

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

SIERRA LEONE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

IDA- E1130-SL

Terms of Reference

for

**The Recruitment of an Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist under the
Western Africa Regional Digital Integration Program – Series of Projects Phase 2
(WARDIP SOP2), Sierra Leone**

SL-MOF-202601-CS-INDV

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1. Background

The Government of Sierra Leone, through the Ministry of Communication, Technology and Innovation (MoCTI), is implementing the Western Africa Regional Digital Integration Program – Series of Projects Phase 2 (WARDIP SOP2) with financing from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank.

WARDIP SOP2 is part of a broader regional initiative aimed at accelerating digital transformation and fostering regional integration across West Africa. The program builds on the first phase and expands coverage to additional countries, including Sierra Leone, with the objective of increasing broadband access, affordability, and usage, while enabling cross-border digital services and strengthening the foundations for a single digital market in West Africa.

Despite growing recognition of the transformative potential of digital technologies, Sierra Leone and the wider West African region continue to face significant constraints, including limited digital infrastructure, high cost of connectivity, weak interoperability frameworks, and low adoption of digital services. These challenges are compounded by socio-economic vulnerabilities such as high levels of informality, gender disparities in digital access, and increasing climate risks affecting infrastructure resilience.

To address these challenges, WARDIP SOP2 adopts a regional and multi-sectoral approach that combines policy reforms, infrastructure investments, and market development interventions. The project is implemented in compliance with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), which requires systematic identification, assessment, and management of environmental and social risks and impacts across all project activities.

Given the Substantial Environmental and Social Risk Classification of the project, there is a strong emphasis on ensuring robust environmental and social risk management, including adherence to relevant Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs), preparation and implementation of safeguards instruments, stakeholder engagement, and grievance redress mechanisms.

In line with the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP), the Government is required to maintain adequate institutional capacity for environmental and social risk management, including the recruitment of qualified specialists to support the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and oversee compliance with environmental, social, health, and safety (ESHS) requirements throughout project implementation.

It is against this background that the Ministry seeks to recruit an Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist to support the effective implementation, monitoring, and reporting of environmental and social risk management measures under WARDIP SOP2 in Sierra Leone.

2. Project Description

The WARDIP SOP2 project is designed to support participating countries, including Sierra Leone, in increasing broadband access, improving digital infrastructure, and enabling an environment for cross-border digital services through a combination of policy, infrastructure, and market development interventions.

The project is structured around five key components:

- **Component 1: Building Policy and Financing Pathways for a West African Single Digital Market**

This component focuses on strengthening the legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks required to support a harmonized digital market across the region. It includes support for digital governance, regulatory harmonization, and development of financing mechanisms to mobilize investment in digital infrastructure.

- **Component 2: Connectivity Market Development and Integration**

This component supports the expansion of broadband infrastructure through catalytic public financing aimed at leveraging private sector investment. In Sierra Leone, this includes investments in international connectivity, particularly submarine cable systems and landing stations, as well as strengthening regulatory frameworks to ensure open access and competitive pricing.

- **Component 3: Data Market Development and Integration**

This component aims to enhance data infrastructure and promote secure, reliable, and interoperable data systems. It includes activities to strengthen cybersecurity, data governance, and digital infrastructure required for efficient data exchange and cloud services.

- **Component 4: Online Market Development and Integration**

This component focuses on strengthening the digital economy ecosystem by promoting e-commerce, digital entrepreneurship, and the adoption of digital technologies by businesses. It also supports the development of inclusive digital services and innovation ecosystems.

- **Component 5: Project Management and Implementation Support**

This component provides support for project coordination, monitoring and evaluation, fiduciary management, and environmental and social risk management, ensuring effective and compliant implementation of project activities.

Sierra Leone's Scope under WARDIP SOP2

Under the WARDIP SOP2 program, Sierra Leone is implementing only Components 2 and 5:

- **Component 2** – focusing on investments in international connectivity infrastructure, including submarine cable systems and associated facilities, as well as enabling regulatory frameworks for open access and market competitiveness.
- **Component 5** – supporting project coordination, fiduciary management, monitoring and evaluation, and environmental and social safeguards implementation.

