

# ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDING POLICY



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# I. INTRODUCTION

New Empowerment Initiative-Sierra Leone (NEI-SL) is an independent, youth-led, non-profit, Non-Governmental Organisation based in Sierra Leone, focused on rural community development. NEI-SL is non-sectarian and politically and religiously impartial, and it does not discriminate on the basis of tribe, race, sex, nationality, religion, social status, financial capacity, political belief, or educational background. NEI-SL's work is guided by the principles of Peace and Tolerance; Participation and Inclusion; Transparency and Accountability; Non-violence and Non-Selective Justice; Equity and Fairness; Sharing and Openness; and Diversity and a Non-Xenophobic Resource Management System. These principles shape how we design programmes, allocate resources, and engage with communities and partners.

Driven by a clear mission to improve individual lives and strengthen community resilience across Sierra Leone and beyond, NEI-SL seeks to influence practice and policy in humanitarian and development settings. We produce and promote practical knowledge, tools, and evidence-based approaches to enable more effective decision-making among humanitarian and development stakeholders. By prioritising inclusive participation, impartial resource management, and measurable outcomes, NEI-SL aims to ensure that programmes deliver sustainable benefits for the people and communities we serve.

The commitment of NEI-SL is guided by four core values:

## **1. Peace and Tolerance**

Peace means actively promoting stability, safety, and non-hostile relations in all our work. Tolerance means respecting different beliefs, cultures, and opinions and creating spaces where disagreements are managed constructively. Together this principle commits NEI-SL to prevent conflict, reduce tensions, and foster respectful dialogue in communities and partnerships.

## **2. Participation and Inclusion**

Participation means ensuring people affected by our programmes have meaningful opportunities to shape decisions that affect them. Inclusion means removing barriers so that women, youth, persons with disabilities, minorities, and other marginalized groups can engage equally. This principle guides NEI-SL to design processes that listen, empower, and reflect the voices of all stakeholders.

## **3. Transparency and Accountability**

Transparency means sharing clear, timely information about decisions, resources, and outcomes. Accountability means taking responsibility for actions, answering to communities, donors, and partners, and learning from feedback. Together they ensure NEI-SL operates openly, reports honestly, and corrects course when needed.

## **4. Non-violence and Non-Selective Justice**

Non-violence commits NEI-SL to reject and prevent physical, structural, or verbal harm in all activities. Non-selective justice means applying rules, protections, and remedies impartially—without favoritism or discrimination. This principle ensures our interventions protect people's safety and uphold equal treatment under the law and practice.

## **5. Equity and Fairness**

Equity focuses on allocating resources and opportunities according to need so that disadvantaged groups can reach comparable outcomes. Fairness means decisions and processes are impartial, consistent, and just. NEI-SL uses this principle to prioritize those most vulnerable and to design programmes that reduce, rather than reinforce, inequality.

## **6. Sharing and Openness**

Sharing means exchanging knowledge, resources, and best practices with partners and communities to multiply

positive impact. Openness means being receptive to new ideas, constructive critique, and collaborative solutions. This value drives NEI-SL to build partnerships, disseminate learning, and scale what works.

## **7. Diversity and Non-Xenophobic Resource Management System**

Diversity recognizes the value of different backgrounds, skills, and perspectives in strengthening programmes and decision-making. Non-xenophobic resource management commits NEI-SL to allocate funds, goods, and services without prejudice toward nationality, ethnicity, or origin, and to manage resources in ways that respect cultural differences. This principle ensures inclusive, merit-based resource decisions that reinforce social cohesion.

## **A. Policy Statement**

As a humanitarian and development organisation, NEI-SL recognises that the environment is intrinsic to sustainable development and that climate change threatens the access of beneficiaries and communities to food, water and livelihoods.

NEI-SL is committed to the promotion of a Zero world: zero exclusion, zero carbon, zero poverty. In line with this, NEI-SL is committed to good environmental stewardship in its operations and in all of its humanitarian and development programming. NEI-SL commits to minimising the environmental impact of our operations and whenever possible, balancing it with necessities to fulfil our mandate.

This policy aims at protecting the environment and reducing the risk of negative impacts with the aim of reaching carbon neutrality eventually. We recognise this to be a long-term commitment to updating our practices continually in light of advances in technology and environmental science.

