# REDD+ SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS AND STANDARDS REVIEW
## REPORT BRIEF

### INTRODUCTION

This brief is based on a desk review conducted between September 2011 and January 2012, which is the period leading up to, and immediately following, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) 17 held in Durban, South Africa. Issues of safeguards and safeguard information systems (SIS) were discussed during COP 17.

This desk review was commissioned by the USAID-supported Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Program. The review aimed to:

1) Generate information that will contribute to international debates on this topic by systematically reviewing and comparing various safeguards and standards in order to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses, and to draw "lessons learned" for future improvements; and

2) Provide information to USAID for its internal reflections on how to improve its own policies and procedures to enhance the social soundness of REDD+ initiatives.

### BACKGROUND

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)[1] is an international strategy that focuses on the roles of forests in mitigating global climate change. With a potential to operate at very broad scales in developing countries that contain forests, REDD+ may affect the lives of hundreds of millions of forest-dependent people.

**Safeguards** are policies or processes to prevent or mitigate identified risks. Safeguards typically reflect a "do no harm" approach.

**Standards** denote a defined and measurable level of performance that must be achieved in relation to a particular criterion. Standards may be enforced through audits and are often structured into hierarchical principles, criteria and indicators that aim to demonstrate positive performance.

Approaches to avoid deforestation have been discussed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for many years, but REDD+ efforts initially focused only on carbon issues. This narrow focus came under criticism, however, and consequently non-carbon social and environmental dimensions of REDD+, such as the rights and livelihood development of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as biodiversity conservation, are increasingly prominent in the international REDD+ dialogue. Much work on identifying and addressing the social dimensions of REDD+ has focused on different safeguards and standards. Although most REDD+ safeguards and standards are still "works in progress," this review is a timely assessment of the situation on safeguards and standards, the "lessons learned" to date and considerations for future options.

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[1] The "+" in "REDD+" includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

## SAFEGUARDS AND STANDARD SYSTEMS REVIEWED

This report reviewed the following safeguard and standard systems currently in use or under development for REDD+, as well as some additional standard and certification systems being applied in related spheres. Although all of these approaches treat social and environmental standards together, this review focuses only on their social components:

### Multilateral Approaches

1. **The UNFCCC Cancun Safeguards:** The UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards agreed upon in 2010 will be the default safeguards for international performance. Under the UNFCCC, REDD+ programs should be designed to uphold these safeguards as an absolute minimum performance requirement.

2. **Use and Adaptation of World Bank Safeguards by the FCPF, the FIP and the GEF:** The FCPF's approach to safeguards represents a minor adaptation of long-established World Bank project practices. The FCPF Charter Document and the Common Approach to Environmental and Social Safeguards for Multiple Delivery Partners documents are the key policies that specify that the World Bank safeguards will be used. Two World Bank safeguards—Operational Policies and associated Bank Procedures—focus on relevant social issues concerning Indigenous Peoples (OP /BP 4.10) and Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12). For the FCPF, a participating country must conduct a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA), which should inform a country's national REDD+ Strategy. An over-arching Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) provides the framework for risk mitigation plans and is intended to ensure compliance with the safeguards. The Forest Investment Program (FIP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) also use or adapt these safeguards.

> ### Seven UNFCCC Safeguards:
> 1. Complement or consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements
> 2. Transparent and effective national forest governance structures
> 3. Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities
> 4. Full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders
> 5. Consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity
>    - Not used for conversion of natural forests
>    - Protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services
>    - Enhance other social and environmental benefits
> 6. Address the risks of reversals
> 7. Reduce displacement of emissions
>
> The UNFCCC also requests that developing country partners address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, **land tenure issues**, forest governance issues and **gender considerations**, when developing and implementing their national strategies or action plans.

3. **UN-REDD Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria:** The UN-REDD utilizes a human rights-based approach to safeguards through its Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (SEPC). The safeguards are intended for activities financed through UN-REDD, which only supports readiness activities. A Benefits and Risks Tool (BeRT) has been developed to help apply the SEPC (2011). UN-REDD also prepared Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement (with FCPF) and Seeking Free Prior and Informed Consent (2011), as well as Guidance for the Provision of Governance Information on REDD+ (2011).

### Bilateral Approaches

4. **Bilateral Donors: Norway, Australia and Germany:** None of the bilateral donors reviewed here has articulated a specific set of safeguards, operational principles or standards for their work in REDD+. To date, the donors have avoided explicit social policies or standards, especially insofar as they have agreed, in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, to align with host country policies. Some default to their overseas development assistance (ODA) principles, even though their coverage of relevant issues is incomplete. In 2011, Germany adopted a general human rights-based policy for all its development work. Another strategy (applied by Norway in Indonesia) is to default to safeguards of other REDD+ delivery partners. Many donors pursue social issues related to REDD+ by providing grants to civil society and research organizations in host countries or by supporting consultative policy processes in host countries, but these are not necessarily grounded in a particular safeguard or standard system.

### Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Initiatives

5. **Climate Community and Biodiversity Standard (CCBS or CCB Standards):** The Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) has developed the CCB Standards, which is a voluntary project-level social and environmental standard with which independently audited projects can demonstrate the social and environmental integrity of their activities from design through implementation. These standards were developed in response to the fact that the Verified Carbon Standards (VCS) used in many pilot forest carbon standards were weak on social and environmental factors. The CCB Standards are particularly strong on community benefits and reward outstanding performance through its "Gold Level." Many projects have now been developed to meet both the VCS and CCB Standards.

6. **REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (REDD+ SES):** REDD+ SES have been under development since 2009 through an inclusive process engaging governments, NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples (IP) organizations, international policy and research institutions, and the private sector, under the facilitation of CARE International and the CCBA. The initiative aims to develop clear, easy-to-follow, country-specific, national-level REDD+ standards for use by governments through a multi-stakeholder process to comply with the minimum official safeguards for REDD+ emerging from UNFCCC negotiations. At the same time, the initiative aims to define and build support for better social and environmental performance from REDD+ programs.

7. **Brazilian and Indonesian Civil Society Initiatives:** In 2009-2010, civil society representatives led a multi-stakeholder process to develop social and environmental safeguards, with principles and criteria, for Brazil. This document is contributing to the national REDD+ debate. Moreover, Brazil's National Development Bank (BNDES), which is managing the Amazon Fund, is using these safeguards as reference guidelines to complement the bank's own Protocol. Indonesia's Civil Society Network for Climate Justice (HuMa) has developed a proposal for Human Rights-Based Safeguards for use in climate adaptation, mitigation and REDD+.

### Other Relevant Initiatives

8. **Lessons from Other Initiatives:**
   - **The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Standards** employ nationally adapted indicators to an international set of principles and criteria. They also offer a flexible and graduated approach to compliance, providing some incentives and—more importantly, time—for the complex business of attaining best practices.

   - **Fairtrade certification** for small producers recognizes the importance of internal group governance issues, such as inclusive participation, equity, and transparent financial management, to achieving social objectives. It also provides support to producer groups to improve their performance in these areas.

   - **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** has developed the Akwe: Kon Voluntary Guidelines, which focus on the assessment of the impacts of conservation projects on indigenous people. These guidelines prescribe local multi-stakeholder platforms for approaching indigenous issues. CBD also has an Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, which enables indigenous groups to lobby the Convention directly when problems arise.

   - **The WWF's meta-standard** for carbon projects supports the idea of "drop out" criteria, i.e., serious infractions that will trigger the cancellation of a project.

   - **The UNFCCC's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** has social and environmental criteria for validation and verification of projects, which must be met before the projects can proceed; however, no standards were developed.

### SOCIAL ISSUES IN REDD+

This report reviewed a range of social issues addressed in the existing safeguard and standard schemes, including upholding international conventions and treaties, rights, benefits and poverty alleviation, governance, avoided involuntary resettlement and grievance mechanisms/access to justice, as well as if and to what extent they are addressed in each scheme. The following table illustrates the prominence (or absence) of key social issues across the reviewed safeguard and standard schemes.

