ATONU Social and Environmental Sustainability Strategy Guidelines for Implementation

The purpose of this document is to assist ATONU project partners in the implementation of the ATONU Social and Environmental Sustainability Strategy (referred to as the Sustainability Strategy). The document is set out in three sections. Section 1 sets out the core responsibilities for implementation, section 2 proposes a structured approach to considering sustainability issues in ATONU activities and section 3 provides specific advice for each key project decision point.

Section 1: Responsibilities

Who?	Key roles and responsibilities
ATONU Managing Director	- Lead the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the sustainability strategy at regional level - Work with Work Package Managers to ensure the sustainability strategy is integrated within the work package plans and activities - Commission occasional audits to review progress of implementation and the effectiveness of the proposed strategies in addressing the key gender issues - Report on progress of implementation of the sustainability strategy to the Project Director
Sustainability Working Group[1]	- Provide technical guidance to Work Package Teams on demand - Support the Managing Director in his key responsibilities with respect to ATONU's sustainability strategy - Review quarterly progress reports from Work Package Teams
Work Package Managers	- Sensitize work package teams on the sustainability strategy - Carry the core responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the sustainability strategy within their work packages - Coordinate with country implementing partners (CIPs) to ensure all activities have considered the sustainability strategy - Produce quarterly reports on implementation of the sustainability strategy
Sustainability Focal Points[2]	- Provide technical support on the implementation of the sustainability strategy to Work Package Managers and Teams - Liaise with the sustainability working group to resolve issues related to the implementation of the sustainability strategy
Country Implementing Partners	- Implement the recommendations on social and environmental sustainability in the project plans and integrate these into their activities (including training, mobilization, implementation, dissemination, etc.) - Report on the specific sustainability indicators outlined under the project results framework and tracker - Liaise with work package managers and sustainability focal points to share lessons and resolve issues related to the implementation of the strategy

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[1] To be appointed by the Advisory Committee after nomination by Consortium Members
[2] To be appointed by Work Package Managers after nomination by Consortium Members

Section 2: Approach

Considering social and environmental sustainability issues involves addressing three key questions:

1. Are there any significant social and environmental impacts associated with the project interventions and what needs to be done to mitigate those?
2. To what extent could the social and natural environment, including climate and climate change, affect the feasibility and/or sustainability of project goals and objectives?
3. Does the natural and social environment provide any significant opportunities to improve nutrition outcomes and what needs to be done to realize those?

1. *Assessing and mitigating social and/or environmental impacts caused by project activities*

This process involves assessing the extent to which project activities could damage the social and natural environment and identifying ways to limit, manage or mitigate those impacts. It commonly includes two steps: (i) Determining the severity of the impact and (ii) defining actions to address them.

The analysis of project impacts concerns all principles and standards of performance in the sustainability strategy. This includes both direct impacts and the extent to which project activities could increase the vulnerability of communities to shocks and trends through:

- increased *exposure to risk*, by putting communities into harm's way,
- increased *sensitivity*, by adopting technologies that are more sensitive to climatic shocks and/or
- damage to a community's *capacity to cope* with or *adapt to* shocks, by, for instance, introducing farming systems that are overly reliable on one crop.

2. *Assessing social, environmental and climate constraints to achieving project objectives*

The effectiveness and/or sustainability of some activities may be constrained by environmental conditions – these include, for instance, soil fertility and propensity to erode, access to water, danger of salinization, droughts, floods and climate change as well as elements of the social environment such as, for instance, secure access to land.

Assessing the extent to which climate change could affect project outcomes is particularly difficult, given the uncertainties associated with process and impact measurement. The assessment usually starts with anecdotal information from key informants about past and current climate conditions, with special emphasis on changes in temperature and precipitation, the cropping seasons, floods and droughts. Findings at the community need validation against hydro-meteorological data, though, before decisions are made about altering proposed project interventions. Communities' vulnerability to climate shocks and trends are also an important consideration, as explained above.

3. *Opportunities in the social and natural environment to improve nutritional outcomes*

ATONU seeks ways to enhance agriculture's contribution to nutrition. Most agricultural development programs focus on achieving agriculture-specific outcomes such as increased income or improved production. In some circumstances, there may exist additional opportunities in the wider environment, beyond farmers' fields, that could strengthen the nutritional outcomes of agricultural development interventions. By expanding the situational analysis across the wider social and natural

environment, a nutrition-sensitive agriculture project could potentially include specific activities that improve access to and management of nutritious "off-farm" foods.

