

TECHNICAL RESOURCE SERIES

Safeguards Edition 1

UN-REDD
PROGRAMME



Food and Agriculture
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Resilient nations.

REDD+ SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEMS

PRACTICAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

UN-REDD PROGRAMME



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The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations Collaborative Initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries. The Programme was launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The UN-REDD Programme supports nationally led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was drafted by Emelyne Cheney, Kristin DeValue, Steve Swan, Kimberly Todd and Judith Walcott of the UN-REDD Programme. Earlier drafts have benefited from thorough reviews by the UN-REDD Safeguards Coordination Group (Cordula Epple, Serena Fortuna and Jennifer Laughlin) and feedback from other specialists across the UN-REDD Programme. The authors would also like to gratefully acknowledge the inputs provided by the following people, who were interviewed during the drafting process:

Roselyn Fosuah Adjei	Aurelie Lhumeau
Michael Bucki	Francisco Aureliano Moreno Rodríguez
Monica Camacho	Clea Paz-Rivera
María del Carmen García Espinosa	Norma Mercedes Pedroza Arceo
Daniela Carrión	Ana Karla Perea Blázquez
Lucas Dourojeanni Álvarez	Elizabeth Philip
Christine Dragisic	Andrea Quesada
Joanna Durbin	Dil Raj Khanal
María Elena Herrera	Rosalind Reeve
Birgitte Feiring	Daniela Rey Christen
Phil Franks	Carmen Roldán Chacón
Leticia Guimarães	Maria J. Sanz Sánchez
Alaya de Leon	Henriette Tsoh-Ikouna

Individuals were consulted on their personal perspectives and experiences on themes and issues covered in this paper, but were not asked to provide institutional positions on these topics or to endorse the paper, or any portion thereof, for which the UN-REDD Programme is solely responsible. Illustrative country case studies were prepared by countries' REDD+ focal points. The UN-REDD Programme is grateful to the following organizations who, in the cooperative spirit of South-South knowledge exchange, took the time to contribute directly to this paper: Ministry of the Environment, Brazil ([Box 11](#)); National Forestry Financing Fund, Costa Rica ([Box 9](#)); Ministry of Environment, Ecuador ([Box 3](#)); Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia ([Box 4](#)); Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Malaysia ([Box 5](#)); National Forestry Commission, Mexico ([Box 6](#)); and the Forestry Department, Zambia ([Box 8](#)).

This publication was produced by the UN-REDD Programme Secretariat, with design by Madeline West and editing by Jennifer Ferguson-Mitchell.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABBREVIATIONS and ACRONYMS	iv
LIST OF BOXES AND FIGURES	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
PART I INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Purpose of the paper	8
1.2 Structure and intended audience	9
PART II BACKGROUND	11
2.1 UNFCCC safeguards requirements	11
2.2 Country approaches to safeguards	13
2.2.1 Defining goals, scope and scale	14
2.2.2 Assessing benefits and risks of REDD+ actions	16
2.2.3 Clarifying safeguards in accordance with national circumstances	17
2.2.4 Identifying, assessing and strengthening existing governance arrangements	17
PART III SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEM DESIGN ELEMENTS.....	19
3.1 SIS objectives.....	20
3.2 SIS functions	23
3.2.1 Information compilation and management	24
3.2.2 Information analysis and interpretation	32
3.2.3 Information quality control and assurance.....	32
3.2.4 Information dissemination and use.....	33
3.3 SIS institutional arrangements.....	35
3.4 Costs of safeguards information system design and operation	37
3.5 Summaries of safeguard information	38
PART IV CONCLUSIONS.....	43
REFERENCES	44
ANNEX I Glossary of key terms used in this paper	47
ANNEX II Selected examples of existing information sources and systems that could contribute to safeguards information systems for REDD+	49

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CENIGA	Costa Rica's National Centre for Geoenvironmental Information
CONAFOR	National Forestry Commission of Mexico
COP	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FLEGT	Forest law enforcement, governance and trade
FREL	forest reference emission level
FRL	forest reference level
GHG	greenhouse gases
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
MRV	measurement, reporting and verification
MTCS	Malaysia Timber Certification Scheme
NGO	non-governmental organization
NFMS	national forest monitoring system
NS/AP	national REDD+ strategy / action plan
NSS	national safeguards system
PAM	policies and measures
PCI	principles, criteria and indicators
PLRs	policies, laws and regulations
QA	quality assurance
QC	quality control
REDD+	reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
SINIA	Costa Rica's National System for Environmental Information
SIS	safeguards information system
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound
TLAS	Timber Legality Assurance System
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD Programme	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
ZEMA	Zambia Environmental Management Agency

LIST OF BOXES AND FIGURES

Box 1	The Cancun safeguards	7
Box 2	Existing UNFCCC guidance on safeguards information systems	12
Box 3	Determining safeguards information system objectives in Ecuador	22
Box 4	Designing a safeguards information system in line with the scale of REDD+ implementation in Indonesia.	25
Box 5	Structuring safeguards information using existing systems and sources in Malaysia	27
Box 6	Using existing information systems and sources in Mexico.	28
Box 7	Possible contributions of national forest monitoring systems to safeguards information systems.	31
Box 8	Disseminating safeguards information through the national forest monitoring system web platform in Zambia.	34
Box 9	Institutional arrangements for the safeguards information system in Costa Rica.	36
Box 10	Perspectives on cost-related considerations for safeguards information systems	37
Box 11	Brazil's summary of safeguards information	39
Figure 1	Generic steps and possible sequencing of a country approach to safeguards showing links to REDD+ national strategy/action plan development process	14
Figure 2	Key design considerations for safeguards information systems	20
Figure 3	Generic functions for consideration during the design and operation of a safeguards information system.	23



Photo: Ecuador Ministry of Environment



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY MESSAGES

Emerging from country experiences, and explored during extensive stakeholder consultations, are a number of key messages on safeguards information system (SIS) design for REDD+:

1. **Development of a SIS does not require establishment of an entirely new system.** It is likely to be more cost effective, in the long term, to develop a SIS from a combination of existing information systems, sources and institutional arrangements to meet desired SIS objectives.
2. **SIS design and operation will be different in each country** due to different national circumstances, existing legal and institutional frameworks, and choice of REDD+ actions; consequently, generic blueprint SIS models cannot be prescribed at the global or regional levels.
3. **Three practical design considerations could be considered by countries** when developing a SIS:
 - SIS objectives;
 - SIS functions; and
 - SIS institutional arrangements.
4. **Important steps in the process of a country's approach to safeguards will influence SIS design**, including:
 - defining the goals, scope and scale of safeguards application
 - assessing benefits and risks of REDD+ actions;
 - clarifying the Cancun safeguards in accordance with national circumstances; and
 - identifying, assessing and strengthening existing governance arrangements.
5. **A SIS provides a strong basis for developing summaries of safeguards information.** By drawing on the SIS, the quality, reliability and credibility of information comprising the summaries may be significantly improved.

Developing a 'system for providing information on how the [Cancun] safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of [REDD+] activities' is a key requirement for REDD+ under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Significant progress has been made in recent years with other pillars of the UNFCCC's Warsaw Framework for REDD+:-reference levels, national forest monitoring systems, and national strategies/action plans (NS/APs) Yet many REDD+ countries are just beginning to turn their attention to the development of 'safeguard information systems' (SIS) that are, anchored to their NS/APs and integrated into their wider country approaches to safeguards. No country has a functioning SIS in place yet and governments, together with other stakeholders, are now starting to appreciate the complexities and implications of SIS design and the importance of safeguards information for achieving not just REDD+, but potentially also broader sustainable development and other national policy, goals.



SAFEGUARD INFORMATION SYSTEM DESIGN – CHALLENGES AND EMERGING SOLUTIONS

Broad consensus exists around a few fundamental SIS design characteristics – transparency, comprehensiveness, flexibility to allow improvements over time, and building on existing systems as appropriate – as reflected in UNFCCC guidance provided in the (2011) Durban decision. These guiding characteristics, however, do not directly answer the questions most frequently asked by developing countries confronted with the challenge of developing their SISs, namely: what does a SIS look like; how do I go about designing one; how much will it cost (to both build and to operate); and who will pay for it?

Through a consultative process, drawing on the insights emerging from early country experiences in SIS development, captured during regional knowledge exchange workshops, as well as one-on-one interviews throughout 2015, the UN-REDD Programme has attempted to provide preliminary answers to these questions. The resultant practical design considerations for SIS offered here, together with the broader context of emerging country approaches to safeguards, have been informed by the experiences and perspectives of a range of REDD+ stakeholders, representing developing country and donor governments, civil society, as well as technical advisors, including the UN-REDD Programme.

Opinions and perspectives among these key stakeholders about what a SIS might look like, how it could be developed and what it might cost to design and operate, remain diverse. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the different political expectations among these constituencies; a lack of existing SIS models; and alternative interpretations of the UNFCCC requirements. It is hoped that the practical considerations offered here present an opportunity for countries to consolidate their thinking and develop SIS design solutions adapted to meet their needs.

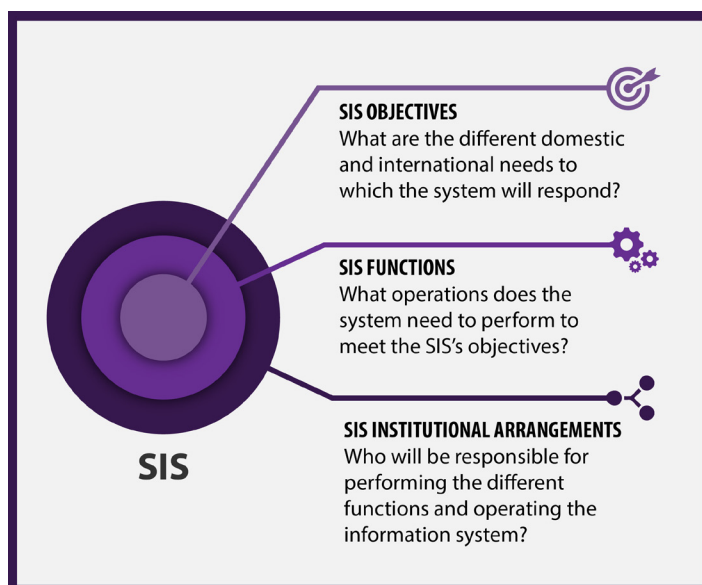
KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS OF SAFEGUARD INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Development of a SIS need not require establishment of an entirely new information system (although countries can choose to develop new systems if they wish). Depending on the country context, it can be helpful to integrate existing information systems and sources into design of a SIS, or to draw on existing information, to perform the necessary functions of a SIS. A SIS is more than just an information technology solution, and may be a more broadly defined as a combination of existing processes, systems and sources of information, together with any new information or institutional structures needed to fill identified gaps. Design features of a SIS will, by necessity, be country-specific, rather than generic, particularly if a SIS is built upon information systems and sources already in place in a country. A one-size-fits-all model of SIS design cannot be prescribed. Nevertheless, consultations with developing countries and other REDD+ stakeholders have identified a number of key design elements

that countries might want to consider when developing a SIS:

- 1. SIS objectives;**
- 2. SIS functions; and**
- 3. SIS institutional arrangements.**

It should be noted that SIS design choices and processes are not static; they are likely to proceed in a stepwise manner, incorporating iterative improvements - with a view to expand objectives, functionality or institutional arrangements at later stages - in line with REDD+ implementation progress. A phased approach to planning for SIS development and implementation, which anticipates, for example, changing levels of institutional capacity and financial support, may be a prudent step in establishing the system.



SIS OBJECTIVES

What do countries want the SIS to do? The default objective stated under the UNFCCC is to demonstrate that the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation. A further objective could relate to using information from the SIS to prepare a UNFCCC-required summary of safeguards information. Countries may, at least in the initial instance, limit their SIS objectives to meeting these UNFCCC requirements. Over time, or from the outset, countries may wish to consider additional objectives for their SIS, beyond what is prescribed under the UNFCCC. For example, to ensure that REDD+, through the safeguards, contributes to broader sustainable development goals or other national policy objectives.

