



Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal (BRCRN) Project (Environmental and Social Safeguards)

1. What are Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)?

Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) are policies, standards and operational procedures designed to prevent and mitigate undue harm to people and environment in a project implementation process. When designing a project, safeguards will help to assess the possible environmental and social risks and the impacts (positive or negative) associated with a development intervention. They can recommend risk mitigation and management measures. During project implementation, safeguards will help manage and mitigate risks in order to enhance positive impacts. The figure below shows the pillars of ESS.



Figure 1: Pillars of ESS

Source: Adapted from FAO, 2015¹

Addressing environmental and social risks helps projects to meet sustainability goals. To assist, the Government of Nepal has recently formulated The Environment Protection Act 2019 and Environment Protection Rules 2020. This legislation addresses the operation of Initial Environmental Examinations (IEEs) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) and Strategic Environment Assessments (SEAs) have also been added in the new regulations. The mainstreaming of environmental safeguards and sustainability applies to all development projects in Nepal, albeit seeking compliance through documentation rather than engaging communities at ground level.

2. ESS requirements in Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal (BRCRN) project

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO), as the nominated Accredited Entity (AE) for the project, will implement the

BRCRN project, reporting to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and is co-Executing Entity (EE) with the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE) of the Government of Nepal (GoN). The BRCRN project is implemented in 26 critical river systems in the southeast region of Nepal, covering parts of provinces No. 1, Madhesh and Bagmati.



The Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal (BRCRN) project is expected to provide environmental and social benefits. That said, the risks cannot be overlooked, even if potential adverse impacts are expected to be minor and site specific. Therefore, such impacts are identified early during the planning cycle and mitigation measures will be integrated into project planning and implementation. Screening for risks will be undertaken at the sub-activity level and initial potential risks are identified as follows:

1. Changes in land use due to the mainstreaming of climate resilient SNRM (Sustainable Natural Resource Management) practices and promotion of improved livelihood practices could discriminate against poor and marginalized communities due to their dependency on natural resources.
2. There is potential for site-specific impacts due to the establishment of small-scale infrastructure.
3. Women, indigenous peoples, and marginalized minority groups often experience discrimination and additional barriers limiting their participation and engagement in activities.
4. The harvesting of timber and forest management without sufficient protective equipment could lead to personal injuries.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/investment-learning-platform/themes-and-tasks/environmental-social-safeguards/en/>

5. The Adheri Khola, Baruwa Khola and Duar Khola river system slightly overlaps with the Kosi Tappu wildlife reserve. The project will not support interventions within the reserve or its buffer zone.

