities that fail to include a gender perspective contribute to the reinforcement of gender inequality, limit economic empowerment and productivity, as well as access to health, education and other services that result in increased negative impacts on women and girls due to socio-cultural and economic factors.

Scope

34. UNOPS strives to identify the different priorities and needs of women and men in infrastructure use, and recognize opportunities to contribute to the promotion of MDG3 on gender equality and empowerment.
35. UNOPS endeavours to identify areas where project activities may adversely impact the quality of life of women and girls. In this regard, UNOPS will work with partners, governments and contractors to design and implement projects with full respect for the human rights and the dignity of women and girls.
36. UNOPS attempts to include women through meaningful consultation and participation in project development and implementation where their interests are implicated. This will ensure that infrastructure activities adequately reflect their needs, according to the particular context, and that they have access to the benefits and opportunities of project activities.
37. Infrastructure projects have the potential to create job opportunities and training for women, which enable women to reap the economic benefits associated with construction and maintenance projects. In this regard, UNOPS endeavours to encourage the employment of qualified women and ensure appropriate support services for women employed in connection with project activities.

C. Persons with disabilities

38. Approximately 15 percent of the world's population have disabilities.³⁰ Moreover, lower income countries have a higher prevalence of persons with disabilities than higher income countries.³¹ The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was created to *"promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity."*³² The CRPD defines 'persons with disabilities' as individuals *"who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."*³³
39. A significant barrier facing persons with disabilities is inadequate access to buildings, transportation and information.³⁴ These barriers contribute to poorer health outcomes, lower educational achievements, less economic participation, higher rates of poverty, increased dependency and reduced societal participation.³⁵ One method of reducing or eliminating these barriers is by ensuring that building projects and information and communication technology products include adequate access for persons with disabilities.³⁶
40. Employing the concept of 'universal design' is one of the primary methods to guarantee accessibility. This concept, as defined in the CRPD, stems from the need to provide accessibility measures to persons with disabilities; however, universal design includes benefits for society as a whole, including the elderly, people with strollers and children. Employing universal design enhances access to services and economic opportunities and promotes the inclusion of those who have been traditionally marginalized due to their functional limitations.³⁷

Scope

41. This provision is implicated when a project directly or indirectly affects the rights of persons with disabilities. The CRPD requires that *"persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications [...] and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and rural areas."*³⁸ In this regard, UNOPS undertakes to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility, when possible, with respect to the following: (1) buildings, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces; and (2) information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.
42. UNOPS implements infrastructure projects in conflict and post-conflict countries, including in support of Mine Action. In this context, there may be large segments of the population that face limited mobility as a result of injuries, making due diligence efforts to incorporate accessibility measures into the design and construction of buildings of critical importance.
43. UNOPS seeks to ensure that roads, premises and facilities are designed and built with consideration for universal design standards and that these standards are integrated into the project cycle.
44. UNOPS endeavours to advise partners of possible concerns and technical alternatives to mitigate or avoid negative impacts on the rights of persons with disabilities. In cooperation with partners UNOPS endeavours to include full accessibility as a requirement for projects. Finally, UNOPS will take into consideration accessibility in monitoring and evaluating works.

D. Indigenous peoples

45. According to Article 33 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, self-identification is the fundamental criterion by which indigenous peoples define themselves.³⁹ However, this does not negate the fact that a working definition is useful in addressing the rights of indigenous peoples in the context of sustainable development. The Martínez Cobo Study on discrimination against indigenous peoples provides a widely used working definition:

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 in 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 systems.*⁴⁰

46. Indigenous peoples maintain distinct identities from dominant societal groups and often encompass some of the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population. This marginalization often prevents indigenous peoples from exercising their rights and defending their interests, leading to the loss of identity, culture and resource-based livelihoods, as well as exposure to poverty and disease. Furthermore, women and girls face distinct issues with respect to the gender dynamics in their individual communities, as well as the dominant society in general; for example, under-representation in the public domain, non-recognition of the right of inheritance of land and other parental properties and wealth, insufficient access to education, poor health, poor earning potential and inadequate information regarding their rights and privileges.⁴¹
47. The General Assembly recognizes the need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples, which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies; especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources.⁴² Article 3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, which includes the right to “freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”⁴³ Furthermore, Article 23 provides that indigenous peoples have “the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development.”⁴⁴ This includes “the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.”⁴⁵ Indigenous peoples have the right to development, and therefore, the right to participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development that may affect them.
48. Infrastructure projects require particular consideration in that they have the potential to increase the vulnerability of indigenous peoples by transforming, encroaching on or degrading their lands and resources. However, affording sufficient consideration to the ways in which a particular project will impact indigenous peoples can provide them with the opportunity to participate in and benefit from project-related activities, in recognition of their right to economic, social and cultural development.