This policy is aimed at guiding NEI-SL staff and the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy, and must be considered together with:

- NEI-SL's Code of Conduct;
- NEI-SL's Grievance Policy;
- NEI-SL's Child Protection Policy;
- NEI-SL's Conflict of Interest Prevention Policy;
- NEI-SL's Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy;
- NEI-SL's Policy Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse;
- NEI-SL's Data Protection Policy;
- NEI-SL's Anti-Terrorism and Anti-money laundering Policy;
- NEI-SL's procedures, manuals and handbooks;
- NEI-SL's Code of Conduct
- U.N. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Six core principles relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

## II. INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

### Article 1 -Scope of Application

- 1.This policy applies to all NEI-SL staff and governance members.
- 2.The provisions of this policy may also be applied to any person employed by an entity that carries out missions for NEI-SL.

### Article 2 – Definitions

1. NEI-SL staff: Under the terms of this policy, the term “NEI-SL staff” refers to any person employed by NEI-SL. NEI-SL’s interns and volunteers are considered to fall within this category for the purposes of this policy.
2. Governance: Under the terms of this policy, the term “governance” refers to any Member elected by decision making bodies to participate in NEI-SL’s managerial and administrative governance bodies. In particular, NEI-SL’s Committee Administrators are Governance members.

### Article 3 – Information and adherence to the policy

NEI-SL staff certify that they adhere to the environmental safeguarding principles outlined in section 4 by signing their employment contract.

1. This policy is published under the authority of NEI-SL. NEI-SL staff, as well as the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy when necessary, are required to conduct themselves in accordance with this policy and must therefore be aware of and have understood its provisions and any changes. When they are unsure of how to proceed, they should seek the advice of a competent person, notably their line manager.
2. NEI-SL staff, as well as, when applicable, the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy, who are responsible to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment of any NEI-SL staff, must ensure that staff is aware of and commits to the full respect of this policy.
3. It is the responsibility of NEI-SL staff with managerial responsibilities, as well as the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy when applicable, to ensure that staff under their supervision comply with this policy.
- 4.This policy shall form part of the working conditions of NEI-SL staff and the conditions, when applicable, for the performance of the missions of the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy from the moment they certify that they have read it.
5. NEI-SL will review the provisions of this policy at regular intervals.

### Article 4 –Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Implement prevention mechanisms and good practices to comply with the framework which relates to environmental safeguarding behaviours and applying to NEI-SL staff as well as, when applicable, other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy.
2. Define the rules relating to environmental safeguarding behaviours that apply to NEI-SL as an organisation.
3. Inform third parties of the conduct they are entitled to expect from NEI-SL staff as well as, when applicable, other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy.

## III. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### **Article 5 – Neutrality**

NEI-SL staff, as well as the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy, must fulfil their duties in a neutral and apolitical manner, in accordance with the law, legitimate instructions and ethical rules relating to their roles.

### **Article 6 – Impartiality**

In the context of their professional roles and/or their missions, NEI-SL staff, as well as the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy, must act in accordance with the law and exercise their discretionary power in an impartial manner, taking into consideration only relevant circumstances.

### **Article 7 – Confidence of stakeholders**

NEI-SL staff, as well as the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy, have a duty to conduct themselves at all times in a way that reflects and upholds NEI-SL's values of integrity, impartiality and efficiency and contribute to strengthen the confidence of all stakeholders.

### **Article 8 – Hierarchical responsibility**

NEI-SL staff report to their immediate line manager and/or the head of their functional department, unless otherwise provided for by law.

### **Article 9 – Confidentiality**

Duly considering the stakeholders' potential right to access information, NEI-SL staff, as well as the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy, must process all the information and all the documents acquired during or as part of the exercise of their duties with the necessary confidentiality.

### **Article 10 –Protection of privacy**

All the necessary measures must be taken to ensure that the privacy of NEI-SL staff and of the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy, is appropriately respected.

### **Article 11 – Information held**

1. Considering the general framework of international law regarding access to information held by private individuals, NEI-SL staff and the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy should disclose information only in respect to the rules and requirements applicable to NEI-SL.

2. NEI-SL staff and the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy must take appropriate measures to guarantee the security and confidentiality of the information for which they are responsible or of which they are aware.

3. NEI-SL staff and the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy must not seek access to information which would be inappropriate for them to have. NEI-SL staff must not make inappropriate use of the information they may obtain in or as part of the exercise of their duties.