Broadening the objectives of a SIS, beyond UNFCCC requirements, may help to build domestic support for REDD+, and could potentially increase the returns on the investment for developing and operating the system. The provision of information on how environmental and social benefits and risks are being managed in forestry and other land-use sectors, for example, could contribute to a range of domestic objectives, such as accessing funding for REDD+ actions; improving implementation of NS/APs through adaptive management; legitimacy of REDD+ among domestic stakeholders; and informing national policy reform agendas.



SIS FUNCTIONS

What will the SIS need to do to meet the chosen objectives of the system? Through stakeholder consultation, and drawing on experiences of information and monitoring systems outside REDD+, a number of functions that might be considered during SIS design, have been identified:



- **information compilation and management**
– what information needs to be included in the SIS, where will it be sourced, how will it be structured, and how will it be brought together and managed?
- **information analysis and interpretation** – what does the information tell us about how safeguards have been addressed and respected, and the attribution of outcomes to REDD+?
- **information quality control and assurance**
– does the information reflect the reality on the ground and is the interpretation of that information acceptable to different stakeholders?
- **information dissemination and use** – how will information be communicated to, and used by, different stakeholders to meet their different needs?



SIS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Who will be responsible for performing the chosen functions of the SIS? Should countries choose to build on existing systems, current institutional mandates of existing information systems, covering the chosen functions of the SIS, will need to be reviewed. New institutional arrangements, such as information sharing agreements, might need to be considered to feed information from multiple institutions into a single national SIS. The existing framework of a country's policies, laws and regulations (PLRs) can help define the mandates and functions of government institutions that might contribute to the SIS. The role of non-state actors – civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as the private sector – could complement government institutional mandates and capacities to perform different functional responsibilities within the SIS. Where some information requirements cannot be met on the basis of what is already available, novel information solutions may need to be found to close those gaps.

SIS DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS AS PART OF BROADER COUNTRY APPROACHES TO SAFEGUARDS

Stakeholders, particularly REDD+ countries, have also identified a number of aspects of overall country approaches to safeguards that could affect how a SIS is developed and subsequently operated. Such country approaches utilize and strengthen existing governance arrangements – such as PLRs, institutional capacities and information systems – to meet UNFCCC safeguard requirements, together with any other safeguard goals the country may choose to adopt. Early country experiences are beginning to demonstrate the value of considering certain key elements of country approaches as important preparatory steps for the design of a SIS, which include:

- ***defining the goals, scope and scale of safeguards application*** - How a country chooses to implement its NS/AP will have a profound bearing on safeguards information needs and sources and, therefore, SIS design. Defining safeguards goals refers to what safeguards frameworks the country chooses to apply for REDD+, and whether the country adopts an approach to safeguards that can accommodate UNFCCC and other REDD+-relevant safeguards requirements of other processes. The scope of safeguards application refers to what actions the safeguards will be applied to, and will determine what information needs to populate the SIS. The UNFCCC calls for a national-level SIS, but strategic decisions on the most appropriate scale(s) to tackle the underlying drivers of deforestation will have direct influence on the information needs, sources and institutional arrangements to be considered during SIS design.
- ***assessing benefits and risks of potential REDD+ actions*** - The REDD+ actions being considered, and their potential environmental and social benefits and risks, will determine what information will need to be provided through the SIS. SIS development can proceed in advance of clarifying REDD+ actions, but runs the risk of having a thematic scope broader than necessary. SIS design *before* production of a coherent first draft NS/AP could prove to be resource inefficient, both in development and operation of the resultant information system. The assessment of benefits and risks of potential REDD+ actions should inform both the selection of actions to be included in NS/AP and the clarification of safeguards (see below).
- ***clarifying the Cancun safeguards in accordance with national circumstances*** - The Cancun safeguards serve as a set of principles that should be clarified, in terms of specific thematic issues of relevance to each country's context, i.e. each country, based on an understanding of the benefits and risks of proposed REDD+ actions, should identify what needs to be safeguarded, under the broad framework agreed in Cancun.
- ***identifying, assessing and strengthening existing governance arrangements*** - A first step for many country approaches to safeguards is to assess what existing governance arrangements – PLRs, institutional arrangements to implement them, and information systems to demonstrate effective implementation – a country has in place to address and respect safeguards (as well as ways to fill any identified gaps). Such assessments can help identify information sources for the SIS, as well as institutional roles and responsibilities for performing different SIS functions.

SUMMARIES OF SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION – PRIORITY OBJECTIVE OF SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Providing a summary of information on how all the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected, throughout implementation of REDD+ actions, is another key UNFCCC safeguards requirement. There is no explicit requirement for summaries of information to be produced as outputs of the SIS. Most national and international stakeholders, however, acknowledge that, once established, the national SIS would logically inform the preparation of future summaries of information.

As with the SIS, there is, to date, no UNFCCC-required structure for a country's summary of information. Guidance on content of summaries of information, nonetheless, has recently been proposed within the UNFCCC process for adoption by the 21st Conference of the Parties (December 2015), whereby developing country Parties might be required, or (*strongly encouraged*), to include, *inter alia*, elements in their summaries of safeguards information as: which REDD+ activities are covered; descriptions of each safeguard in accordance with national circumstances; descriptions of existing systems and processes (including the SIS); and information on how each of the safeguards has been addressed and respected. The structure of the SIS may be an important influence on the structure of the summary of information (and vice versa).



PART I INTRODUCTION

REDD+ has the potential to deliver social and environmental benefits that go beyond the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions¹, but may also entail potential risks to people and the environment. These benefits and risks will depend on a number of factors related to specific national circumstances – such as how REDD+ actions² are designed; how successful these actions are in addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (and managing, conserving and enhancing forest carbon stocks); as well as where and how they are implemented, and who implements them.

To protect against these potential risks, while promoting benefits beyond climate change mitigation, Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have adopted a set of seven “Cancun safeguards” ([Box 1](#)) to be addressed and respected when implementing REDD+ actions.³ Developing a “system for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of [REDD+ actions]” – or safeguards information system - is a key requirement for REDD+ under the UNFCCC.⁴ Provision of summaries of information on how all of the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ actions completes the main safeguard requirements agreed thus far under the Convention.⁵ All UNFCCC decisions on safeguards, associated information systems and summaries of information are précised in [Section 2.1](#).

1

Box 1: The Cancun safeguards

“When undertaking [REDD+] activities, the following safeguards should be promoted and supported:

- (a) That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;
- (b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
- (c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- (d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities;
- (e) That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the [REDD+] actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;
- (f) Actions to address the risks of reversals;
- (g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.”

Source: UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix I, paragraph 2

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper presents practical considerations for the design of systems that provide information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected – commonly referred to as safeguards information systems (SIS). The guidance provided to countries by the UNFCCC ([Box 1](#)) is general and not focused on what a SIS might look like or on the process of developing one. The UN-REDD Programme has prepared this paper in an effort to respond to country requests for further information on the possible design and development process of a SIS, based on country experiences to date.

The emphasis of this paper is to support countries in meeting UNFCCC requirements related to SIS. Some countries may wish to use their SIS to meet additional objectives, going beyond what is required by the UNFCCC. The information in a SIS may, for example, help countries to meet the specific safeguards requirements of entities providing REDD+ result-based payments, such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Carbon Fund or the Green Climate Fund. A SIS can also be used by countries to share information with their domestic constituencies, and to inform policy needs at national and/or subnational levels.

A key tenet of this paper is that countries may find it practical to start by designing a SIS that is relatively simple, sufficient to meet UNFCCC requirements, and to expand upon content and improve functionality, as appropriate, and when resources and capacities permit.

In addition to the main focus of elaborating possible SIS design considerations, the paper also covers two topics relevant to SIS design:

1. aspects of broader country approaches to safeguards that are of value to consider before exploring SIS design elements in detail; and
2. how SIS design choices can inform and facilitate the development of summaries of information, as required under the UNFCCC.

The content of this paper draws on the insights emerging from early country experiences and interviews conducted with a range of REDD+ stakeholders, representing developing country and donor governments, civil society, as well as technical advisors, including the UN-REDD Programme.

1.2 STRUCTURE AND INTENDED AUDIENCE

This paper is structured in three main parts. [Part 1](#) is an introductory overview explaining the purpose of this paper. [Part 2](#) provides background information and context, namely an overview of UNFCCC decisions and a review of emerging aspects of country approaches to safeguards that may have a significant bearing on SIS design. [Part 3](#), the technical core of the paper, looks at specific SIS design considerations, starting with overall objectives, and then discusses several functions that a system could perform, followed by a review of institutional arrangements that may be needed to operationalize a SIS. This section concludes with a brief discussion on possible SIS development cost considerations, together with a brief overview of likely connections between SIS design and the development of summaries of safeguards information. A glossary of key terms used in this paper is presented in [Annex 1](#).

This paper is intended primarily for use by government institutions and other key stakeholders engaged in country REDD+ safeguard processes, who are seeking to understand practical considerations that may be useful when designing a SIS. A secondary audience is REDD+ practitioners, technical assistance providers and donors. Readers are expected to have some working knowledge of REDD+, UNFCCC decisions and safeguards in general.





PART II BACKGROUND

2.1 UNFCCC SAFEGUARDS REQUIREMENTS

2

Countries that wish to participate in REDD+, as negotiated under the UNFCCC, and seek results-based payments for results-based REDD+ actions (in terms of tonnes of forest carbon dioxide equivalent per year), are required to have in place four key elements:

1. National REDD+ strategy or action plan (NS/AP);
2. Forest reference emission level / forest reference level (FREL/FRL);
3. National forest monitoring system (NFMS);
4. Safeguard information system (SIS).

These elements are to be developed '*in the context of the provision of adequate and predictable support, including financial resources and technical and technological support to developing country Parties*'.⁶

Once REDD+ activities commence, countries will need to periodically submit a summary of information on how the Cancun safeguards ([Box 1](#)), have been addressed and respected in their specific national context.⁷ Submission of information and reports related to the other elements are also required, but these are not within the scope of this paper and are not listed or discussed here.

The body of UNFCCC decisions related to the Cancun safeguards and SIS can be summarized as follows:

- Developing countries should promote and support the Cancun safeguards while implementing REDD+ activities;⁸
- Developing countries should develop a system for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities (SIS), consistent with UNFCCC guidance;⁹
- Application of the safeguards and provision of information on how they are being addressed and respected should support developing countries' NS/AP;¹⁰
- Developing countries' NFMS may provide relevant information, as appropriate, for the SIS;¹¹
- Once the implementation of REDD+ activities has started, developing countries should periodically submit summaries of information to the UNFCCC on how the safeguards have been addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities;¹²

- Summaries of information on safeguards should be submitted through national communications or other agreed communications channels and, on a voluntary basis, via the [UNFCCC REDD Web Platform](#);¹³
- In order to be eligible for results-based payments, developing countries should have a SIS in place *and* should have submitted their most recent summary of information on safeguards;¹⁴ and
- [Developing countries are required or strongly encouraged to include the following elements in their summaries of information: which REDD+ activities are covered by the safeguards; description of each safeguard in accordance with national circumstances; description of existing relevant systems and processes; information on how each safeguard has been addressed and respected; improved information provided over time].¹⁵

Broad consensus exists around a few basic characteristics of a SIS, as reflected in the UNFCCC guidance provided in the Durban decision ([Box 2](#)).¹⁶ Transparency is a main attribute, both in SIS design and in the information it provides. It should be noted that a SIS is a *national* system¹⁷, providing accessible information to all relevant stakeholders, which may comprise a domestic and/or an international audience depending on the country-determined objectives of the SIS ([Section 3.1](#)). The information generated through a SIS should be comprehensive, in the sense of covering all seven Cancun safeguards. Also, the design of a SIS should be flexible, as it is understood that the SIS will likely require improvements over time, for instance due to refinements in the design and implementation of the REDD+ actions included in national REDD+ strategies or action plans. Lastly, the SIS should not be viewed as an entirely new piece of REDD+ architecture, but should be built on existing systems as appropriate.