Scope

49. The application of this section and relevant protections must be considered where a project directly or indirectly affects the dignity, human rights, livelihood systems, or culture of indigenous peoples or affects the territories or natural or cultural resources that indigenous peoples own, use, occupy, or claim as an ancestral domain or asset.⁴⁶
50. UNOPS strives to design and implement infrastructure projects in a manner that encourages full respect for the human rights, inherent dignity, livelihood systems and cultural identity of indigenous peoples.
51. UNOPS undertakes to participate in project development in collaboration with partners. In this context, when relevant, UNOPS will encourage partners to conduct a comprehensive pre-project assessment to identify culturally appropriate socially and economically sustainable development opportunities for indigenous peoples in the infrastructure context. Furthermore, the identification of negative impacts on indigenous peoples and the establishment of methods for avoidance or mitigation of these impacts will be addressed during this assessment.
52. In consultation with partners, UNOPS will encourage the engagement of affected indigenous peoples in a constructive and meaningful dialogue when their interests are affected by the design and implementation of infrastructure projects. Where partners have already carried out consultations with affected communities, UNOPS will consider the results from these consultations in the context of project activities. Meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples is of particular importance where projects adversely affect land and resources under traditional ownership or customary use.⁴⁷ Furthermore, consultations should ensure effective participation by women, taking into consideration their interests and the specific impacts infrastructure may have on their rights.

53. In the course of interactions with affected indigenous peoples, UNOPS seeks to achieve prior and informed consultation, which is free from intimidation or coercion, includes the provision of project information relevant to their interests, and is conducted with appropriate respect for the decision making process employed by the indigenous peoples concerned. This fosters a better understanding of the threats and opportunities of project activities on communities and prevents conflict in the long term.

E. Cultural heritage

54. Cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, is a valuable source of information and cultural diversity and identity for the whole of humanity. In this regard, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention)⁴⁸ and the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage (CSIH)⁴⁹ emphasize the importance of preserving this unique and irreplaceable property. The process of globalization and social transformation are threatening to deteriorate and destroy the world's cultural heritage and it is crucial to recognize the role that communities, specifically indigenous communities, maintain in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of cultural heritage.⁵⁰
55. The protection of cultural heritage and the rights of indigenous peoples are overlapping principles. In this regard, Article 13 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides that indigenous peoples *"have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons."*⁵¹
56. The considerable value of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, to both indigenous peoples and to society as a whole, necessitates its protection as a critical component of achieving sustainable development objectives. According to Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention, tangible cultural heritage includes monuments, groups of buildings and sites which are of outstanding universal value from a historical, aesthetic, ethnological, anthropological or scientific point of view.⁵² Article 2 defines intangible cultural heritage as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills - including related instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.⁵³

Scope

57. UNOPS strives to safeguard and ensure respect for the cultural heritage of communities, groups and individuals affected by infrastructure activities and to prevent any adverse impact on cultural heritage as a result of these activities.
58. In an attempt to safeguard cultural heritage, UNOPS promotes the completion of pre-project assessments, in collaboration with partners, governments and contractors, to identify project impacts on both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Where adverse impacts are identified at the onset of a project, UNOPS seeks to ensure appropriate respect for and protection of identified cultural heritage. Where no adverse impacts are identified during the pre-assessment, but subsequently discovered during the implementation phase of the project, UNOPS will attempt to ensure protection and respect for identified cultural heritage.

F. Involuntary resettlement and displacement

59. The involuntary resettlement and displacement of individuals and communities results in significant social and economic impacts on society as a whole. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights establish the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing; furthermore, these instruments provide that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their property, nor deprived of their own means of subsistence.⁵⁴
60. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the displacement of a population is the *"forced movement of people from their locality or environment and occupational activities."*⁵⁵ When displacement occurs as a consequence of development, it may take the form of (1) *physical displacement*, for example, through relocation, loss of residential land, or loss of shelter, or (2) *economic displacement*, which may result in a loss of land, assets, access to assets, income sources or means of livelihoods.⁵⁶ Both physical and economic displacement may result from the involuntary

acquisition of land or involuntary restrictions on land use or on access to legally designated parks and protected areas.⁵⁷ Displaced populations frequently become impoverished, leading to negative effects on development.

61. The development of infrastructure projects is often in the best interest of society as a whole; however, these development activities may incur significant negative impacts for certain segments of the population. Inadequate attention to issues of displacement and involuntary resettlement of populations during the design and implementation of projects will have significant social and economic costs for development.