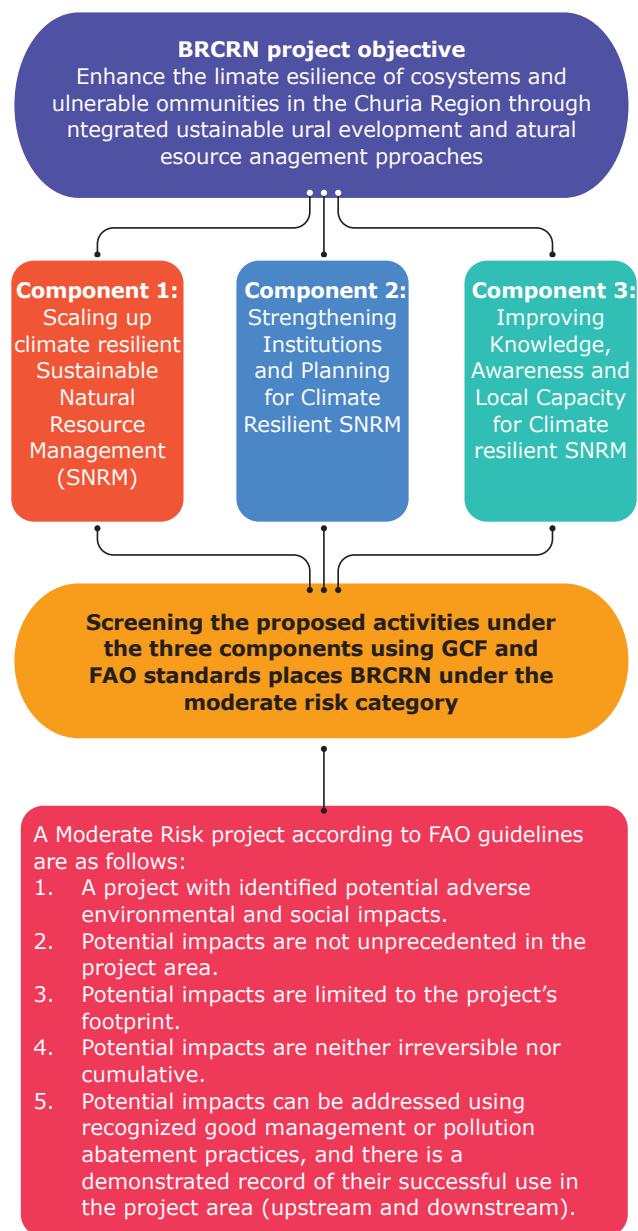


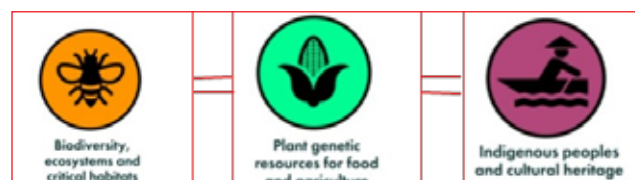
Figure 2: BRCRN components

GCF has provisionally adopted the Performance Standards and directives of implementation of the International Financial Cooperation (IFC). There are eight IFC Performance Standards that include environmental and social considerations when designing and implementing a project. The IFC standards are congruent with FAO's Environmental and Social Standards; nine of these will be followed throughout the project cycle. A list of nine FAO Environmental and Social Standards follows, as applied to the BRCRN project for screening interventions and preparing the environmental and social management plan:



Each activity will be screened using FAO's Environmental and Social Screening Checklist. Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) will be developed including information on risks, mitigation measures, indicators, responsibilities, and with a timeframe where appropriate. The nature, magnitude, reversibility, and location of impacts comprise the screening of sub-activities. During ESMP development, environmental and social monitoring is included in the plan in order to measure the success of the mitigation measures.

3. In BRCRN, Safeguards can be triggered in the following Standards²:



The project will not support interventions within the wildlife reserve or its buffer zone. It will not support land conversion, but instead promote ecosystem restoration. It will promote sustainable land use practices which will generate more environmental benefits than business as usual practices.

Plantations and agroforestry systems will be established using species already used, adapted and grown in the region. Seeds and planting material will not be imported for this project.

Indigenous Peoples comprise 31 percent of the population in the BRCRN project area and 13 percent are socially excluded groups (Dalits). An Indigenous Peoples (IP) and social inclusion planning framework ensures that efforts will be made to respect, include and promote IP issues during project implementation including their right to FPIC.

² Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a specific right that is recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It allows Indigenous Peoples (IP) to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories. Once they have given their consent, they can withdraw it at any stage. Furthermore, FPIC enables IPs to negotiate the conditions under which the project will be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. This is also embedded within the universal right to self-determination (for further information please see: <https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/>)