Box 2: Existing UNFCCC guidance on safeguards information systems

"...systems for providing information on how the safeguards...are addressed and respected should, taking into account national circumstances and respective capabilities, and recognizing national sovereignty and legislation, and relevant international obligations and agreements, and respecting gender considerations:

- (a)** Be consistent with the guidance identified in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, paragraph 1;
- (b)** Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis;
- (c)** Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time;
- (d)** Provide information on how all of the safeguards...are being addressed and respected;
- (e)** Be country-driven and implemented at the national level;
- (f)** Build upon existing systems, as appropriate."

Source: UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2.

2.2 COUNTRY APPROACHES TO SAFEGUARDS

The SIS design considerations presented in this paper are expressed in the broader context of country approaches to safeguards (hereafter, “country approaches”).¹⁸ Such country approaches have emerged in recent years and are characterized by use and improvement of existing governance arrangements – such as policies, laws, regulations; institutional arrangements and information systems and sources -- to meet the UNFCCC requirements mentioned above, as well as any other safeguards goals a country may choose to adopt ([Section 2.2.1](#)).

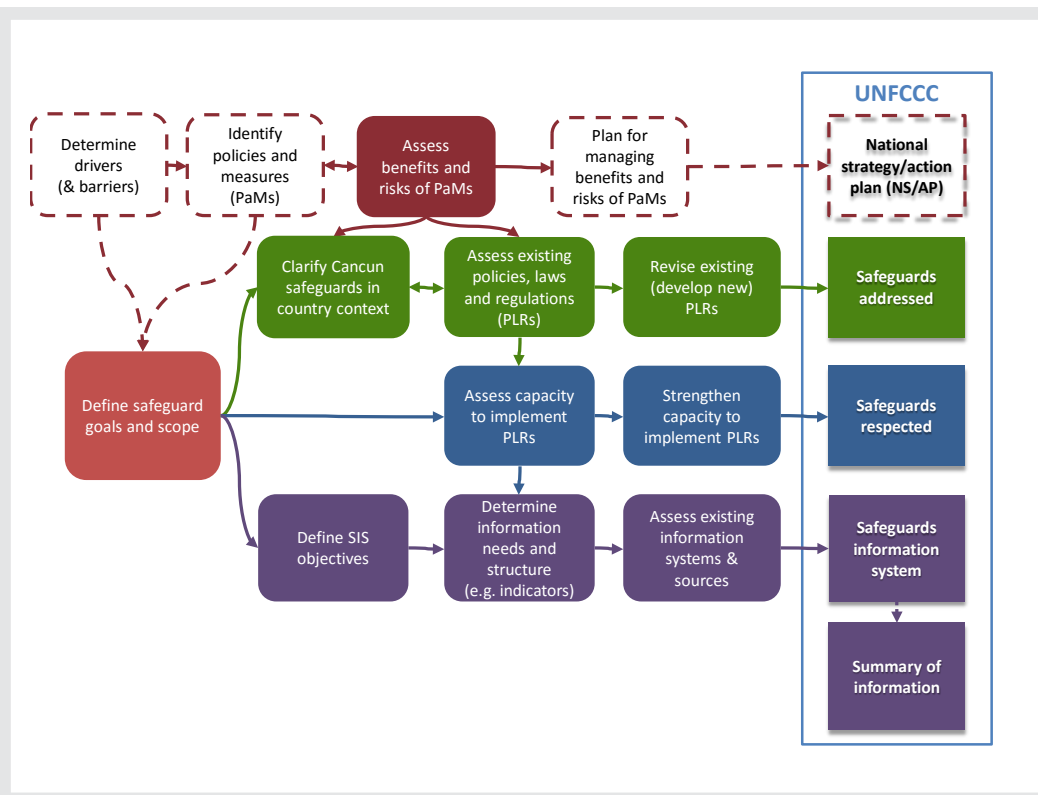
A country approach aims to ensure that:

- safeguards are *addressed* through the existence of a coherent body of policies, laws and regulations dealing with the risks and benefits associated with proposed REDD+ actions;
- safeguards are *respected* through the implementation and enforcement of those policies, laws and regulations, by government and (where relevant and appropriate) non-government actors, throughout the implementation of REDD+ actions;
- a SIS is in place to provide information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected; and
- summaries of information on safeguards are submitted periodically to the UNFCCC.

There is no blueprint for a country approach. Each country’s approach will be different and reflect specific national circumstances as well as what governments, with contributions from other stakeholders, define as the overall goals, scope and scale ([Section 2.2.1](#)) of safeguards application. Drawing on practical experiences, however, some generic steps can be identified ([Figure 1](#)) which may be useful for countries planning to develop their country approach to safeguards, including design and development of their SIS.

This paper focuses primarily on considerations specific to SIS design (see purple boxes in [Figure 1](#)). The following section briefly outlines other SIS design-relevant steps of a country approach, before focusing on practical considerations for designing a SIS ([Part 3](#)). Early country experiences, as reported during the workshops and consultations that informed this paper, are demonstrating the value of considering certain elements – such as assessing the benefits and risks of proposed REDD+ actions; clarifying the Cancun safeguards under the national circumstances; or identifying and assessing existing governance arrangements – as important preparatory steps for the design of a SIS.

Figure 1: Generic steps and possible sequencing of a country approach to safeguards showing links to REDD+ national strategy / action plan development process



Country approaches to safeguards are non-linear and highly iterative processes – the sequence of steps presented here represents theoretical and idealized processes for illustrative purposes only. Each country will determine its own steps, and their sequence, and may want to revisit some of the steps as they progress through their safeguards processes.

2.2.1 DEFINING GOALS, SCOPE AND SCALE

Three broad safeguards considerations, with direct implications for the design of a SIS, are the *goals of a country approach to safeguards*, the *scope of safeguards application* and the *scale of implementation of REDD+ actions*. These considerations are all embedded in the broader process of planning for REDD+, and developing an NS/AP. In principle, the goals, scope and scale should be defined well in advance of considering the design of a SIS. In practice, however, the development of a country approach to safeguards is often an iterative process, with discussions and decisions on the development of the NS/AP taking place in parallel, or being revisited at later stages in the broader REDD+ readiness process. Countries may also adopt a range of different strategic approaches to operationalize their NS/APs, in line with their specific national circumstances and policy priorities. How a country chooses to implement its NS/AP will have a profound effect on safeguards information needs and sources, and consequently SIS design.

Goals of a country approach to safeguards

Defining safeguards goals refers to choices made in a country's safeguards approach of whether to cover safeguards requirements additional to those of the UNFCCC and the Cancun safeguards. For example, countries may want to consider other bi- or multi-lateral safeguards requirements, such as the World Bank Operational Policies as applicable to financing from the FCPF Carbon Fund, when designing their country approaches to safeguards. Countries may also consider what national sustainable development or green growth policies, among others, could benefit from addressing and respecting REDD+ safeguards.

Safeguards goals are likely to reflect a trade-off between a country's strategic policy objectives and budgetary and capacity constraints. Integrating all safeguards requirements – either international or domestic – into a single country approach (and therefore a single SIS design) can avoid the development of inefficient and unsustainable parallel safeguards processes.

Scope of safeguards application

Similarly, the scope of safeguards application will determine the types of information that a SIS will collect and provide. UNFCCC requirements indicate that the Cancun safeguards should be applied to all REDD+ actions. Such actions, as means of tackling drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (as well as enabling more effective and extensive 'plus activities'¹⁹), are unlikely to be restricted to the forestry or any other single land-use sector; some may be cross-sectoral in nature. Defining the scope of safeguards application will thus depend on how a country plans to implement REDD+.

In practice, a number of countries are aiming to integrate REDD+ into wider forestry sector strategies, or even more broadly, as a cross-sectoral mechanism, engaging agriculture and energy sectors, for example, to catalyze sustainable productive landscapes. As such, REDD+ safeguards could be applied to a broad scope of actions in multiple sectors. This can, in turn, significantly broaden the scope of a SIS, which would have to collect and provide information on a wide range of multi-sectoral issues. This may imply a greater need for resources and so could be considered a longer-term objective. On the other hand, a broader scale of application may simplify matters (and possibly be more cost-effective), as it eliminates the need to disaggregate information geographically by areas where REDD+ actions are taking place, and areas without REDD+.

Scale of REDD+ action implementation

In addition to the horizontal dimension of how broadly REDD+ safeguards will be applied (scope), there is also a vertical dimension and different options of scale when it comes to selecting and implementing REDD+ actions. The UNFCCC calls for a national-level SIS²⁰, but the NS/AP may be operationalized through a variety of modalities at different scales from national-level policy interventions to subnational land-use planning, down to site-based projects.

Strategic decisions on the most appropriate scale(s) for actions to achieve NS/AP goals will have a direct influence on the design of a SIS. The information needs linked to social

and environmental benefits and risks of national-level policy interventions are likely to be significantly different to those of site-based activities. Correspondingly, the safeguards information needs and available information sources will also differ. In addition, irrespective of scale of REDD+ action implementation, safeguards information may well be generated or available at a subnational level; means of aggregation of information from different geographic scales will be an important consideration when determining the information content and structure of the SIS.

As with goals and scope, considerations of scale in NS/AP implementation, and therefore SIS design, may not be static. Countries may choose to start with a subnational approach on an interim basis, with a view to expanding to incorporate national policy elements at a later date, or vice versa. Safeguard information needs and sources can change over time, adjusting to the scale of REDD+ implementation; SIS designs will need to be flexible to allow for this.

2.2.2 ASSESSING BENEFITS AND RISKS OF REDD+ ACTIONS

In terms of SIS design considerations, it is becoming increasingly apparent that potential REDD+ actions should ideally be identified *before* starting to consider what safeguards information to provide and how. Indeed, the nature of the REDD+ actions being considered, and their potential benefits and risks, will determine what information will need to be provided through the SIS ([Section 2.1](#)). Assessing proposed REDD+ actions for their potential benefits and risks, to the environment and society, is one clear analytical step to link safeguards (including SIS design) with NS/AP development. This is a crucial link that has been until now absent or weak in many countries, leaving safeguards somewhat in isolation from the rest of the REDD+ readiness process.

If no options for actions to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation have been identified, or these are still in development, it would be important to revisit benefit and risk assessments once the NS/AP is further developed and REDD+ actions have been defined. SIS design and development can proceed in advance of specifying REDD+ actions, but runs the risk of having a thematic scope broader than necessary, such as including information on environmental and social benefits and risks that may not be relevant to REDD+ actions once identified. Consequently, SIS design before development of a coherent first draft NS/AP could prove to be resource inefficient, in both development and operation of the resultant information system. This being said, the identification of REDD+ actions can be informed by a broad-brushstroke benefit and risk assessment conducted before, or in parallel to, drafting an NS/AP. An iterative process of assessing benefits and risks, refining the selection and design of REDD+ actions, might best serve both NS/AP and SIS development processes.

There is a range of methods and tools available to analyze the benefits and risks of potential REDD+ actions.²¹ Strategic environmental and social impact assessments, which are institutionalized in many countries, can also provide a framework for benefit and risk analyses.

2.2.3 CLARIFYING SAFEGUARDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Another crucial component of country approaches is the clarification of the Cancun safeguards according to national circumstances. The Cancun safeguards can be seen as a set of broad overarching principles that need to be clarified, in terms of specific thematic issues of relevance in the country.²² Such clarification can help stakeholders to develop a joint understanding of what it means to “*promote and support*” these safeguards in their specific country context. The identification of key issues most relevant to the application of each of the Cancun safeguards should take into account the risks and benefits associated with a country’s potential REDD+ actions.