Scope

62. UNOPS seeks to avoid involuntary resettlement wherever possible as a result of project activities and, where this is not possible, to minimize involuntary resettlement by exploring project site and design alternatives.⁵⁸
63. In cases involving the involuntary resettlement of a population as a result of project activities, UNOPS will promote the restoration of livelihoods of displaced individuals. In this regard, UNOPS encourages partners to accord appropriate respect for the property rights of displaced individuals and the inclusion of adequate mechanisms of compensation, in addition to examining ways to improve the living standards of displaced persons and other particularly vulnerable groups.⁵⁹
64. This provision is applicable to the design and implementation of infrastructure projects that result in physical or economic displacement. Displacement may be full or partial, permanent or temporary. Furthermore, UNOPS encourages the appropriate consideration of situations involving informal systems of ownership, which may be relevant when dealing with indigenous peoples and other non-dominant social groups.
65. UNOPS encourages meaningful consultations with affected individuals and communities, with full respect for their human rights and inherent dignity.

II. Labour and decent work

Introduction

66. Sound labour practices are critical to the efficiency and sustainability of any organization. Respect for the rights of workers reduces risks and provides opportunities to support communities and encourages good business practice. At a minimum, UNOPS infrastructure projects should respect the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (June 1998).⁶⁰ These principles include:
1. Freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining⁶¹
 2. Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour⁶²
 3. Abolition of child labour⁶³
 4. Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation⁶⁴
67. In addition to the above fundamental principles, international legal principles call for the protection of the health, safety and security of workers and respect for the right to just and favourable remuneration and reasonable working hours.⁶⁵
68. At the 2005 World Summit, the General Assembly resolved to make full and productive employment and decent work a central objective of national development strategies and international and national policies;⁶⁶ therefore, all members of the United Nations system have been called on to mainstream employment and decent work into all policies, programmes and activities.⁶⁷ In furtherance of these goals, the ILO developed a Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work, which defines decent work as *"productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity."*⁶⁸

Objectives

69. UNOPS endeavours to promote just and favourable conditions of work, fair treatment, non-discrimination and equal opportunity in association with all UNOPS infrastructure activities.
70. UNOPS strives to ensure respect for national labour laws, and, when national laws are insufficient to support the requirements contained within this provision, encourage the implementation of measures to guarantee respect for the rights of individuals employed in connection with the design and implementation of infrastructure projects.

A. Freedom of association

71. The principle of freedom of association is enshrined in numerous fundamental human rights instruments.⁶⁹ These instruments reinforce the principle that workers must be allowed to form and join worker organizations of their own choice and that these organizations should be permitted to function independently, and with reasonable access to information and resources. Collective bargaining is a means of ensuring adequate respect for the right to freedom of association. Moreover, effective collective bargaining practices allow employers and workers to negotiate for a fair employment relationship and decrease the risk of expensive labour disputes.

Scope

72. This provision applies to contractors retained by UNOPS in connection with infrastructure project activities. UNOPS requires that contractors warrant that all personnel or any other staff involved in UNOPS contracted project activities comply with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including the right to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

B. Forced labour

73. Forced labour is a widespread international problem that not only constitutes a serious human rights violation, but also inhibits economic development.⁷⁰ The use of forced or compulsory labour, which is defined as any work or service which is exacted

from any person involuntarily and under threat of penalty, is prohibited under international law.⁷¹ Due to the complexity and geographical diversity of UNOPS infrastructure projects, the issue of forced or compulsory labour is particularly relevant. According to the International Labour Organization, there are an estimated 12.3 million victims of forced labour throughout the world, including individuals who are victims of human trafficking, bonded workers, forced to work by state or rebel military groups and victims of traditional slavery.⁷²

Scope

74. Forced or compulsory labour is prohibited in all forms and UNOPS has a responsibility to ensure that infrastructure activities do not contribute to these exploitative practices. Furthermore, UNOPS will strive to ensure that contractors retained by UNOPS do not utilize forced or compulsory labour. In particular, UNOPS will suspend and blacklist contractors when there is reasonable evidence indicating that they utilize forced labour.
75. UNOPS should maintain a particular focus with regard to marginalized and vulnerable populations; for example, migrant workers, who are traditionally more susceptible to abusive labour practices.

C. Child labour

76. The use of child labour constitutes a violation of human rights, which can not only lead to serious physical and emotional damage to children, but is linked to poverty and the slow economic growth and social development of communities.⁷³ The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which has been ratified by 193 countries, recognizes *“the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”*⁷⁴
77. The International Labour Organization provides relevant guidance on international labour laws on child labour. For example, the minimum age for employment is 15 for full-time employment and 13-15 for light work, which does not interfere with the child’s education or harm their health or development.⁷⁵ In the case of countries where the economy and educational system are insufficiently developed, the age of full-time employment may be reduced to 14 and 12-14 for light work that complies with the same requirements enumerated above.⁷⁶ It is further prohibited to employ children under the age of 18 for particularly harmful forms of labour, including work which by its nature is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.⁷⁷

Scope

78. UNOPS strives to support the elimination of all forms of child labour. Where this is not possible, the international standards outlined above, and those contained in the ILO conventions on child labour, establish the minimum requirements for consideration in the employment of minors.
79. UNOPS requires that contractors retained in conjunction with UNOPS infrastructure activities warrant that they do not engage in practices which are inconsistent with Article 32 of the CRC.⁷⁸
80. UNOPS seeks to ensure appropriate consideration for methods of validating age and the impact of employment on the ability of school-age children to participate in education.