All other components are implemented at the regional level or by other participating countries and institutions.

3. Governance and Institutional Arrangements

The WARDIP SOP2 Project in Sierra Leone is implemented through a multi-stakeholder structure involving government, private sector, and project-level institutions, reflecting the public-private partnership (PPP) nature of the connectivity investments.

MoCTI is the lead implementing agency and provides overall strategic oversight, policy direction, and coordination with the World Bank and national stakeholders. The PCU under the Sierra Leone Digital Transformation Project (SLDTP) is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the project, including procurement, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and ensuring compliance with the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) and the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP).

A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) will be established to lead the financing, deployment, and operation of submarine cable infrastructure and associated facilities under Component 2. The SPV will operate as a PPP entity, with private sector partners holding majority ownership and the Government maintaining a minority stake. It will be responsible for infrastructure delivery, operation on an open-access basis, and implementation of an Environmental, Social, Health and Safety Risk Management System (ESHSRMS), including compliance with all applicable environmental and social standards.

Private sector operators and contractors will support the design, construction, and operation of infrastructure and will be required to comply with all environmental and social requirements, including the preparation and implementation of Contractor Environmental and Social

Management Plans (C-ESMPs), occupational health and safety measures, and community protection provisions.

4. Environmental and Social Risk Management Context

The implementation of WARDIP SOP2 involves activities such as deployment of digital infrastructure (including submarine cables and associated facilities), which may generate environmental and social risks related to land use, community health and safety, labor conditions, e-waste management, and biodiversity impacts.

To address these risks, the project requires the preparation and implementation of key environmental and social instruments, including:

- Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)
- Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) / Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs)
- Resettlement Framework (RF) and site-specific Resettlement Plans (RPs), where applicable
- Labor Management Procedures (LMP)
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)
- Environmental, Social, Health and Safety Risk Management System (ESHSRMS)

These instruments must be implemented in accordance with the World Bank Environmental and Social Standards (ESS1–ESS10), with continuous monitoring, reporting, and stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle.

The PCU, supported by the SPV, is responsible for ensuring compliance with these requirements. The Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist will play a critical role in supporting these institutions to effectively manage environmental and social risks, ensure compliance with the ESCP, and maintain alignment with World Bank safeguards requirements.

5. Objectives of the Assignment

5.1.General Objective

To support the PCU at MoCTI in ensuring effective planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of environmental and social risk management activities under the WARDIP SOP2 Project, in full compliance with the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP), and relevant national regulations.

5.2.Specific Objectives

The Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist will:

- Ensure compliance of all project activities with applicable Environmental and Social Standards (ESS1–ESS10) and national environmental and social regulations
- Support the preparation, review, and implementation of all required environmental and social instruments (e.g., ESMF, ESIA/ESMP, RP, LMP, SEP, etc.)
- Strengthen environmental and social risk management systems within the PCU and SPV
- Monitor and report on environmental, social, health, and safety (ESHS) performance of the project
- Support stakeholder engagement, grievance redress mechanisms, and inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Build capacity of PCU staff, contractors, and stakeholders on environmental and social safeguards

6. Scope of Work

Under the supervision of the Project Coordinator, the Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist will work closely with the PCU, SPV, contractors, and relevant stakeholders to perform the following tasks:

6.1.Environmental and Social Risk Management

- Lead the implementation and monitoring of the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)
- Ensure effective application of the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)
- Support screening of project activities and determine required safeguards instruments
- Oversee preparation and implementation of site-specific ESIAs/ESMPs
- Ensure integration of E&S requirements into project design, procurement documents, and contracts