The clarification of safeguards can relate to the structuring information in a SIS ([Section 3.2.1](#)). In some cases, this clarification process has led to the definition of country-specific national REDD+ safeguards or standards, the scope of which sometimes going beyond what is required by the UNFCCC. Information on how these national safeguards frameworks are being addressed and respected would form the basis for SIS structure and content. A number of countries have acknowledged the process of clarifying the Cancun (and any other) safeguards, and structuring safeguards information (for example, in terms of national sets of principles, criteria and/or indicators), as a potential entry point for broad stakeholder consultation or participation. Engaging stakeholders to determine what these safeguards mean in their specific country context can strengthen transparency and credibility of the safeguards information populating a SIS.

2.2.4 IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING AND STRENGTHENING EXISTING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

A first step in many existing country approaches to safeguards has been to identify and assess how existing governance arrangements – notably policies, laws and regulations (PLRs)²³; institutional mandates, procedures²⁴ and capacities; and information systems and sources – tackle, at least on paper, the priority issues under each safeguard (as clarified by the country). Such assessments can help establish what safeguards-relevant PLRs are already in place, what institutions are mandated to implement and enforce them, and what information systems might contribute to the SIS. Assessments of existing governance arrangements can also identify potential gaps, overlaps or inconsistencies in the PLRs, institutional mandates and procedures, and information systems that could hinder safeguards being addressed and respected during REDD+ implementation. Based on the findings of such assessments, PLRs might be amended or new provisions drafted in order to fill gaps or deal with inconsistencies, overlaps and weaknesses in a country’s policy, legal and regulatory frameworks. New regulations could be adopted to support the implementation and enforcement of the relevant PLRs.

Assessments of PLRs and other relevant governance arrangements can help identify potentially useful information sources for a SIS, as well as relevant institutional roles and responsibilities for information compilation, management, provision and other desired SIS functions ([Section 3.2](#)).



PART III

SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEM DESIGN ELEMENTS

3

Many REDD+ countries are just beginning to turn their attention to the development of a SIS that is both anchored to their NS/APs and integrated into their wider country approaches to safeguards. No country has a functioning SIS in place yet and governments, together with other stakeholders, are now starting to appreciate the complexities and implications of SIS design and the importance of safeguards information for achieving REDD+, as well as possible broader sustainable development and other national policy, goals. Questions often asked by REDD+ countries about the SIS include:

- What does a SIS look like?
- How do I go about designing one?
- How much will it cost (to both build and to operate)?
- Who will pay for it?

It is difficult to give broadly applicable answers to these questions. Indeed, development of a SIS does not require establishment of an entirely new information system (although countries can choose to develop new systems if they wish).²⁵ Depending on the country context, it can be helpful to integrate existing information systems and sources into design of a SIS, or to draw on existing information, to perform the necessary functions of a SIS.

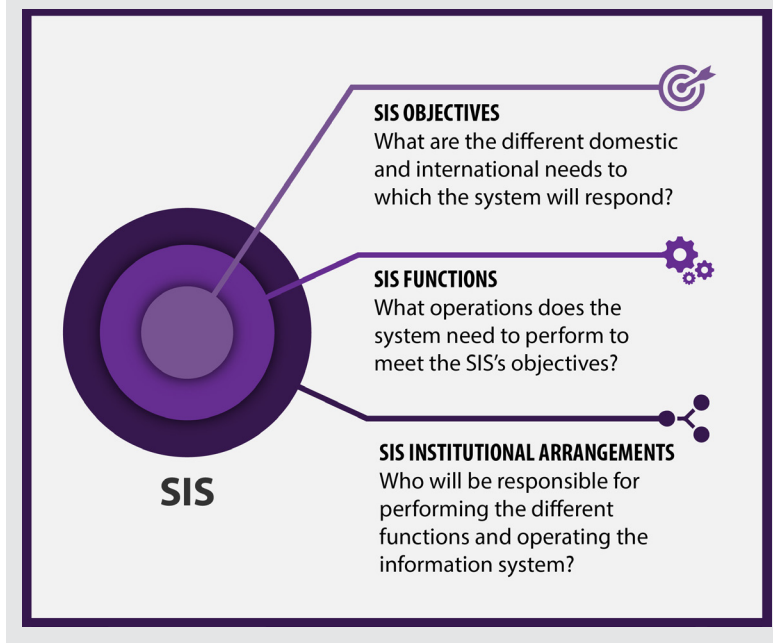
A SIS, therefore, could be considered to be a combination of existing systems and sources of information, together with any new information or institutional arrangements needed to fill identified gaps. Design features will therefore be country-specific, rather than generic, if a SIS is built upon information systems and sources already in place in a country. Nevertheless, a few key design considerations, identified through stakeholder consultations conducted in the preparation of this paper, could be considered when preparing for, and proceeding with, SIS development. These design considerations can be organized around three key elements ([Figure 2](#)):

1. SIS objectives ([Section 3.1](#));
2. SIS functions ([Section 3.2](#)); and
3. SIS institutional arrangements ([Section 3.3](#)).

Each of these design elements is elaborated upon below, with concise country examples to illustrate key concepts where possible. An additional important consideration is cost, including both the upfront investment costs of building a SIS and the recurring operational costs of operating it. SIS costs are briefly touched upon in [Section 3.4](#).

It is important to restate that development of a SIS can be an iterative undertaking. For example, considerations of SIS objectives may be reviewed and revised in light of decisions made about SIS functions, or functions may be reconsidered when institutional

Figure 2: Key design considerations for safeguards information systems



responsibilities are taken into account. Developing a SIS in an iterative and adaptive manner also allows for the incorporation of lessons learned from operating previous versions of the system.

An initial SIS design may make use of information that is readily available, or most relevant to the early stages of REDD+ implementation, with a view to expand content or improve functionality at later stages. SIS objectives, functions and institutional arrangements can all be adjusted in line with progress or revisions to the country's NS/AP and clarification of the Cancun safeguards in the specific country context. Such a process of incrementally refining the design of a SIS is anticipated and expected under the UNFCCC, which notes that a SIS should *"be flexible to allow for improvements over time"*.²⁶ A phased approach to planning for SIS development and implementation, which anticipates changing levels of, for example, institutional capacity and financial support, maybe a prudent step in establishing the system.

3.1 SIS OBJECTIVES

What are the different domestic and international information needs that the system will respond to?

The objective of a SIS, from the perspective of UNFCCC requirements is to demonstrate that the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected during REDD+ implementation. These are the basic objectives that every REDD+ country's SIS should meet, and countries may initially choose to limit their SIS objectives to meeting these UNFCCC requirements. A further objective could relate to using information from the SIS to prepare a summary of safeguards information, which is also required by the UNFCCC for countries to access and obtain payments for REDD+ results.

Countries may, over time, or from the outset, wish to consider additional objectives for their SIS, for example to ensure that REDD+, through the application of safeguards, contributes to broader sustainable development policy goals. In addition to collecting and providing REDD+ safeguards information, a SIS can also be designed to provide information relevant to a number of domestic and international policy objectives. This may help to build domestic support for a SIS (as well as REDD+ in general), in recognition of its potential to serve multiple uses, and also increase the returns on the cost of developing and operating the system. Information on how environmental and social benefits and risks are being managed in forestry and other land-use sectors, for example, could contribute to a range of domestic objectives ([Figure 3](#)). Indeed, some countries have indicated that provision of information to the UNFCCC would not be the principal purpose of their SIS, and that informing domestic policy objectives would take priority.²⁷ Some of these additional, domestic and international, objectives for a SIS are discussed briefly below.

Funding accessed – Apart from being one of the UNFCCC requirements to access results-based payments, addressing and respecting safeguards and developing a SIS can help to attract investment in REDD+. The ability to document risk reduction may be a key factor in investment decisions for results-based REDD+ actions. Financing for results-based actions, particularly from the private sector, may be based on increased confidence in the enabling environment in which REDD+ is implemented. A SIS may also help countries to meet the safeguards requirements of different international organizations and other funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, that are likely to make results-based payments for measured, reported and verified emissions reductions/enhanced removals. Providing information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected will also be important to address reputational risk for donors and financiers of REDD+ readiness and demonstration efforts.²⁸

Improved NS/AP implementation – A SIS may contribute to improved NS/AP implementation by helping to design REDD+ actions that will be more sustainable, taking into account wider socio-economic issues and environmental concerns that are likely to be important in addressing the underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and enabling the sustainable management, conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. Information collected on how safeguards are being addressed and respected may also allow for the identification of strengths or gaps in the application of safeguards to REDD+ actions, contributing to adaptive management of the NS/AP and ultimately strengthening its implementation (Ecuador example, [Box 3](#)). The safeguards/SIS also contribute to sustainability of NS/AP by reducing, mitigating or preventing potential conflicts related to impacts on stakeholders, which have the potential to slow, or in some cases, halt NS/AP implementation.

Greater legitimacy of REDD+ – A SIS may help to enhance the domestic legitimacy of REDD+ by increasing transparency through stakeholder participation in various aspects of SIS design and operation, and the provision of information to stakeholders at national, subnational and local levels. This can result in increased stakeholder ownership of the NS/AP; it can also ensure that safeguards are appropriate to national circumstances and contribute to national sustainable development goals as well as other international policy commitments outside of climate change mitigation.

Policies reformed based on evidence - A SIS may contribute to policy-making priorities. Depending on the scope of the SIS the country has identified, a SIS may be able to inform decision-making at the national or subnational level related to multiple policy objectives, such as wider forest sector reform, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, watershed restoration, biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation, gender equality and social inclusion. As such, the information contained and made available by a SIS may contribute to delivering domestic sustainable development and green growth goals, among others.

Box 3: Determining safeguards information system objectives in Ecuador

Ecuador's national REDD+ Action Plan and its country approach to safeguards are closely related to the national sustainable development objectives laid out in the "National Plan for Good Living 2013-2017" (Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir). Ecuador's approach to safeguards aims to avoid potential risks associated with REDD+ and promote social and environmental benefits according to national goals and priorities. This approach takes account of Ecuador's national context and priorities through: i) the legal and political framework applicable to safeguards; ii) national institutional capacities; iii) the approach to REDD+ implementation, as reflected in Ecuador's national REDD+ Action Plan; and iv) risks and benefits associated with REDD+ identified through a REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards clarification process.

The main objective of Ecuador's SIS is to provide and manage information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected during REDD+ implementation, through the enforcement of the applicable legal framework. This is reflected in the safeguards and SIS component of the REDD+ Action Plan, with stated goals to promote the Cancun safeguards (addressing and respecting them throughout REDD+ implementation), and to design and operate a SIS to report on this.

The proposed SIS design in Ecuador will promote a multipurpose and flexible system that allows the management of relevant information for reporting to the UNFCCC via the summary of information on safeguards, while at the same time allowing other national and international stakeholders to access information about how the safeguards are being addressed and respected. The information collected on safeguards will be used to provide feedback and recommendations to strengthen and improve the promotion of safeguards in the country, as well as the implementation of the REDD+ Action Plan through specific actions (or "policies and measures").

The SIS will serve as a platform to collect and manage socioeconomic and environmental information from local and national scales, in accordance with the design and scope of the REDD+ measures and actions, to report how safeguards are being addressed and respected in the design and implementation of the REDD+ Action Plan. The main information sources for Ecuador's SIS will be existing centralized information systems and largely local-level reports on REDD+ implementation.

Safeguards reports will be generated through the SIS, building on linkages made between safeguards and other aspects of the national REDD+ Action Plan, namely the participation strategy; communication mechanisms; the national forest monitoring system; and the registry system for REDD+ actions, among others. The SIS design relies on identifying and developing processes that provide a complete portrait of how the system will function and how it is connected to other REDD+ processes. The system relies heavily on institutional arrangements to collate information from existing information systems and other government entities. It is anticipated that a web platform for the SIS will be used to share information and collect comments or suggestions, which may be useful to promote transparency and build confidence in the effective implementation of REDD+ actions.