D. Non-discrimination in employment

81. Freedom from discrimination is a fundamental human right; the respect of which is critical for ensuring that workers have the freedom to choose their employment and develop their full economic potential. Furthermore, all individuals have the right to equal conditions, benefits and entitlements without discrimination. The term ‘discrimination’ applies to any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on internationally-recognized impermissible grounds which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁷⁹ The following categories are impermissible grounds for discrimination: race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, age, ethnicity, caste, disability, organizational membership, health status, sexual orientation or marital status.

82. Respect for the principle of non-discrimination in the employment context provides significant social and economic benefits, including greater social stability for all segments of the population and increased public support for economic development.⁸⁰

Scope

83. This provision applies to the employment of individuals in connection with all infrastructure project activities. When national law does not provide sufficient guarantees against discrimination in employment, UNOPS endeavours to promote respect for the principle of non-discrimination, in cooperation with partners and third parties, and in full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals involved in project activities.

E. Health and safety in employment

84. The right to safe and healthy working conditions is a fundamental human right.⁸¹ It is estimated that approximately four percent of the world's GDP is lost because of work related accidents and diseases.⁸² Protecting the health and safety of all workers is crucial to the success of infrastructure projects and the implementation of effective policies and procedures for the identification and prevention of workplace health and safety hazards will facilitate this success.

Scope

85. UNOPS strives to maintain the highest health and safety standards for employment in the context of infrastructure projects, including reasonable measures to ensure that third parties employ appropriate health and safety protections in connection with project activities.⁸³ This requires ensuring that employees are provided with adequate protective equipment and receive sufficient training for the work they undertake, in particular in connection to dangerous processes or substances.
86. Furthermore, a safe work environment includes a workplace free from harassment, assault, threats and intimidation. In this regard, UNOPS encourages the inclusion of employment policies to address these issues, as well as fair and transparent grievance procedures in the context of project activities, in coordination with partners and third parties.

F. Hours, wages and leave

87. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that all people have the right to rest and leisure, including a reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.⁸⁴ In addition, the right to just and favourable remuneration, in full respect for human dignity, is also guaranteed by the Declaration.⁸⁵
88. International labour standards set a limit of 48 hours per week for commercial and industrial work, with a daily maximum of 10 and 8 hours respectively.⁸⁶ In circumstances involving industrial work to be conducted on a continual basis, the maximum hours per week is increased to 56 hours.
89. In addition, the ILO Convention on Holidays with Pay requires that employees should be guaranteed no less than three weeks of paid holiday per year. Regarding the employment of women, the ILO Maternity Protection Convention establishes a minimum of 14 weeks paid maternity leave.⁸⁷
90. The ILO Minimum Wage Convention establishes the requirement for the creation of a minimum wage and outlines a series of factors to consider in this regard, including the needs of workers and families, the general level of wages in the national context, the cost of living, social security benefits and living standards of other social groups, the requirements of economic development, the levels of productivity and the desirability of attaining and maintain a high level of employment.⁸⁸

Scope

91. UNOPS strives to ensure that all infrastructure project activities comply with relevant standards on hours, wages and leave. Where national standards are contrary to workers' rights, UNOPS encourages respect for international standards, in cooperation with partners and third parties.