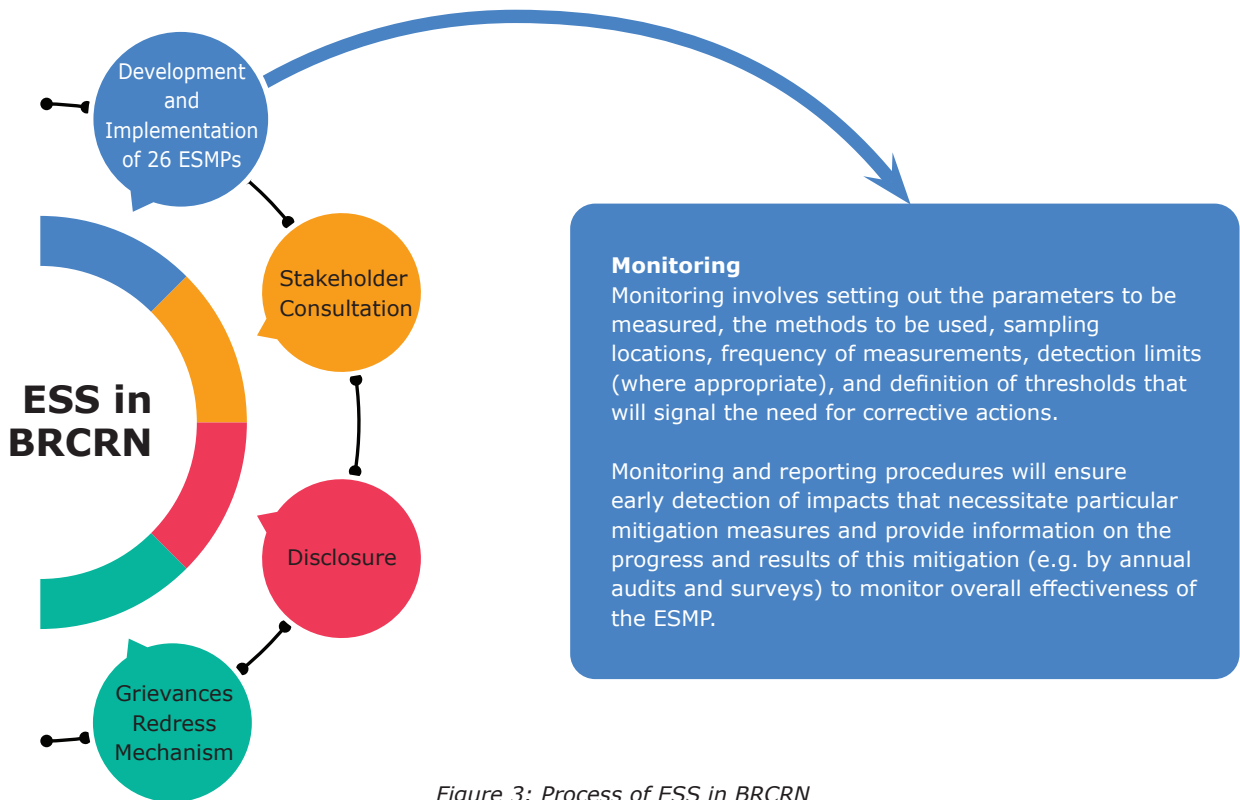


Figure 3: Process of ESS in BRCRN

4. Stakeholder engagement in BRCRN

The implementation of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan is one of the key requirements of the BRCRN project. Stakeholders are defined as actors within the following groups: government, local communities, community-based organizations (CBOs), civil society organizations/NGOs, the private sector, international development cooperation agencies, and international organizations. Consultation will ensure the participation of diverse stakeholders, including women, indigenous peoples, Dalits and other marginalized minority groups.



The BRCRN project has been designed based on extensive consultation with stakeholders at the national, regional, and local level. Regular stakeholder consultation will help to inform stakeholders about project progress, validate findings and present results.

FAO and the Ministry of Forest and Environment (MoFE) will provide regular progress updates on safeguards, project implementation and other issues through their websites and other communication channels including print media, radio, written reports, and presentations. Information will be presented in Nepali, English, and local languages where appropriate. A telephone number will also be available to project beneficiaries and stakeholders so they can make inquiries related to the project, raise concerns, or file a complaint.

At the national level, stakeholders will be invited to participate in Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings, bi-annually. Stakeholders will be invited to maintain permanent representation within the Provincial Project Coordination Committee (PPCC), which will serve as an important platform to disseminate information on project progress, opportunities for coordination and to receive and address feedback from different stakeholders.

Participation in the BRCRN project is voluntary. Whenever engaging with Indigenous Peoples, the project will undertake to obtain appropriate consent (using the principles of FPIC). CBOs representing indigenous communities will be identified, and consultations held to inform them of project activities and how they can be directly involved in the project.

5. Disclosure in BRCRN

The disclosure of relevant project information like Environment and Social Management Plans, Indigenous Peoples Plans and Social Inclusion Management Plans will encourage effective stakeholder participation. FAO will disclose information in a timely manner, that is accessible and culturally appropriate, placing due attention to the specific needs of community groups which may be affected by project implementation.

BRCRN and FAO will have a disclosure plan for all moderate risk projects. For this, a disclosure portal will be established to publicly disclose project documents related to ESS (environmental and social analyses, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, Environmental and Social Management Frameworks, Indigenous Peoples Plans, Social Inclusion Plans and other relevant documents).