Source: Ministerio del Ambiente, et al. (2014)

3.2 SIS FUNCTIONS

WHAT OPERATIONS DOES THE SYSTEM NEED TO PERFORM TO MEET CHOSEN OBJECTIVES OF THE SIS?

As summarized earlier, UNFCCC guidance on SISs ([Box 2](#)) is limited to a handful of general characteristics expected of the system, and no guidance or requirements are provided in terms of what *functions* a SIS will have to perform to meet the desired objectives for the system. In response to this absence of formal guidance, this paper reviews a number of possible functions ([Figure 3](#)) as key considerations for developing an effective and operational SIS, which are in line with the broad guiding characteristics agreed under the UNFCCC, mainly: information compilation and management; information analysis; information quality control; and information dissemination. It should be noted, however, that every country's circumstances are different and that a SIS does not need to perform all functions below in order to be effective.



Figure 3: Possible key functions for consideration during the design and operation of a safeguards information system

The functions of a SIS will likely be performed by a mix of institutions, stakeholders and/or systems. Assessing the PLRs that address the safeguards ([Section 2.2.4](#) and [Figure 1](#)) can help determine which government (and possibly non-government) institutions are mandated and capacitated to carry out the desired functions of the SIS. It could also contribute to identifying existing information systems that already perform those functions or information sources that provide this information, and could therefore be incorporated into the SIS design. The role of non-state actors – civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as the private sector – in complementing government institutional mandates and capacities, can also be considered in the process of assigning functional responsibilities within the SIS. [Section 3.3](#) elaborates on institutional arrangements to implement the desired SIS functions.

The following sections of the paper will review practical considerations for designing a SIS that performs one or more of the potential SIS functions mentioned above.

3.2.1 INFORMATION COMPILATION AND MANAGEMENT

The information compilation and management functions of a SIS are primarily concerned with determining:

- what information is **needed** to demonstrate that the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation, in addition to meeting any other SIS objectives set by the country;
- how to **structure** the necessary information within the SIS, e.g. as safeguard-by-safeguard narrative descriptions, categorized as principles, criteria and/or indicators, through spatial information, or some combination of these approaches;
- what **sources** of relevant information to meet these needs already exist and what additional types of information might need be compiled; and
- how to **manage** the information once it has been compiled, so other SIS functions can be performed with the information.

Each of these aspects is outlined in the following sections.

Information needs

The following considerations may help countries to determine what information is needed for their SIS:

Safeguards goals and scope, and SIS objectives – SIS information needs will vary according to the country's safeguards goals and scope, and the objectives identified for its SIS. For example, should a country choose to set goals that include the safeguards frameworks of different REDD+ donors, these frameworks might have additional information requirements to those of the Cancun safeguards. Should a country choose to extend the scope of REDD+ actions and thus safeguards application to cover broader forestry or other land-use sectors, then this too will have implications for the information needs of the SIS.

Scale of REDD+ implementation – Countries with decentralized forest management, or those that have identified benefits and risks specific to REDD+ actions undertaken at sub-national or local scales, may establish that their SIS information needs vary by state, province or district. This is addressed in more detail under information structure and institutional arrangements ([Section 3.3](#)), and is also illustrated through a country example from Indonesia ([Box 4](#)).

Improvements over time – Depending on resources, capacities and time constraints, countries may choose to start with a SIS that performs limited functions and contains information that is easily available and/or most relevant to the early phases of REDD+ implementation, and expanding or improving the SIS at a later stage. Though information should be comprehensive in terms of covering all seven Cancun safeguards, a country may choose to focus efforts on aggregating the information most relevant to priority benefits and risks associated with key REDD+ actions.

Box 4: Designing a safeguards information system in line with the scale of REDD+ implementation in Indonesia

Indonesia has a decentralized political structure where the provincial, district and village-level authorities have considerable autonomy, especially in relation to natural resource management. Given this national context, the REDD+ National Strategy recognizes the crucial roles of both national and subnational governments to reduce emissions through REDD+. As such, REDD+ in Indonesia will be implemented through a jurisdictional approach: “the nationwide approach under which REDD+ is implemented and administered through Indonesia’s provincial and district government units, with performance aggregated at the national level”. The jurisdictional approach framework includes a performance evaluation system which will measure each jurisdiction’s progress against the National REDD+ Strategy, including the national safeguards system. This information will then feed into the national SIS.

As with implementation of REDD+ actions in Indonesia, the SIS will also involve both horizontal coordination between national ministries and vertical collaboration with national and sub-national governments. In the current early stage of SIS operationalization, two approaches are used: (a) REDD+ pilot project implementers report directly to the national SIS data management unit using a “self-assessment approach to safeguards implementation”; and (b) at the subnational level, the SIS has been tested in Jambi and East Kalimantan provinces, to see the possibility to link the national-level SIS to existing forest-related information systems in the two provinces.

Scale is also a key consideration for stakeholder engagement in the design of the SIS. Stakeholders at both the national and sub-national scales are being engaged in the iterative process of SIS development, promoting transparency through a participative approach. Such an approach increases the confidence of the diverse actors, creating a sense of ownership and acceptance and ensuring that the outputs fit within both the national and subnational contexts and, therefore, can be applied effectively.

Information structure

Another important aspect of information compilation and management is deciding how to structure safeguards information within the SIS. As with the other design aspects of the SIS, the information structure will be based on a number of factors, including:

- safeguards goals adopted, or the safeguards frameworks the country will apply to REDD+;
- scope of safeguards application;
- scale of REDD+ intervention (national, subnational or local);
- country clarification of the Cancun safeguards;
- specific objectives of the SIS, and plans for analysis and dissemination to the different users of the information;
- capacity and resources available to implementing institutions;
- specific investor and donor requirements; and
- structure of information within existing information systems and sources.

Two structuring options for safeguards information have so far received the most attention in countries' work on SIS design:

1. According to safeguard, with supporting narrative descriptions of what is in place to address each of the safeguards and how they have been respected; and/or
2. According to some form of hierarchical categorization of information, beyond the seven Cancun safeguards; a structure that is often applied includes:
 - **Principles** (P): broad aspirational statements of intent, i.e. statements of objective;
 - **Criteria** (C): more specific statements of thematic content that elaborate the principles; and/or
 - **Indicators** (I): detailed qualitative, quantitative or descriptive attributes that, when assessed, can demonstrate changes over time.

Narrative descriptions – These could be used on their own to describe how a country is addressing and respecting the safeguards, or used in combination with other information structures or means of presenting information. Such descriptions might be based on studies or assessments of the country's relevant PLRs and their implementation and enforcement, for example, or on specific information covering key thematic issues from the country's safeguards clarification (e.g. change in forest cover in forest areas that are particularly important for social and environmental benefits; respect for the rights of indigenous peoples; and transparency in the forest sector).

Principles, criteria and/or indicators (PCI) – A number of countries (an example of which, from Malaysia, is illustrated in [Box 5](#)) have used some variation on this structure when adapting or clarifying the Cancun safeguards and other safeguards frameworks relevant to their context (e.g. World Bank Operational Policies) into overarching principles (P). These principles are then broken down (or clarified) into criteria (C), which are linked to indicators (I) used to assess the extent to which the safeguards are addressed and respected. In most countries that apply a PCI structure, the principles and criteria are drawn from a framework developed as part of the national clarification of the Cancun (and possibly other) safeguards ([Section 2.2.3](#)). Many countries have integrated a participatory aspect into SIS design processes, which has included validating proposed indicators with a range of stakeholders.

Indicators may also be used to structure safeguards information outside of a PCI framework, helping to organize and present quantitative or qualitative safeguards information in a transparent and consistent way. The development of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) indicators and simple indicator sets (with clear institutional mandates and sufficient operational budgets for the compilation of information over time) can help to ensure this type of information is used in a SIS to provide a range of useful and accessible information to stakeholders (UN-REDD Programme 2015c). These need not be developed specifically for a SIS, as they may be based on relevant and pre-existing indicators associated with existing information systems and sources, and therefore do not necessarily imply additional costs for development. New indicators are best considered in cases where there is a distinct information need, not met by existing sources, to demonstrate safeguards are being addressed and respected.

Box 5: Structuring safeguards information using existing systems and sources in Malaysia

The scope of Malaysia's national REDD+ strategy, at least in its first iteration, is focused on the plus activities of REDD+, specifically sustainable management of forests and carbon stock conservation. Given this intended scope, an existing framework of principles, criteria and indicators (PCIs), based on the existing Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS), will be applied as to structure information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected. Malaysia is also considering incorporating the relevant Aichi Targets, for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, into their safeguards information structure.

The MTCS comprises nine principles, 47 criteria, 97 indicators and 307 verifiers of sustainable forest management (SFM). Five of the existing SFM principles under this certification scheme have been assessed to be directly related to the Cancun safeguards:

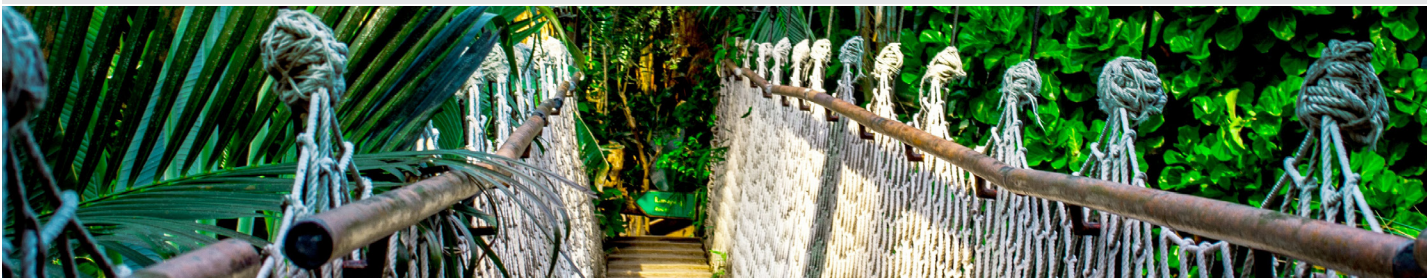
- Principle 1: Compliance with laws and principles
- Principle 2: Tenure and use rights and responsibilities
- Principle 3: Indigenous peoples' rights
- Principle 4: Community relations and worker's rights
- Principle 5: Benefits from the forest

Periodic reviews of the PCIs, engaging civil society and grassroots stakeholders, have already take place; the most recent review was in 2012. The PCIs of the existing SFM certification scheme are expected to be revised again in 2017 to be more REDD+-relevant (in terms of safeguards as well as measurement, reporting and verification of emissions reductions and enhanced removals).

The approach to structuring for information contained within the SIS, which is currently in the final stages of stakeholder consultation, is envisaged to have three main components:

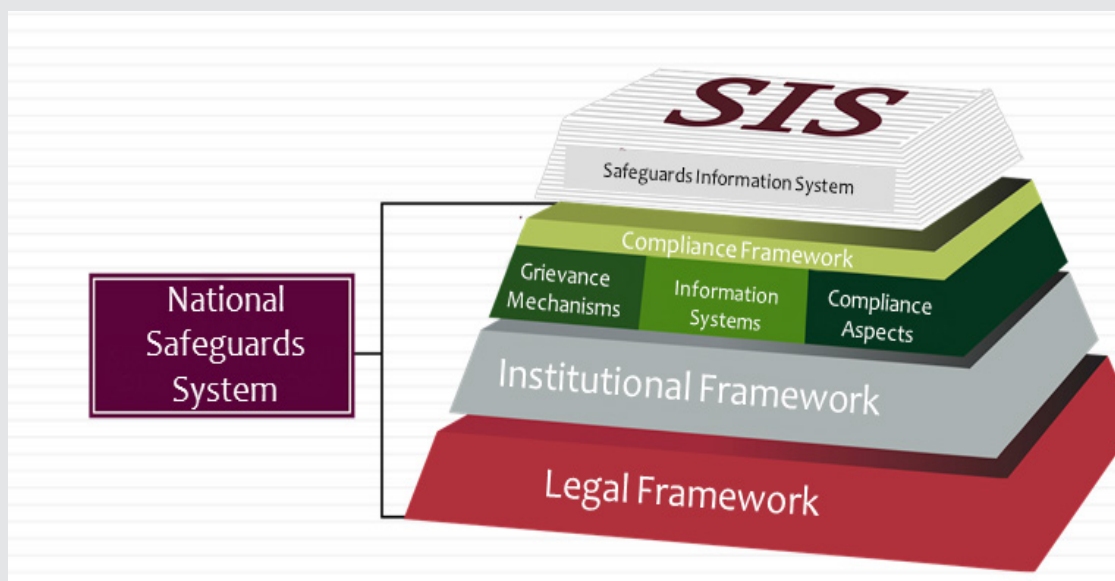
1. narrative descriptions of the interpretation of each Cancun safeguard in accordance with national circumstances;
2. progress against PCIs drawing largely from the existing MTCS (which includes third party audits) for subnational information on environmental and social safeguard processes and outcomes, coupled with national-level information on policy implementation; and
3. feedback from the public to foster transparency and more reliable information.