III. The environment

Introduction

92. The fact that the protection of the environment is closely linked with justice and the protection of human rights and dignity is reflected in the Stockholm Declaration, which proclaims: *“Both aspects of man’s environment, the natural and the man-made, are essential to his well-being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights the right to life itself.”*⁸⁹ While international instruments do not directly recognize a human right to the environment, international practice acknowledges that the protection of the environment is a pre-condition to ensure respect for human rights and the right to development.⁹⁰ In this regard, many states have incorporated the right to a healthy environment into their national laws.
93. The protection of the environment and the balance between individual rights and sustainable development has a direct impact on the right to health, the right to property and access to justice.⁹¹ Furthermore, the recognition of these rights requires that individuals have access to information and participatory measures when project activities impact their environment.⁹² In particular, climate change, the degradation of the environment, loss of natural resources and ecological disasters disproportionately affect poor and marginalized communities who have limited mechanisms to manage these problems. Failure to address these concerns seriously hinders the achievement of sustainable development and frequently results in a lack of respect for the rule of law.
94. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (the Rio Declaration) recognizes the right of all human beings to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.⁹³ The declaration further explains that development activities must be conducted in a manner that equitably fulfils the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.⁹⁴ Satisfying these principles has proven difficult in light of increasing environmental challenges, not limited to the depletion of natural resources, pollution, climate change, destruction of habitats, loss of species, the collapse of whole ecosystems and the degradation of urban and rural human settlements.⁹⁵ In this regard, the Rio Declaration views environmental protection as an integral part of the development process in the achievement of sustainable development.⁹⁶
95. At its most basic level, protection of the environment necessitates protecting access to vital ecosystem products such as food and clean water, and ecosystem services such as flood control for individuals and communities. The United Nations General Assembly recognizes *“the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.”*⁹⁷ Furthermore, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has recognized the right to water, which requires that all people have *“sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses”* whereas *“water is necessary to prevent death from dehydration, to reduce the risk of water-related disease and to provide for consumption, cooking, personal and domestic hygienic requirements.”*⁹⁸ Efforts to address this right are incorporated in MDG 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability) through the key target of halving the proportion of the population without access to clean drinking water and sanitation.
96. Infrastructure development plays a key role in achieving environmentally sustainable development and protecting the rights of individuals and communities. Poor design and implementation of infrastructure projects may contribute to increased levels of pollution, poor air-quality, excessive resource consumption, climate change, socio-economic inequality, loss of bio-diversity and waste.⁹⁹ However, incorporating appropriate safeguards into project design and implementation can avoid or minimize adverse impacts on the environment and contribute to the protection of the global climate for present and future generations.

Objectives

97. UNOPS endeavours to design and implement infrastructure projects in a manner that respects the principle of environmental responsibility and sustainability, including preventing or mitigating adverse impacts on the environment and identifying strategies for improved environmental performance. UNOPS Strategic Plan 2010-2013 includes environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change as one of the four high-level contribution goals for the organization during this period, necessitating emphasis on environmental sustainability in all UNOPS infrastructure activities. In this sense, UNOPS is continually developing sustainable design practices, implementing environmental management plans and incorporating environmental reviews throughout the life cycle of infrastructure projects to mitigate impacts and foster benefits.

98. UNOPS seeks to ensure respect for the precautionary approach outlined in the Rio Declaration, which provides that where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage to the environment, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.¹⁰⁰
99. UNOPS strives to respect the ‘polluter pays’ principle in all infrastructure activities, as recognized in the Rio Declaration, which provides that the polluter should bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.¹⁰¹
100. In efforts to comply with the General Assembly’s resolution, recognizing the right to water, UNOPS seeks to develop mechanisms to ensure sufficient recognition and protection of the right to water, wherever implicated by the design and implementation of infrastructure projects. The right to water includes the following freedoms and entitlements:
- protection against arbitrary and illegal disconnections
 - prohibition of unlawful pollution of water resources
 - non-discrimination in access to safe drinking water and sanitation, notably on the basis of land or housing status
 - non-interference with access to existing water supplies, especially to traditional water sources
 - ensuring that personal security is not threatened when accessing water or sanitation outside the home
 - access to a minimum amount of safe drinking water to sustain life and health
 - access to safe drinking water and sanitation in detention
 - participation in water- and sanitation-related decision-making at the national and community levels.¹⁰²
101. UNOPS recognizes the nexus between environmental sustainability, infrastructure and community participation and seeks to encourage community involvement in related programming activities, wherever possible, and in collaboration with partners and third parties.
102. Environmental concerns will be further mainstreamed into all UNOPS infrastructure activities. In this regard, environmental and social considerations will be more systematically integrated into the project life cycle wherever possible, including, for example, through the incorporation of environmental and social assessments and environmental management plans.

A. Pollution prevention

103. The elimination of activities resulting in environmental pollution is crucial to the protection of human health and the achievement of sustainable development objectives. There are several aspects for consideration with regard to the prevention of pollution in UNOPS infrastructure projects, including: the contamination of air and water sources; the generation and disposal of waste materials; the management and use of hazardous materials; the life cycle impact of materials used in construction; and other forms of pollution, including noise, odour, light and vibrations. Waste will be managed in a manner consistent with the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes,¹⁰³ The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer¹⁰⁴ and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.¹⁰⁵

Scope

104. UNOPS strives to prevent the release of hazardous materials into the local environment in association with project activities. This provision also applies where hazardous materials are part of existing infrastructure.
105. UNOPS endeavours to make certain that waste produced by project activities is managed and disposed of in the most sustainable manner, considering the local context and facilities. This includes adequate measure for the storage, disposal, treatment and transport of toxic and hazardous waste.
106. Particular attention is paid to avoid pollution of surface and ground water, both during the design and implementation phase of project activities, and in the long-term operation of the infrastructure in question.