Section 3: Key decision points

Projects such as ATONU typically involve several decision points at which sustainability issues might need to be considered. In this guidance, we make a distinction between planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, consultation and disclosure.

Project planning

Project planning involves identifying potential interventions, appraising them against economic, institutional, social and environment criteria and making choices as to which interventions will be carried out and what adjustments are needed, given the results of the appraisal process.

It is good practice to start the assessment of social and environmental sustainability criteria with a screening process, which categorises interventions into degrees of severity[3]:

- Category 1: Significant negative impacts that will require a full social and environmental impact assessment and social and environment management plan;
- Category 2: Negative impacts that can be mitigated without needing a full social and environmental assessment and management plan;
- Category 3: No or non-significant negative social and environment impact [4]
- Category 4: Potential positive social and environmental impact over and above what the project is intended to achieve.

Based on the results of the first screening, the project design and appraisal process may need to consider alternative ways to improve the nutritional outcome of an agricultural project and/or develop a Social and Environmental Management (SEMP) plan[5]. The plan translates the conditions found from the initial screening exercise into specific monitoring and mitigation measures[6]. The SEMP establishes basic indicators and criteria for monitoring implementation and effectiveness of mitigation actions. The plan also establishes timing and responsible parties.

Project implementation

Ensuring effective implementation of social and environmental management actions will require clear instructions in contracting and procurement processes to those partners as to what needs to be done.

Not all partners have in-house capacity to manage social and environmental impacts. It is good practice, therefore, to include an evaluation of this capacity in the contract due-diligence exercise, and, if necessary, include actions to strengthen the capacity of project implementers in the project document. This assessment will need to focus on managerial capabilities and systems, track record and future plans in climate and environmental management, taking into account the level of risk, the importance of the opportunities and the extent and nature of the recommended activities. The

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[3] ... across the 3 key question defined in section 2

[4] Most development organizations and multilaterals have some form of environmental and social impact analysis and process and often the social and environmental assessment are conducted as part of one exercise

[5] It is expected that the ATONU project may have already have some form of SEMP in place; this would be examined on a case by case basis

[6] To illustrate USAID staff are generally responsible for developing an overarching environmental screening process which is known as an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) The next step happens at the project level and is responsibility of the implementing partner.

capacity-building programme may need to consider training needs, contracting in specialist services and acquisition and maintenance of specialist equipment.

Monitoring and evaluation

Actions identified under the social and environment management plan (SEMP) will need to be part of the ATONU results framework and tracker. Specific actions will include:

- recording and communicating all significant environmental impacts and events to relevant authorities and ensuring remedial actions are taken in good time
- ensuring recommended environmental monitoring actions are carried out in a technically competent manner, data are archived, published and analysed and management implications are communicated to project management in good time
- re-assessing significant risks and opportunities and reviewing implementation and impacts of recommended climate and environment actions and remedial actions taken during project execution at annual, mid-term and final project evaluation points

The Environmental Sustainability Working Group will work closely with the DIMELT Work Package Manager and the ATONU Managing Director on an annual basis to review progress of the implementation of the Social and Environmental Sustainability Strategy, taking into account our developing understanding of the scale of challenges, our own performance and emerging opportunities. A full review of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy will be undertaken in tandem with any mid-term or end line evaluation or review of the entire ATONU project.

Public disclosure and consultation

Principle 8 of ATONU's social and environmental sustainability strategy stipulates that local communities will be fully informed of all reasonable potential social, environmental and climate threats and benefits associated with proposed ATONU activities. Implementing this principle will involve:

- Consulting project beneficiaries and affected communities to identify and assess potential climate and environmental risks and opportunities
- Disclosing the nature and extent of all potentially significant climate and environment impacts associated with the intervention to all relevant stakeholders in good time, allowing potentially affected communities to respond prior to project inception
- Obtaining full prior and informed consent from project beneficiaries and communities to initiate project activities in the full knowledge of the potential risks and proposed mitigating actions
- Consulting project beneficiaries and affected communities on relevant climate and environmental management issues at annual, mid-term and final project evaluation points
- Fully disclosing all relevant environmental impacts resulting from project activities, remedial actions taken and impacts of remedial actions.