Sources: UN-REDD Programme (2015c); UN-REDD Programme (2015d); UN-REDD Programme (2015b)



Box 6: Using existing information systems and sources in Mexico

Mexico envisions putting in place a SIS built upon existing systems at the national level, which will allow for the provision of integrated information. It has been recognized, however, that having an information system will not necessarily guarantee compliance with the safeguards, and that it may be necessary to have a support structure that considers the existing governance arrangements of the country, particularly the legal, institutional and compliance frameworks, which when combined and linked will be used to operationalize the safeguards. This structure is known in Mexico as the National Safeguards System (NSS).



The NSS will define how the REDD+ safeguards application will be guaranteed in Mexico, and to which activities the safeguards will be applied. It will identify the laws and institutions that are to support their implementation and reporting, and the compliance aspects of the system, which will allow for the resolution of conflicts, dealing with complaints and feedback information loops. Mexico is currently in the process of a national consultation on its national REDD+ strategy, which will aim to implement REDD+ within a framework of sustainable rural development, and also guarantee the effective application and implementation of safeguards, in line with UNFCCC requirements.

Mexico is now developing an inventory of existing information systems and mechanisms for monitoring and reporting, derived from and linked to national and international legal frameworks. Relevance for the SIS is being determined based on whether the systems or mechanisms could be used to provide information on the implementation of REDD+ activities, consistent with the Cancun safeguards. The results of analysis of the relevant legal frameworks were used as a key input to determine which systems and mechanisms would be explored. The interpretation of safeguards is the next key step that Mexico plans to undertake; this will be used to further define what information would be needed to be included in the SIS.

Sources: CONAFOR (2014); CONAFOR y UN-REDD Programme (2015)

The information structuring examples presented here are broad options, and are not mutually exclusive. Rather than using the same information structure for the entire SIS, the information structure may differ according to the safeguard (or even according to the type of information provided for each safeguard). A narrative explanation of change in the cover of key forest types, and the implementation of policies and incentives to address this change may be accompanied by spatial information, for example. Countries with safeguards information needs varying by state, province or district might choose to design a standardized SIS structure for different scales, with, for example, province-specific indicators that use subnational information sources. This information could then be aggregated to generate national-level safeguards information (if not already captured in national information systems). It could also, if applicable, provide an opportunity to compare how safeguards are addressed and respected across provinces.

Information systems and sources

In responding to UNFCCC guidance to “*build upon existing systems*”, countries may wish to design and operate their SIS using existing information systems and sources of information. Assessment of institutional mandates and reporting responsibilities may help to identify existing systems and sources of information that are relevant for the SIS. An example of this process is currently taking place in Mexico ([Box 6](#)). Such an assessment takes into account existing institutional arrangements, resources and capacities, and ease of access to information, as well as existing mandates and protocols for information compilation and management. As mentioned previously ([Section 2.2.4](#)), assessing PLRs related to safeguards can contribute to this task of mapping out related institutional mandates and responsibilities. Stakeholder mapping can also help identify the holders of non-institutional information of relevance for the SIS, which could include, for example, forest users such as indigenous peoples and local communities.

Identifying, assessing and strengthening existing systems and sources of information

- Given the array of themes covered by the safeguards, one information system or source is unlikely to be able to provide all of the information needed for a SIS. Assessing information systems and sources can not only help to identify what information is already available in country, but can also point to gaps in the availability of existing information to meet identified information needs (i.e. information relevant to the risks and benefits of the country’s REDD+ actions). Where an assessment of existing information sources or systems highlights that some information needs cannot be met on the basis of what is already available, suitable arrangements may need to be found for closing those gaps. Existing information systems can be assessed to determine whether modifications to accommodate new information needs are feasible, such as adding or amending indicators, or adjusting information collection methods. The contribution of national forest inventory data to a SIS, for example, may be limited by the thematic scope, periodicity and sampling design of the inventory. National population censuses might be more easily modified to add a forest community-specific questionnaire. Some illustrative examples of information systems and sources which could be relevant for a SIS are presented in [Annex 2](#).

An important consideration in the compilation of safeguards information to enable an assessment of how safeguards have been respected in practice, is the scale and resolution at which the information is generated and whether this scale and resolution is commensurate with that of REDD+ implementation. A number of countries, for example, are opting to design national REDD+ registries in such a way that project-level initiatives are required to document how they address and respect safeguards; these could constitute a valuable source of site-specific information for a SIS.

Another evolving information system of potential relevance to the SIS is the NFMS ([Box 7](#)). The extent to which a NFMS can contribute information relevant to safeguards will depend on country circumstances and the design of the NFMS.

Sources of information from outside government - The compilation of safeguards information need not be sourced solely from government institutions and systems. Other stakeholders such as civil society, indigenous peoples, local communities and the private sector, may all be able to contribute information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected. Non-state actors may have greater geographical or thematic reach to complement or fill gaps provided by existing government systems or sources. Given their roles as managers and primary users of the forest, indigenous peoples and local communities could provide valuable primary information on the state of a country's forests and related livelihood outcomes. Similarly, reports and audits under voluntary sustainable commodity production standards and certification schemes, or reports on demand for forest products, could serve as important sources of safeguards information. As a SIS will be a national government system, it will be necessary for the government to validate the accuracy of all information populating the SIS.

Information management

The planned objectives and dissemination outputs of a SIS may help to determine an approach to managing safeguards information. Recording the approach to managing and storing safeguards information in a methodological document, in addition to establishing necessary institutional arrangements ([Section 3.3](#)), can be considered good practice for information management. Such an approach could include:

- specifying the institutional homes of, and focal points for, information systems and sources of relevance;
- providing guidance for analyzing this information in the context of the country approach to safeguards; and
- tasking a person or team to compile and analyze relevant safeguards information as needed.

In considering the frequency of compiling information for a SIS, countries might consider cycles of information compilation and reporting for relevant international, national and even subnational needs (which need not match the timeframes of the SIS functions).

The use of technological solutions to manage other national information systems, such as open-source software or web platforms, can help simplify the information compilation and management functions of a SIS, regardless of the type of information or its level of

Box 7: Possible contributions of national forest monitoring systems to safeguards information systems

A national forest monitoring system (NFMS) is one of the four key UNFCCC elements for REDD+, and may contribute important information to a SIS. An NFMS is commonly based on a combination of three main components (satellite land monitoring system, national forest inventory and GHG inventory), which will provide the following information in the context of REDD+: 1) information suitable for measuring, reporting and verifying (MRV) anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions reductions and enhanced removals; and 2) information on forest carbon stock and forest area changes resulting from REDD+ activities (UN-REDD Programme 2013b).

Considerations for the design and operating of a SIS and NFMS have important features in common, despite differences in the nature and timing of both systems. Both systems involve the development of capacities for information compilation, management and analysis; ensuring appropriate institutional arrangements and mandates are in place and utilizing transparent information-sharing mechanisms.

Both the functions of and information collected through the NFMS may be able to contribute to a SIS, such as through providing information on forest cover change that would be relevant to the Cancun safeguards (e) - natural forests and biological diversity, (f) - reversals, and (g) - displacement. It is important to note that possible contributions of a country's NFMS to its SIS should be assessed jointly by teams working on each system, taking into account associated costs, capacities and institutional arrangements.

complexity. One possible means of compiling, storing and/or archiving electronic forms of information – particularly documents, such as written laws or workshop reports – is uploading them to a repository. This could take the form of an online library, a spreadsheet, electronic records or a database. A repository of information, and database search functions, may contribute to ease of filing, access and navigation, particularly if a country chooses to use a combination of existing information systems for its SIS. Information could be organized by safeguard or by indicator, and could also be coded using searchable keywords. Given that the information needed to analyze some of the safeguards may overlap, tagging documents or uploading information to more than one location may be an appropriate means of organizing it. Institutions may have rules or protocols for different levels of information access (both uploading and downloading) for different stakeholder groups, so confidentiality considerations should be taken into account.

Countries with relatively advanced centralized information systems, such as national environmental information systems, may plan to use these systems, which often already compile information from the subnational level, together with international reporting mechanisms as their main sources of information. Countries may also seek to design a partly or fully automated SIS that largely compiles and manages information from existing information systems and sources, integrating analysis of how safeguards have been addressed and respected.

3.2.2 INFORMATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Depending on its overall objectives, a SIS will not just compile, manage and store information, but also perform analysis functions. The ultimate objective of analysing information will be determined by the country's safeguards goals and the audience for the dissemination of its results. In the context of UNFCCC requirements, analysis can help to demonstrate how the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout implementation of REDD+ (potentially with a view to informing the summary of safeguards information; [Section 3.5](#)). Analysis may also help to provide information on other identified national priorities, in line with the scope and objectives of the SIS, for example using safeguards information to assess the impact of certain national policies. Some forms of analysis that may be performed are:

- assessing trends in social and environmental conditions as a consequence of REDD+ implementation;
- scoring of indicators according to the information compiled, using time-series information to illustrate changes in the application of safeguards over time;
- coding and assessing documents to illustrate patterns in forest governance; and
- conducting statistical analyses.

Analysis methodologies will depend in part on how information is collected and managed within a SIS, and may require a mix of system functions and human resources to review and interpret information. Cost implications of this information analysis function should therefore be considered when planning budgets for SIS design and operation ([Section 3.4](#)). The nature of the analysis will also depend on whether the SIS compiles unprocessed information, or information that has already been processed and analysed for another purpose (or a mix of the two).

3.2.3 INFORMATION QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSURANCE

Although not explicitly required by the UNFCCC, inclusion of quality control and/or assurance functions in the SIS may help to ensure that the information provided is more credible and the analysis of that information more transparent. Quality control (QC) can be defined as a set of routine processes or procedures to measure and control the quality of information as it is being compiled, managed and analysed, and is typically performed by those directly involved in the management and analysis of information. Quality assurance (QA), on the other hand, typically refers to planned review procedures conducted by those not directly involved in the process of compiling, managing and analysing information.

Generally speaking, QC would likely be conducted by the designated institution(s) charged with the SIS functions of compiling, managing and disseminating safeguards information. Cross-checking safeguards information from different sources before analysis (whether used in the SIS nor not), can help to ensure quality and consistency of information. Once safeguards information has been aggregated and interpreted by the designated institutions, the quality and transparency of a SIS may be enhanced if the information also undergoes some form of QA process.

Once the SIS is fully operational, in time, a country may consider involving different domestic

stakeholders – government departments at the national and subnational levels; civil society organizations, private sector operators, local communities, etc. – in assuring the quality of SIS outputs, which could, for example, include the summary of safeguards information. Review of this kind may help to ensure that the analysis and interpretation of safeguards information reflects, as closely as possible, what is happening on the ground, as well as stakeholder’s concerns and priorities. This type of review of SIS outputs may enhance the transparency and credibility of the system.