107. UNOPS seeks to ensure consideration of the life cycle impacts of materials used in construction activities; for example, the processes used in the creation of materials, the environmental impacts of materials during their use, and the reuse, recycling or disposal of the materials when they are no longer useful.
108. In the case of infrastructure projects that threaten the health, safety or security of the local community, UNOPS attempts to ensure that appropriate safeguards are incorporated into project design and implementation to prevent or, where necessary, mitigate these risks.

B. Sustainable resource use

109. The depletion and degradation of the world's natural resources is a growing concern. The sustainable use and management of natural resources is essential to ensure availability for future generations. Sustainable resource use should be incorporated into UNOPS infrastructure projects, at a minimum, within the following areas: energy efficiency; water conservation and availability; efficient use of materials; reducing resource requirements; and conserving ecosystems functions.¹⁰⁶

Scope

110. UNOPS endeavours to support sustainable resource use in the context of all infrastructure activities. In this regard, UNOPS seeks to identify measures to improve resource efficiency by reducing energy and water use, using sustainable, renewable and low-impact resources instead of non-renewable resources wherever possible and with respect for the local context, and identifying methods of reusing or recycling resources used in project activities.
111. When project activities reveal the potential for significant impacts on the natural resources utilized by local communities, UNOPS endeavours to take reasonable steps to avoid or mitigate these effects, in collaboration with partners and third parties.

C. Climate change

112. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change expresses concern that human activities are significantly increasing the atmospheric levels of greenhouse gasses (GHG), resulting in adverse affects on the ecosystem and humankind.¹⁰⁷ While the full impact of climate change is still unclear, it is becoming increasingly evident that the world's poor and marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by increases in natural disasters, changing disease patterns, severe droughts and deteriorating tropical forests.
113. Considering that buildings are responsible for more than one third of the total energy use and GHG emissions in society, infrastructure activities have the potential to create a significant impact on the reduction of these emissions.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, designing infrastructure that is resilient to the effects of climate change will support efforts to protect the world's most vulnerable nations and communities.

Scope

114. UNOPS recognizes the nexus between climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts and infrastructure and communities and, on behalf of its partners, UNOPS helps implement climate change adaptation and mitigation activities. In this regard, UNOPS strives to design infrastructure projects to withstand climate change impacts, including more frequent and severe floods, droughts, storms and sea-level rise. The use of green design concepts, renewable energy and natural cooling and heating designs will also be incorporated into infrastructure design to reduce harmful emissions. Special attention should be paid to synergies between adaptation and mitigation measures, ensuring that infrastructure is both low carbon and climate-resilient.
115. The participation of communities in efforts to address climate change mitigation and adaptation is crucial to ensure the sustainability of these activities. Therefore, UNOPS seeks to encourage community involvement in related infrastructure development activities.

D. Protection of biodiversity and prevention of land degradation

116. Biological diversity is “the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.”¹⁰⁹ The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognizes the importance of biological diversity for maintaining life sustaining systems of the biosphere and that the conservation of biological diversity is a concern of society as a whole.¹¹⁰ The CBD recognizes the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities on biological resources. Furthermore, it expresses concern that biological diversity is being significantly reduced as a result of certain human activities and emphasizes the necessity of anticipating, preventing and attacking the causes of this reduction or loss.¹¹¹
117. Threats to biological diversity are increased by infrastructure projects that impact local flora and fauna or result in degradation of the environment; for example, in the case of harvesting raw materials, deforestation, draining marshes, swamps or lakes or emissions of hazardous substances into sensitive ecosystems.¹¹²
118. Infrastructure and rural access projects in dry-land areas often generate positive social impacts on local communities, because these are often remote and poor regions. However, infrastructure projects may exacerbate land degradation, soil erosion and desertification, harming the life-sustaining resources and livelihoods of local communities, leading to displacement or relocation.
119. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification¹¹³ recognizes that over 250 million people live in areas directly affected by desertification and in most severe cases they endure famine, mass migration and sustained poverty.

Scope

120. In cooperation with partners, UNOPS strives to identify impacts on biodiversity, with particular attention to impacts on indigenous and local communities that are dependent on these resources, and to prevent, minimize and remedy adverse impacts, while recognizing opportunities for the protection, promotion and recovery of biodiversity.
121. In cooperation with partners, UNOPS endeavours to contribute to the improvement, productivity, rehabilitation, conservation and sustainable management of land in connection with infrastructure activities to reduce the negative human impact associated with these activities. The achievement of these aims is dependent on UNOPS ability to identify areas in which project activities adversely impact the degradation and desertification of land, as well as opportunities for positive development.