Figure 2: Social Issues Addressed in Safeguards and Standards Systems

| Safeguards or Standards System > / Social Issues in REDD+ upheld or addressed | UNFCCC | Multilaterals | | | | | Bilaterals | | | NGOs or Int'l. Organizations | | | | Other | | Summary (number) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | FCPF Readiness Fund | FCPF Carbon Fund | FIP | UN-REDD | GEF | Germany | Norway | Australia | CCBS | REDD+ SES | Brazilian CSOs | HuMa | CBD | WWF Meta-standard | Primary issue | Secondary issue | TOTAL |
| International Conventions | X | | Will apply UNFCCC and FCPF Common Approach to assess safeguard component of candidate countries' "market readiness" | (x) | X | (x) | No specific REDD+ safeguards or standards, but diverse set of strategies and action plans touching on many issues | No specific REDD+ safeguards or standards, but ODA objectives of poverty alleviation and social and economic development invoked | No specific REDD+ safeguards or standards, but ODA policies strong on Gender and Social Equity | X | X | X | X | X | X | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Property Rights | (x) | X | | (x) | X | | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Stakeholder Participation | X | X | | X | X | (x) | | | | | X | X | X | | X | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| • Right to information | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | X | 2 | | 2 |
| • Representation | | X | | | X | | | | | | (x) | | | X | X | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Indigenous Peoples' Rights | (x) | X | | (x) | X | (x) | | | | X | X | X | X | (x) | X | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| • Free Prior Informed Consent | | X | | | X | (x) | | | | | X | X | X | | | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| • Respect culture & indigenous traditional knowledge | X | | | | X | | | | | X | (x) | | | | | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Gender | (x) | | | X | X | | | | | X | (x) | | | | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Poor and Vulnerable Groups | | | | X | | | | | | | X | | X | X | | 4 | | 4 |
| Equitable Benefit Sharing | | | | (x) | X | | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| Enhanced Livelihoods | (x) | (x) | | X | X | (x) | | | | X | X | | | | | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| • Poverty alleviation | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | 1 | | |
| • Climate change adaptation | (x) | | | | | | | | | X | X | X | | | | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Avoided Resettlement | | X | | | X | (x) | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| Recourse/Grievance Mechanisms | | X | | | X | | | | | X | X | | | | | 4 | | 4 |
| Monitoring, Reporting | | X | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| Good Governance | X | X | | | X | | | | | | X | | | | | 4 | | 4 |
| • Fiduciary integrity | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| • Uphold national laws | X | | | | | | | | | X | X | X | | | X | 5 | | 5 |
| • Labor standards | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | 1 | | 1 |

Key: X = strong mention or relevance   (x) = weaker mention or relevance

**KEY FINDINGS**

- **In terms of content, the clearest, most comprehensive and most rigorously worded REDD+ social standards are** those of UN-REDD and those of a few international multi-stakeholder platforms (i.e. the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards, referred to as REDD+ SES) and the civil society (Brazilian civil society organizations and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards (CCBS)). Most apply a principles, criteria and indicators approach;

- **In terms of process, the REDD+ SES Initiative is very strong since** its principles, criteria and indicators have been generated though multi-stakeholder processes at the international level, and the criteria and indicators are then adapted through national multi-stakeholder processes to individual national contexts. This approach greatly increases local understanding of the issues while it simultaneously builds consensus and promotes ownership of REDD+ and its social standards. Moreover, it provides a framework for monitoring and reporting;

- **The UNFCCC, multilateral and bilateral safeguards tend to be weaker** in terms of both obligations and process, which may reflect the nature of the political compromises needed to reach agreement;

- **"Safeguard" policies and processes that only aim to minimize or prevent REDD+'s negative impacts do not go far enough on their own.** Standards that are clearly structured and nested at project, national and international levels, as well as strong but adaptable compliance mechanisms to ensure they are met, are also needed—particularly to deliver the benefits and opportunities presented by REDD+;

- **None of the existing systems of safeguards or standards reviewed covers the full range of social issues in REDD+**. At this stage, however, the priority should be focused on testing and learning from field experience, such as CCBS and REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (REDD+ SES), to inform future revisions; and

- **Simplicity in safeguards and standards will be the key to obtaining results,** and social (and environmental) standards employing —principles and criteria‖ offer the clearest logic for designers, implementers and participants of REDD+ at all levels.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Safeguards and Standards:**

REDD+ needs both safeguards with independent grievance mechanisms and standards, which apply transparent monitoring mechanisms and consequences for non-compliance:

- Safeguard policies and processes need to be more explicitly linked with standards for design, implementation, and monitoring;
- Support is needed for follow-up work on UNFCCC safeguards and safeguard information systems (SIS) issues emerging from the Durban COP 17;
- Development of the international REDD+ architecture should prioritize standards that include monitoring and clear thresholds, with consequences for non-compliance; and
- REDD+ donors, particularly bilateral ones, can provide leadership on social (and environmental) standards in REDD+ by making them a priority in REDD+ programming and promoting them in international fora.

**Improving Safeguards and Standards, Piloting, and Promoting Best Practices:**

Development partners need to collaborate to develop a common approach to social and environmental safeguards (policies) and standards, then disseminate and publically uphold them in order to establish socially responsible REDD+ as the international norm:

- Experience with piloting needs to be reviewed to identify strengths and weaknesses in the application of existing systems, and to use the findings to build on strengths and address weaknesses in order to identify and develop "best practices."  Other relevant piloting, reviews, research studies and capacity building on the application of safeguard and standards schemes should be supported;
- Internationally agreed-upon principles and criteria with nationally negotiated indicators, as being piloted in the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards, needs to be more broadly applied; and
- When a critical number of countries have engaged in this process and the revisions to the overall standards system have been made, the UNFCCC, REDD+ countries and other REDD+ institutions should consider adopting the best practices from these standards

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