

Social Safeguards Policy - DOB Ecology

Introduction

DOB Ecology is committed to protecting and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems while upholding and promoting human rights. We consider any programme to conserve or restore forests or wetlands that neglects the rights, needs, traditional knowledge and practices of local communities and indigenous people to be fundamentally unsustainable. DOB Ecology will only fund programmes that have carefully considered how their interventions will, in addition to delivering tangible nature benefits, do so in such a way that local people benefit from nature conservation. This is part of our integrated approach which sees resilience building of local communities as fundamental to conservation success.

DOB Ecology works through funding programmes carried out by a network of international partners. We recognize that as a funder we have neither direct view nor control in these programmes on any incidents that may occur (alleged or actual) with negative impacts on indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs). To minimize the risk of such incidents occurring we consider it essential that our programme partners have robust policies and practices that ensure the rights and needs of IPLCs are respected and their well-being enhanced.

This Social Safeguards Policy outlines our principles, standards, and procedures to prevent, mitigate, and manage adverse social impacts, including human rights violations, in programmes supported by DOB Ecology.

Scope of application

This policy applies to all programmes DOB Ecology funds that are implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or other partners. We ask and expect all partners to ensure that their staff, sub-grantees, contractors, and associates involved in the execution of the projects are aware of and adhere to this policy.

Core Principles

DOB Ecology adheres to the following principles and requires them to be respected by partners (and their sub-grantees, contractors and associates) in all programmes it funds:

- **Respect for Human Rights:** All partners must respect and promote (internationally recognized) human rights, including the rights of IPLCs, women, minorities, and marginalized groups.
- **Participation and Inclusion:** Beneficiaries and stakeholders must have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in programme decision-making processes.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Partners must avoid discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or other such factors.
- **Do No Harm:** Programmes must be designed and implemented to avoid causing harm to individuals, communities, or the environment.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Partners must ensure clear, transparent communication and accountability mechanisms in programmes.

Standards and Safeguards

Our partners are expected to have appropriate social safeguard policies, procedures and practical measures (e.g. training) in place to ensure that their staff and local partners understand their responsibility to protect and empower IPLCs. We also expect them to have policies in place to protect their own staff against any misconduct or harm.

DOB Ecology expects its partners to have taken notice of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and relevant international conventions, such as the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and the [Conservation Initiative on Human Rights](#).

At organization and programme levels, partners must at least:

- Identify and address potential human rights risks, including land rights violations, forced displacement, labor rights abuses, and discrimination.
- Make special efforts to avoid harm to those who are vulnerable to infringements of their rights and to support the protection and fulfilment of their rights within the scope of their conservation programs.
- Ensure free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from IPLCs for activities that may impact their lands, resources, way of living, traditions or livelihoods.
- Actively promote gender equality and consider the needs and rights of women, children, and other marginalized groups.
- Integrate gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate approaches into programme design, implementation, and monitoring.
- Establish accessible and effective grievance mechanisms for affected individuals and communities to raise concerns, seek redress, and resolve conflicts. Mechanisms must ensure confidentiality, impartiality, and timely resolution.
- Support governance systems that secure the rights of IPLCs in the context of their work on conservation and sustainable natural resource use.
- Publicize their own safeguards policy and procedures in an easily accessible location on their website.

Procedures

DOB Ecology has installed internal procedures to ensure compliance with this policy and remedial action when necessary.

Reporting concerns or incidents

- Any (potential) partner must immediately inform DOB Ecology of any serious cases or alleged cases of violation(s) of this policy.
- Any affected party may lodge a complaint against a partner or programme we support via complaints@dobecology.nl.

Policy review and updates

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Feedback from partners, stakeholders, and affected communities will inform revisions.