6.2.Safeguards Instruments Preparation and Implementation

- Review and provide technical guidance on:
 - ESIA/ESMPs
 - Resettlement Plans (RPs) / Livelihood Restoration Plans (LRPs)
 - Labor Management Procedures (LMPs)
 - Contractor ESMPs (C-ESMPs)
 - SEA/SH Action Plans
 - E-Waste Management Plans
- Ensure all safeguards instruments are prepared, disclosed, and implemented in accordance with World Bank requirements

6.3. Contractor and SPV Oversight

- Ensure contractors comply with E&S requirements, including:
 - Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)
 - Waste management and pollution control
 - Community health and safety measures
- Review and approve contractor C-ESMPs prior to commencement of works
- Support oversight of the SPV ESHSRMS
- Conduct regular site visits and audits to assess compliance

6.4. Monitoring, Reporting, and Compliance

- Prepare and submit quarterly ESHS performance reports to the World Bank
- Track implementation of ESCP actions and safeguards instruments
- Establish and maintain a system for monitoring environmental and social indicators
- Ensure timely reporting of incidents and accidents, including SEA/SH cases, in line with ESCP timelines
- Maintain proper documentation and records of all safeguards activities

6.5. Stakeholder Engagement and Grievance Redress

- Support implementation of the SEP
- Ensure effective functioning of the GRM
- Facilitate consultations with affected communities and stakeholders
- Ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups, including women and persons with disabilities

6.6. Capacity Building and Training

- Develop and implement capacity-building programs for:
 - PCU staff
 - SPV personnel
 - Contractors and supervising firms
 - Local stakeholders and communities
- Conduct training on:
 - World Bank ESF requirements
 - Occupational health and safety
 - SEA/SH risk mitigation
 - Emergency preparedness and response

6.7. Coordination and Advisory Support

- Provide technical advice to the PCU on all environmental and social matters
- Liaise with:
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA)
 - Other relevant MDAs

- Support integration of climate resilience and sustainability considerations into project activities

7. Deliverables

The Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist will be responsible for the following key deliverables:

Deliverable	Description	Timeline
Inception Report	Detailed work plan, methodology, and reporting framework	Within 2 weeks of contract start
Safeguards Review Reports	Technical review and clearance of E&S instruments (ESIA/ESMP, RP, etc.)	As required
ESCP Implementation Tracker	Updated tracking of ESCP actions and compliance status	Monthly
Quarterly ESHS Reports	Comprehensive environmental and social performance reports submitted to the World Bank	Quarterly
Site Inspection Reports	Reports from field visits assessing contractor compliance	Monthly / As required
Training Reports	Documentation of capacity-building sessions conducted	As required
Incident Reports	Reports on any environmental/social incidents or accidents	Within required ESCP timelines
Annual E&S Performance Report	Consolidated annual report on safeguards performance	Annually

8. Qualification and Experience Requirements

8.1. Education

- Master's degree in Environmental Science, Environmental Engineering, Social Safeguards, Natural Resource Management, or a related field

8.2. Professional Experience

- Minimum of 8–10 years of relevant experience in environmental and social safeguards management
- Proven experience working on World Bank-funded or similar donor-funded projects

- Strong familiarity with the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) and Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs)
- Experience in infrastructure projects (e.g., telecommunications, energy, transport, or large-scale public works)
- Demonstrated experience in preparing and implementing:
 - ESIA/ESMP
 - Resettlement Plans
 - Stakeholder Engagement Plans
 - Labor Management Procedures

8.3. Technical Competencies

- Strong knowledge of environmental and social risk assessment methodologies
- Experience in occupational health and safety (OHS) management
- Knowledge of gender, social inclusion, and SEA/SH risk mitigation
- Experience in monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of E&S performance
- Familiarity with Sierra Leone environmental regulations and institutional frameworks

8.4. Skills and Attributes

- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills
- Excellent report writing and communication skills
- Ability to work collaboratively with government institutions, contractors, and communities
- Strong organizational and coordination skills
- High level of integrity and professionalism

9. Responsibility of the Employer

The PCU will provide office space, office equipment, internet facilities, project documents and other relevant materials required by the Specialist to perform his/her duties as specified in this ToR.