An important objective of quality control and assurance procedures can be to document lessons learned and improve processes to collect, analyze and manage safeguards information over time, which is consistent with a stepwise approach to REDD+ in general, and SIS (and summaries of information) in particular.

3.2.4 INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND USE

A final pair of functions that could be considered in the design of a SIS includes:

- a) information dissemination to target audiences to meet desired objectives; and
- b) information use by stakeholders, to meet their various needs and mandates.

It should be noted that, in addition to having a SIS in place, a single international dissemination product is required to receive payments for REDD+ results under the UNFCCC (i.e. a summary of information on how all of the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ actions). Some of the connections between SIS design considerations and the development of summaries of safeguards information are discussed in [Section 3.5](#).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on the multiple potential uses of safeguards information – from informing international decisions on payments for results, through to improving democratic accountability. Outlined here are some further considerations for a country’s safeguards information dissemination strategy, which include: audience, accessibility, structure and reporting frequency. An example of how some of these safeguards information dissemination aspects are being considered during SIS development in Zambia is shown in [Box 8](#).

Audience – A country’s overall SIS objectives ([Section 3.1](#)) will determine dissemination options, which can be tailored to reach desired target audiences, each with different information needs. Stakeholder and institutional analyses, conducted as part of REDD+ readiness processes, could be helpful in identifying target audiences for SIS information at different scales (international, national, subnational and local), across key constituencies (public, private and civil society sectors, as well as indigenous peoples and local communities).

Accessibility – Along with transparency, accessibility is an important SIS feature included in the Durban guidance and a key consideration when evaluating options for disseminating safeguards information. Many countries are considering online portals to disseminate safeguards information, which in some cases will be integrated with web platforms serving the NFMS. Such platforms could allow visualization of spatial information related



Box 8: Disseminating safeguards information through the national forest monitoring system web platform in Zambia

Zambia is in the process of developing a SIS that builds on several existing information systems, including the registry of the Zambian Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) and the web platform of the country's national forest monitoring system (NFMS). ZEMA is the government agency mandated to provide environmental reporting on all international agreements to which Zambia is a party, and will be ultimately providing safeguards information to the UNFCCC.

Zambia has chosen to implement REDD+ at landscape level. In each locality, an appropriate, independent non-governmental organization (NGO) will be identified to collect safeguards information. The information collected will be determined based on locality specific needs and this information will then be submitted to ZEMA for reporting. In fulfilling its mission, the NGO is expected to work closely with the government's Sectorial Implementation Units relevant to REDD+ (e.g. local government, energy, forestry, agriculture, commerce and industry) and subnational administrations. The safeguards information thus collected will be compiled and archived in the national registry operated by ZEMA.

Zambia will then use the web platform of its state-of-the-art NFMS to disseminate safeguards information at the national level. The NFMS is built around ten provincial forest monitoring laboratories relaying data to a central national forest monitoring laboratory through a web portal. This web portal will also be used to share information publicly by displaying biannual reports and a REDD+ wiki has been integrated in order to facilitate stakeholder discussion on the content of this information.

Source: Zambia (2015)

to safeguards, and provide differential, stakeholder-specific levels of information access (download) and submission (upload). Such technological solutions might not be appropriate for reaching stakeholders who face challenges accessing online information. In order to address some of these challenges, availability of information in local languages, via radio announcements, posters in community centres, verbal presentations in village assemblies, and other such options for dissemination should be considered.

Structure – Content structure, as discussed in [Section 3.2.1](#), can vary across the different dissemination products a country decides to develop, depending on the objectives and audience. The structure of a SIS – such as through a PCI framework, does not necessarily have to be reflected in each dissemination product, and not all SIS information needs to be communicated to all stakeholders ([Section 3.5](#)).

Frequency – How often should stakeholder information be disseminated to different stakeholders to meet different objectives? A country may want to align the frequency of information collected for the SIS with the frequency of information already being collected by existing systems and sources. Information may be shared more frequently on a national level than what is required internationally under the UNFCCC.

3.3 SIS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PERFORMING THE DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS AND OPERATING THE INFORMATION SYSTEM?

A fundamental SIS design consideration is that of the institutional arrangements used for designing and operating the system. According to UNFCCC guidance ([Box 2](#)), a SIS should build on existing systems where appropriate. A country may choose to review how institutional mandates of different existing information systems cover the functions chosen to meet the objectives of the SIS, assess how effective these are, and determine whether any new institutional arrangements are needed. In the case of a SIS that incorporates the participation of non-state actors in one or more functions, decisions about which functions stakeholders will provide input to, feedback on, and participate in, will be imperative.

Institutional mandates and responsibilities – The existing PLRs relevant to safeguards, as discussed in [Section 2.2.4](#), can help define the mandates and responsibilities of existing government institutions that might contribute to a SIS. Consideration should be given to how those mandates and responsibilities are implemented in practice. This includes determining what institutional arrangements are in place to ensure information system functions ([Section 3.2](#)) are operational, and what institutional (financial, human, technological) capacities could be strengthened to improve SIS functioning. This will be particularly relevant when attempting to demonstrate how safeguards have been respected. To do so, will necessitate information on how PLRs have been implemented in practice, as well as the outcomes of their implementation, in terms of environmental and social changes on the ground.

For example, a country's environment ministry maybe the focal institution for REDD+ and for reporting to the UNFCCC, as well as host to one or more systems with information about the country's natural resources and environmental management. The forestry administration may, however, conduct the national forest inventory, while the bureau of statistics may conduct the national census. In this case, while the ministry of environment hosts the SIS, all other relevant institutions would need to ensure that they cooperate to share information for the SIS in a timely and accessible manner.

Information-sharing agreements between institutions, such as a memorandum of understanding, can help facilitate information sharing by explicitly stating the institutional arrangements required to share information, the objectives for sharing such information, as well as the conditions associated with its use. Similar arrangements may be required through administrative hierarchies, to allow for the flow of subnational information from various sources into a single national SIS (UN-REDD Programme, 2015e).

Closing gaps in institutional arrangements – Where an assessment of existing information sources and/or systems shows that these do not meet SIS requirements, suitable arrangements may need to be found for closing those information gaps. This may also involve building the capacity of relevant institutions, as well as expanding, changing or creating mandates and protocols for information compilation and management. Other SIS information sources may include non-governmental organizations, industry standards, corporate social responsibility policies, and the traditional knowledge and customary practices of indigenous peoples

and local communities. The role of non-government institutions could also be considered in complementing institutional arrangements within government, and could contribute to gap-filling measures. Industry standards and corporate social responsibility policies, as well as traditional knowledge and customary practices and techniques of indigenous peoples and local communities, could contribute to demonstrating safeguards have been addressed and respected.

An example of institutional arrangements for Costa Rica's SIS is provided in [Box 9](#).

Box 9: Institutional arrangements for Costa Rica's safeguards information system

Costa Rica prepared the first proposal for its SIS with the support of the UN-REDD Programme in 2013-2014, along with a preliminary list of indicators to report how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected. This proposal included analysis of institutional arrangements which were necessary for the SIS to collect, manage and report information.

With the goal of designing a SIS that uses existing systems and sources of information where possible, in line with guidance from the UNFCCC, the Costa Rica National Forestry Financing Fund established a partnership with the National Centre for Geoenvironmental Information (CENIGA), in order to create a REDD+ safeguards module within the National System for Environmental Information (SINIA). The SINIA is legally recognized as Costa Rica's official platform to manage and distribute national environmental information, coordinating and linking with different institutions and sectors. In addition, it administers an integrated system of environmental indicators and statistics. There is also a module of spatially explicit environmental information, linked with the spatial data infrastructure of the National Geographic Institute, which has interoperability with the National Territorial Information System.

Existing information managed by these relevant national institutions, along with new information generated by institutions responsible for REDD+ projects, will form the basis of the preliminary list of indicators for Costa Rica's SIS. This is built on the concept of using existing information to ensure the inclusion of high-quality information in the SIS, and take advantage of synergies in reporting – saving both time and resources. It was decided that the institutions in charge of managing the different sources of information for the SIS would compile information to generate reports and indicators. The inclusion of these indicators in the SINIA will require that the institution or institutions responsible for REDD+ implementation use CENIGA protocols, which are supported by Costa Rica's Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunications.

Although the institution that will manage the SIS has not yet been identified, there are plans for the selected institution to generate and compile the summary of information, which would then be delivered to the National Meteorological Institute – the institution responsible for preparing Costa Rica's reporting to the UNFCCC. An important aspect of the preparation process will be defining the budget and resources necessary for the institution responsible for the SIS to effectively develop the summaries of information with information that is relevant and comparable over time. Costa Rica has also recognized that the operationalization of the SIS may require building the financial and/or technical capacity of institutions during the readiness phase of REDD+, so that they can carry out the necessary functions related to compiling, analyzing and disseminating information.

Source: Costa Rica National Forestry Financing Fund (2015)

Institutional arrangements across multiple scales – Considerations of scale are cross-cutting throughout the identification and definition of institutional arrangements for a SIS. Although the UNFCCC requires that a SIS provides information at a national level, subnational systems could be used to feed into a SIS. This may be particularly important when providing information on how safeguards have been respected over time, i.e. demonstrating how PLRs have been implemented, the social and environmental benefits of REDD+ actions have been enhanced, and the risks are mitigated.

3.4 COSTS OF SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEM DESIGN AND OPERATION

As indicated above, generic blueprint SIS models cannot be prescribed at the global or regional level. Each country's SIS design and operation will depend on the SIS objectives chosen by the country, as well as the availability and functionality of pre-existing institutional arrangements, mandates and capacities. Consequently, costs of SIS development and operation cannot be predetermined in absolute monetary terms. However, a number of qualitative and relative perspectives on SIS costs have been provided by developing countries, donors, civil society and other technical experts consulted during the preparation of this paper. Some of these initial ideas are summarized in [Box 10](#).

Box 10: Perspectives on cost-related considerations for safeguards information systems

- Within the context of institutional arrangements for SIS operation, available resources and realistic expectations of budget availability and allocations, should be considered when undertaking SIS design.
- As well as technical and technological assistance, SIS development, as part of broader REDD+ readiness processes, will benefit from adequate, novel and predictable financial resources
- Providing regular information updates on how safeguards are being addressed and respected might only be a fraction of the original SIS design and development cost, i.e. upfront investment costs might be significantly greater than recurrent operational costs.
- Operating a SIS is likely to demand more time and human resources (to, for example collate various sources of information and analyze that information in the context of the NS/AP) than direct operational budget to cover recurrent running costs.
- SIS operations might only incur a fraction of the cost of measuring, reporting and verifying REDD+ results, yet the benefits of SIS information may go beyond REDD+, contributing to other national policy goals such as sustainable landscapes, poverty reduction, biodiversity conservation, etc.
- Safeguards information on risk mitigation can provide important information for investors in REDD+ actions, and those making payments for results, which could affect investor/donor confidence and consequently volumes of REDD+ financing.
- To ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the operation of a SIS, it may be useful to diversify the objectives of a SIS to increase the non-monetary returns on the initial investment.

Sources: interviews with developing country, donor and international civil society stakeholders consulted during the development of this paper

3.5 SUMMARIES OF SAFEGUARD INFORMATION

In addition to developing a SIS, provision of summaries of information on how all the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout implementation of REDD+ actions, is a key safeguards requirement that countries need to meet under the UNFCCC. In fact, submitting the most recent summary of information, starting when REDD+ activities are first implemented is one of the conditions that developing countries should meet in order to receive REDD+ result-based payments.²⁹ Summaries should be submitted to the UNFCCC via National Communications, or voluntary submission directly to the [UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform](#).³⁰

Once the first summary of information has been submitted, frequency of subsequent summaries should be consistent with the provisions for submissions of national communications – every four years for non-Annex I countries.³¹ Submission of a summary of information directly to the UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform would allow a country to provide its summaries of information on a more frequent basis than the National Communications reporting cycle, as the submissions to the platform can be made at any time.