4. In the same way, NEI-SL staff and the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy must not retain professional information that may or should be legitimately circulated, or circulate information they know, or have reasonable grounds to believe, is inaccurate or misleading.

## **Article 12 – Responsibility of line managers**

1. NEI-SL staff in charge of supervising or managing other NEI-SL staff must do so in accordance with the policies and objectives of NEI-SL. They are responsible for responding to acts and omissions of staff under their supervision who violate these policies and objectives, and to take due diligence measures expected from a person in their position to prevent such acts or omissions.

2. NEI-SL staff tasked with supervising or managing other NEI-SL staff must take the necessary measures to prevent staff under their supervision from engaging in acts likely to generate environmental damage. These measures may be: to draw attention to and implement the laws and regulations; to ensure adequate training and awareness related to environmental damage and to set an example of integrity through their personal conduct.

## **IV. ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES**

### **Article 13-Protection of the Environment**

NEI-SL will minimise, and wherever possible, eliminate the release of any pollutant that may cause environmental damage to the air, water, earth or its inhabitants.

### **Article 14-Sustainable Use of Natural Resources**

NEI-SL will support the use of renewable natural resources and will the conservation of non-renewable natural resources.

### **Article 15-Minimisation and Safe Disposal of Waste**

NEI-SL will minimise the creation of waste, and (wherever economically possible) reuse, repair and recycle materials and encourage others to do likewise. NEI-SL will encourage the sorting of waste and its disposal via recycling processes. NEI-SL will dispose of its waste in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.

### **Article 16 -Wise Use of Energy**

Whenever possible, NEI-SL will use environmentally safe and sustainable energy sources. NEI-SL will reduce the amount of energy consumed by promoting energy-efficient practices, investing in energy efficient products, and using / advocating for environmentally sustainable energy sources where possible.

### **Article 17 -Risk Reduction**

NEI-SL will, whenever possible, minimise the risk of environmental damage by employing safe technologies and operating procedures. NEI-SL will, whenever possible and relevant, conduct environmental assessments to identify and assess any adverse environmental impacts of its programming and implement measures to prevent, reduce, and mitigate any negative impacts. NEI-SL will, whenever possible and relevant, develop mitigation plans on a case-by-case basis, depending on the context, type of programming, and donor requirements.

## **Article 18 -Sustainable Procurement**

NEI-SL will ensure that consideration is given to purchasing environmentally sustainable products and services and support the development of sustainable supply chains by prioritising suppliers that have environmental standards compatible with its own. Within the terms of the domestic law, NEI-SL will make provision to ensure that contractors working on NEI-SL's behalf apply environmental standards equivalent to NEI-SL's own. However, the humanitarian imperative is paramount: Where speed of deployment is essential in saving lives, NEI-SL will purchase necessary goods and services from the most appropriate available source, and do likewise when the security and safety of its staff is at stake.

## **Article 19 -Responsible Traveland Transport**

NEI-SL will as much as possible promote responsible travel and transport by encouraging the use of travel options that minimise environmental impact wherever practicable.

## **Article 20 -Compliance with Laws and Procedures**

NEI-SL ensures compliance with relevant international and national legislations, regulations and codes of practice on environmental matters relevant to its operations.

## **Article 21 – Disclosure**

Within the terms of international and domestic law, NEI-SL will disclose to its employees and to the public, incidents relating to its operations that cause environmental harm and measures NEI-SL took to address their consequences. NEI-SL will act promptly and responsibly to correct incidents or conditions that endanger health, safety, or the environment.

## **Article 22 -Awareness Raising and Training**

NEI-SL will promote environmental good practice and its environmental policy principles to all partners, suppliers, consultants, donors, supporters, contractors. NEI-SL will increase staff, interns and volunteers' awareness, and provide support, on steps they should take to reduce their personal footprint and to adhere to NEI-SL's environmental policy.

## **V.IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

### **Article 23-Implementation Date of the Policy**

This Environmental Safeguarding Policy comes into effect after approval by the Committee of NEI-SL on 1st May, 2023.

### **Article 24– Adherence to the policy**

NEI-SL staff and the other entities referred to in Article 1 of this policy certify that they adhere to these principles by signing the NEI-SL Policy Acceptance Form and/or by signing their employment contract.