E. Environment and disaster risk reduction

122. Disaster risk reduction is a key component of efforts to achieve sustainable development and poverty reduction. In 2005, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action: 2005-2015, which focuses on increasing the resilience of nations and communities to disaster.¹¹⁴ The Hyogo Framework recognizes that disaster risks increase when hazards interact with environmental vulnerabilities.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, the General Assembly endorsed the Hyogo Framework, emphasizing the particularly harsh long-term social and economic consequences of disasters on developing countries, which impede the achievement of sustainable development.¹¹⁶
123. Disasters result in severe environmental impacts, for example, floods, storms and wildfires; however, environmental degradation has the reciprocal effect of increasing the frequency and severity of disasters. This is a vicious circle that leads to increased vulnerability of already economically-disadvantaged communities.
124. Disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue within environmentally sustainable development practice. In particular, the frequency and severity of disasters are directly related to climate change, which causes variations in rainfall, temperature and weather patterns, and also to deforestation and desertification, which can lead to significant changes in rainfall and weather patterns.¹¹⁷ Many alterations in the environment associated with climate change, deforestation and desertification have a direct impact on the increased frequency and consequences of hazards such as droughts, floods, storms and heat waves.¹¹⁸

Scope

125. UNOPS executes a range of crisis and disaster projects related to risk reduction and preparedness, emergency relief, and recovery and reconstruction. UNOPS is committed to exploring ways to decrease the risks associated with disasters for communities in need. UNOPS will make a particular effort to focus efforts on disaster risk reduction in all infrastructure activities.
126. In furtherance of these efforts, UNOPS will seek to incorporate key activities on disaster risk reduction into infrastructure activities as suggested by the Hyogo Framework. For example, implementing environmental and natural resource management approaches that integrate disaster risk reduction, including both structural (e.g. building reinforcement walls to protect against flooding) and non-structural (e.g. training communities on emergency response procedures) measures.¹¹⁹ In addition, tools to identify areas for risk reduction or elimination will be integrated into all infrastructure activities.

IV. Transparency, accountability and anti-corruption

Introduction

127. The Millennium Development Goals identify the eradication of extreme poverty as a target of primary importance; however, the achievement of this goal is often impeded by a culture of corruption, enabled by a lack of transparency and accountability in the development context. In this regard, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development recognizes corruption as a serious threat to sustainable development and pledges to prioritize the fight against this threat.¹²⁰ The severity of threats to security and stability from corrupt practices resulted in the creation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.¹²¹ Article 5 of the convention calls on state parties to implement effective anti-corruption policies that promote the participation of society and reflect the principles of the rule of law, proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency and accountability, in collaboration with international organizations.¹²²
128. Furthermore, the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions addresses the specific corrupt practice of bribery in international business transactions, noting the prevalence of bribery in these forums, which *“raises serious moral and political concerns, undermines good governance and economic development, and distorts international competitive conditions.”*¹²³ This convention calls for the criminalization of private sector attempts to bribe public officials conducting international business transactions.¹²⁴
129. Corrupt practices take many forms, not only the exchange of money, goods or favours. The problem of sexual abuse and exploitation in connection with United Nations humanitarian activities led to the promulgation of the Secretary General’s bulletin on protective measures to be adhered to by all United Nations staff, including the staff of separately administered entities and programmes.¹²⁵ The bulletin includes a set of standards to protect the most vulnerable populations, including women and children. The following standards are of particular relevance:
- a. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal; [...]
 - c. Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance.¹²⁶
130. Subsequently, UNOPS endorsed a joint-statement, recognizing that the above standards are binding on all UN staff and personnel and reaffirming the goal of achieving the full implementation of these standards.¹²⁷
131. Facilitating transparency and accountability in connection with all UNOPS infrastructure projects results in superior quality, decreased costs and increased public trust, as well as combating corruption and promoting sustainable development practice. In particular, implementing effective mechanisms for transparency assists national governments in their efforts to combat corruption and manage aid more effectively, ensuring that all available funds go as far as possible in the fight against poverty. In this regard, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action outline actions to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development and methods for implementation and ensuring transparency and accountability. These commitments were reaffirmed in Busan at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011.¹²⁸
132. The Accra Agenda provided the foundation for the creation of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), of which UNOPS is a signatory, and which recognizes that the *“transparency of aid information promotes more effective partnerships, and accelerates development and poverty reduction by increasing accountability and ownership, reducing corruption, and improving service delivery.”*¹²⁹

Objectives

133. UNOPS endeavours to combat corruption and ensure transparency and accountability in the context of all infrastructure activities, in cooperation with partners and third parties. UNOPS accountability framework provides the mechanisms and processes to ensure accountability and efficient use of resources through timely and thorough reporting on financial and

operational results. Corruption risks vary according to the institutional, political and socio-economic circumstances specific to the geographical locations of UNOPS activities. Therefore, UNOPS seeks to assess corruption threats, determine measures to combat threats and, wherever possible, identifying opportunities for increased transparency and accountability. Implementing effective mechanisms of transparency facilitates national capacity development, in particular by assisting national governments in efforts to combat corruption and increase accountability.