Disclosure of project information will have a particular focus on vulnerable groups including women, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, illiterate or technologically illiterate people, people with hearing or visual disabilities, people with limited or no access to the internet and other groups with special needs.

6. Grievances Mechanism in BRCRN

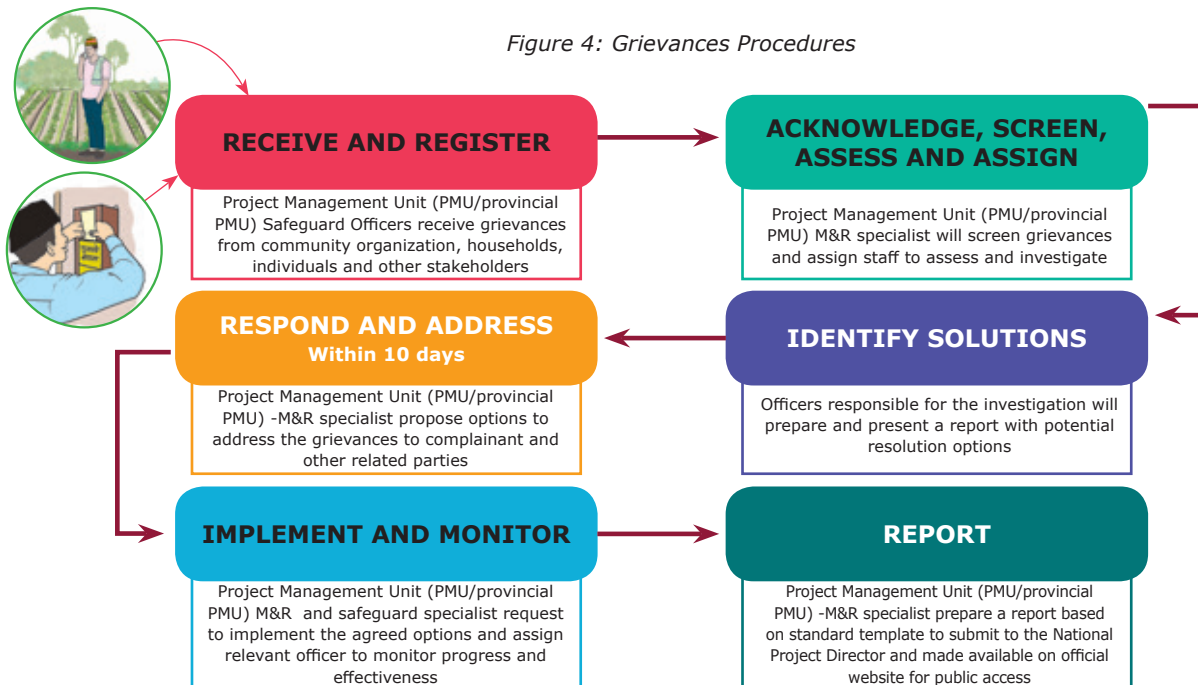
A grievance redress mechanism (GRM) is designed to ensure that no individual or group will be negatively impacted by making a grievance or complaint. GRMs are available for all people. Women, indigenous, and other marginalized groups should have equal access and bear no negative repercussions for filing a complaint or grievance.



The objectives of the GRM are to:

- create a platform in which affected people, stakeholders and community members can freely raise concerns and complaints to be effectively addressed;
- demonstrate to project stakeholders and communities that they play an important role in project design and implementation; and
- follow up and report on efforts to take corrective actions.

The GRM has been designed to address any complaints or grievances to the project. A grievance passes through an internal national process, where most issues are expected to be addressed. Figure 4 below shows the procedures of the GRM. Customary practices of different community, ethnic groups to manage conflict will also be integrated into the formal grievances mechanism.



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forests and Environment
Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal
 Forestry Complex, Babarmahal, Kathmandu
 Tel : 01- 5341487 • email: brcrn.nepal@brcrn.gov.np
 website: www.brcrn.gov.np



**Food and Agriculture
 Organization of the
 United Nations**

FAO Representation in Nepal
 UN House Pulchowk, Lalitpur • PO Box: 25
 Tel: 01-5523239 • email: fao-np@fao.org
 website: <https://www.fao.org/nepal/en/>