134. The pervasive nature of corruption, and its adverse impact on economic growth, poverty and inequality, as well as its detrimental effect on human rights, in particular, vulnerable and marginalized groups, requires focused consideration in the context of UNOPS infrastructure activities. Furthermore, corruption frequently has negative impacts on the enforcement of environmental regulations, inhibiting environmentally sustainable development practice. Corruption is a cross-cutting issue that spans all geographical locations and focus areas and, in this regard, UNOPS strives to incorporate anti-corruption measures into all project activities, in cooperation with partners and other stakeholders, to ensure that all project funds have the greatest possible development impact.

Scope

135. This section applies to all infrastructure activities carried out by UNOPS, in coordination with partners and third parties, with full respect for the principles of transparency and accountability.
136. Individuals employed by UNOPS will not offer, give, receive or solicit, directly or indirectly, anything of value, to improperly influence the actions of another party.
137. Individuals employed by UNOPS will not engage in the exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sexual activities or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.
138. Where it is established that a UNOPS employee did, in fact, take part in any one of the aforementioned actions, the individual(s) involved will be subject to administrative action or disciplinary measures, which could include summary dismissal.
139. Furthermore, UNOPS strives to ensure that all activities conducted by service providers, contractors and suppliers in connection with UNOPS infrastructure activities do not contribute to corrupt and exploitative practices. In this regard, UNOPS will maintain a list of ineligible firms and individuals, in addition to the United Nations Procurement Division's list, and will refuse bids from firms and individuals included in these lists.

Glossary of terms

Accountability:

Accountability is the obligation of the organization and its staff members to be answerable for delivering specific results that have been determined through a clear and transparent assignment of responsibility, subject to the availability of resources and the constraints posed by external factors. Accountability includes achieving objectives and results in response to mandates, fair and accurate reporting on performance results, stewardship of funds, and all aspects of performance in accordance with regulations, rules and standards, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions.¹³⁰

Climate change:

A change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.¹³¹

Collective bargaining: Applies to all negotiations which take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers' organizations, on the one hand, and one or more workers' organizations, on the other, to: (a) determine working conditions and terms of employment; and/or; (b) regulate relations between employers and workers; and/or; (c) regulate relations between employers or their organizations and a workers' organization or workers' organizations.¹³²

Cultural heritage:

Includes the following:

- Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science.
- Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science.
- Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.¹³³
- The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills – including related instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.¹³⁴

Decent work:

Productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Desertification:

Includes the degradation of land or vegetation, soil erosion and the loss of topsoil and fertile land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.¹³⁵

Disaster risk reduction:

The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.¹³⁶

Discrimination:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on internationally recognized impermissible grounds which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Due diligence:

The process through which enterprises can identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their actual and potential adverse impacts as an integral part of business decision-making and risk management systems. This includes assessing actual and potential human rights impacts, integrating and acting upon the findings, tracking responses as well as communicating how impacts are addressed.¹³⁷

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM):

An organization-wide process of structured, integrated and systematic identification, analysis, evaluation, treatment and monitoring of risks towards the achievement of the organizations objectives.¹³⁸

Environmental degradation:

The reduction of the capacity of the environment to meet social and ecological objectives and needs.¹³⁹

Gender equality: The concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male.

Gender empowerment:

People – both women and men – can take control over their lives: set their own agendas, gain skills (or have their own skills and knowledge recognized), increase self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-reliance. It is both a process and an outcome.¹⁴⁰

Greenhouse gases:

The gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and man-made, that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation.¹⁴¹ These are the six greenhouse gases that form the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), Nitrous oxide (N₂O), Hydro fluorocarbons (HFCs), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs), Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).¹⁴²

Indigenous peoples:

First and foremost, a distinct social and cultural group which self-identifies itself as a distinct indigenous social and cultural group. A broad working definition includes communities, peoples and nations 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 in 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 systems.¹⁴³

Persons with disabilities:

Includes individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.¹⁴⁴

Risk:

The effect of uncertainty on objectives; specifically, the circumstance or consequence that affects the achievement of objectives.¹⁴⁵

Social responsibility: The responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that contributes to sustainable development, including health and welfare of society; takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships.¹⁴⁶

Social sustainability:

When the formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities.

Stakeholder engagement:

The following are elements of effective stakeholder engagement: the clear purpose for the engagement is understood; the stakeholder's interests have been identified; the relationship that these interests establish between the organization and the stakeholder is direct or important; the interests of stakeholders are relevant and significant to sustainable development; stakeholders have the necessary information and understanding to make their decisions.¹⁴⁷

Sustainable development:

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Universal design:

The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.¹⁴⁸

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