As discussed in [Section 3.2.4](#), these summaries of information are one of the main channels for sharing safeguards information. Summaries of information provide an opportunity for countries to demonstrate to the international community (e.g. donors and other stakeholders) that safeguards are being addressed and respected through the implementation of REDD+ actions under the NS/AP. While a SIS is a national system, summaries of information are primarily for international audiences, though they may also be useful to domestic audiences). Domestic stakeholders are likely to have interest in more detailed information than what is provided in the summary of information submitted to the UNFCCC.

It should be noted that there is no explicit requirement for summaries of information to be outputs of a SIS. Indeed, the first submission of a summary of information to the UNFCCC, by Brazil ([Box 11](#)), was produced in advance of the country's SIS being designed, let alone developed. A number of countries, including Brazil in its first summary, acknowledge that once established, their national SIS would logically inform the preparation of all future summaries of information. The notion of a summary of information being a product of a SIS was widely acknowledged by many stakeholders consulted during the drafting of this paper, especially given that both are UNFCCC requirements in order to receive REDD+ results-based payments.

As indicated throughout this paper, a SIS can provide a strong, if not essential, basis for developing a summary of safeguards information, improving the transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness of safeguards. As with a SIS, there is, to date, no UNFCCC-required structure for a country's summary of safeguards information. Based on the options for information structuring in a national-level SIS ([Section 3.2.1](#)), a summary might take the form of: a) a narrative summary; b) a summary of information by indicator; c) a detailed PCI framework; or d) some hybrid combination of these structures, depending on the nature of the safeguard.

Box 11: Brazil's summary of safeguards information

Brazil's summary of information explains how the Cancun safeguards are applied in Brazil to actions for reducing emissions from deforestation in the Amazon biome, implemented through the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon between 2006 and 2010, as well as projects funded with REDD+ results-based payments received through the Amazon Fund. The summary explains how the Cancun safeguards were addressed and respected through the Amazon Fund's safeguards. REDD+ Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria, a product of a civil society-led, multi-stakeholder process in 2010, served as a reference for defining the Amazon Fund safeguards, which are compared to the Cancun safeguards in the summary of information.

The summary presents itself as a non-exhaustive preliminary assessment of the implementation of the Cancun safeguards by Brazil. The goal is to take the first step towards the creation of an effective dialogue process with Brazilian society about the implementation of Cancun safeguards and about the creation of the SIS, acknowledging that its effective implementation should rely on a gradual and participatory approach.

The summary of information also describes the existing legal and institutional frameworks that are relevant to addressing and respecting the Cancun safeguards, as well as listing some existing environmental information systems that are expected to be relevant in the future development of Brazil's SIS. Information on the preliminary process of setting up the SIS is also outlined, noting that, from Brazil's perspective:

"...the summary of information and the SIS REDD+ are two distinct instruments. The first is intended to provide information on the implementation of the Cancun Safeguards with respect to the results for which payments will be claimed. Such a document, presented on a regular basis, offers a picture of the implementation of the safeguards, focused on REDD+ results, being a requirement to access REDD+ payments. The second is a system that, in Brazil, is still at its early stage of development and should enable the constant monitoring of the implementation of REDD+ safeguards in Brazil. When the SIS REDD+ becomes fully operational, the country will be able to generate its summary of information from it. For the moment, however, this summary of information on safeguards had as its basis the existing sources of information (information systems, websites, reports, etc.) and the relevant legal and institutional frameworks in place".

Source: Ministry of the Environment (2015)

Guidance on the content of summaries of information was proposed within the UNFCCC process in June 2015. The UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice in concluding its consideration of the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC (2011) request for *"further guidance to ensure transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness when informing on how all [Cancun] safeguards...are being addressed and respected"*,³² has proposed a draft decision for adoption by COP21 in Paris (November-December 2015). This draft decision indicates the following required or (strongly) encouraged contents for a summary of information:

- information on which REDD+ activities are included in the summary of information;
- information on national circumstances relevant to addressing and respecting the safeguards;
- a description of each safeguard in accordance with national circumstances;
- a description of existing systems (including the SIS) and processes relevant to addressing and respecting safeguards;
- information on how each of the safeguards has been addressed and respected; and any other relevant information on the safeguards.

The structure of the SIS may have an important bearing on the structure of summaries of information, and vice versa. SIS design decisions, with regard to objectives, functions and institutional arrangements, can all contribute to and facilitate the preparation of a summary of safeguards information. Countries could, for example, affirm that an explicit objective of their SIS is to provide information for their summary, which could be reflected in the decisions made about SIS functions:

- **information compilation and management** – what information is needed in the summary to demonstrate how safeguards are being addressed and respected *throughout* the implementation of REDD+ actions?
- **information analysis and interpretation** – what analysis needs to be undertaken to show how safeguards have been addressed and respected in relation to NS/AP implementation, including *attribution* of outcomes to specific REDD+ actions?
- **information quality control and assurance** – does the information in the summary reflect the reality on the ground and the interpretation of that information acceptable to different stakeholders i.e. does it present a credible account of how safeguards have been addressed and respected?
- **information dissemination and use** – what information needs to be shared in the summary and what information should *not* be shared in the summary; will the summary have domestic applications and audiences?

Institutional arrangements for a SIS, as shown in the example from Costa Rica ([Box 9](#)), could also take account of which institution(s) will be in charge of preparing the summary of information, specifying how information could be shared between institutions and disseminated for the summary of information. Quality assurance – the assessment, review and validation of summaries of information – is a SIS function, already identified by a number of REDD+ countries and civil society organizations, as a potentially valuable entry point for non-state actor engagement. Where the SIS may rely largely, or entirely, on state institutional arrangements, the domestic evaluation of summaries, through multi-stakeholder consultation or participation, could present an important opportunity to strengthen the agreed and desired transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness (i.e. overall credibility) of the safeguards information.

It is expected that the international community – including sources of future REDD+ payments – will be seeking transparency and evidence of continuous improvement of information quality, in the summaries submitted by countries (Braña Varela et al., 2014). Producing summaries of information drawing from SIS content, and possibly structure, could facilitate improvements in the quality of information from one summary to the next. Improving the information shared internationally will also be important to document the changes in drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, corresponding REDD+ actions and consequently, the scope and priorities of a country's approach to safeguards – which are all likely to change over time as NS/AP implementation progresses. With this changing and refinement of NS/AP design and implementation will come evolving capacities and potentially greater ambition with respect to safeguards, which will be reflected in a country's

latest summary of information. This will particularly be the case for information on how safeguards are being respected (i.e. improvements in how PLRs are being *implemented in practice*) together with the *positive outcomes* of that implementation, and should be documented from one summary of information to another.





PART IV CONCLUSIONS

4

This paper has outlined some practical design considerations that might assist countries as they proceed with the development of a SIS, throughout the different phases of REDD+. In suggesting possible SIS design elements, as well as broader country approach to safeguard processes that could influence SIS development³³, this paper makes a preliminary attempt to consolidate stakeholder thinking and experience on SIS design, across different constituencies, with the hope that this will stimulate further inquiry resulting in improved technical support to countries in the future.

In reviewing the practical considerations discussed throughout this paper, a number of take-home messages on SIS design may be highlighted. Firstly, SIS design and operations will be different in each country due to different national circumstances, existing legal and institutional frameworks, and choice of REDD+ actions. Consequently, one-size-fits-all models of SIS design cannot be prescribed at the global or regional levels. The design considerations reviewed in this paper – objectives, functions and institutional arrangements – are an attempt to provide globally applicable elements that can be tailored to country specific contexts.

Secondly, development of a SIS need not require the establishment of an entirely new system. Some countries may choose to develop new systems rather than build on limited (or limited functionality of) existing systems. For many countries, however, it is likely to be more cost effective, in the long-term, to develop a SIS from a combination of existing information systems, sources and institutional arrangements to meet desired SIS objectives.

Thirdly, before embarking on a detailed SIS design process, it may be useful to consider important steps in the broader process of a country's approach to safeguards, which may influence SIS design. Stakeholder consultations and experiences have identified a number of such steps, including: a) defining the goals, scope and scale of safeguards application; b) assessing benefits and risks of REDD+ actions; c) clarifying the Cancun (and possibly other) safeguards in accordance with national circumstances; and d) identifying, assessing and strengthening existing governance arrangements that can be employed to address and respect safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation.

Lastly, a SIS provides a strong basis for developing summaries of safeguards information. By drawing on the SIS, the quality, reliability and credibility of information comprising the summaries may be significantly improved.

With these key messages in mind, and taking into account the more detailed considerations offered in the paper, REDD+ countries may adapt the content here to their national contexts, as they navigate the process of designing and putting into place an operational and sustainable SIS.

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ANNEX I

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS USED IN THIS PAPER³⁴

Term	Definition	Source
Addressing safeguards	Ensuring that a coherent body of policies, laws, regulations (PLRs), and associated institutional arrangements, are in place to deal with the potential benefits and risks associated with REDD+ actions, and in doing so, enabling the application of the Cancun safeguards in the country context and to meet country safeguard goals.	Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards and UN-REDD Programme Benefits and Risk Tool (BeRT) v2: User Guide
Applying safeguards	<p>Employing the Cancun (and other) safeguards, as clarified in a country's specific context, through its existing, strengthened and new PLRs, and associated institutional arrangements to implement and enforce them, to deal with potential benefits and risks associated with REDD+ actions.</p> <p>Safeguards are applied to REDD+ actions to mitigate, manage or remove the risks, as well as enhance the benefits, of those actions. Whereas the environmental and social issues - such as forest governance, indigenous people's rights, biodiversity conservation, etc. - are what is safeguarded. (REDD+ actions are not safeguarded, per se).</p> <p>cf. scope of a country approach to safeguards</p>	This paper
Clarifying safeguards	Identifying and documenting a more detailed elaboration of each of the seven broad principles embodied in the Cancun safeguards in terms of their substantive content. This may comprise country-specific thematic, criteria, indicators or narrative statements, in relation to the REDD+ actions comprising the national strategy or action plan. Also referred to as contextualising, elaborating, interpreting, specifying or unpacking safeguards.	Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards and Meridian paper on REDD+ Safeguards: Practical Considerations for Developing a Summary of Information
Country approach to safeguards	<p>A country- (primarily government-) led process to respond to international REDD+ safeguard requirements (UNFCCC Cancun safeguards and other safeguards as appropriate), in a way that is harmonious with national policy goals, by building on existing governance arrangements. These governance arrangements used to operationalize the Cancun (and other) safeguards, comprise three core elements:</p> <p>Policies, laws and regulations (PLRs) which define, on paper, what needs to be done in order to support implementation of REDD+ actions in a manner consistent with Cancun (and other) safeguards, i.e. how safeguards are being addressed. PLRs are primarily codified statutory ordinance, but can also include corporate environmental and social responsibility policies, industry standards and customary norms of indigenous peoples and local communities.</p> <p>Institutional arrangements - the mandates, procedures and capacities to ensure that the relevant PLRs are actually implemented and enforced in practice, i.e. how safeguards are being respected. Such arrangements are typically institutionalised within public, private or civil society sectors, but may also involve arrangements to strengthen the individual capacities of citizens, including indigenous peoples and local communities, to implement and enforce relevant PLRs.</p> <p>Information systems which collect and make available information on how REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation.</p>	Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards

Term	Definition	Source
Goals of a country approach to safeguards	<p>Expression of the policy goals that a country wants to achieve through its approach to safeguards, including, but not necessarily limited to the UNFCCC requirements for REDD+. The Cancun safeguards are a basic requirement to be eligible for REDD+ results-based payments under the UNFCCC, but a country may also want to consider other bi-/multi-lateral safeguards requirements, e.g. World Bank Operational Policies, required by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Carbon Fund. Consideration may be given to safeguard requirements and expectations of investors in REDD+ activities as well as those of buyers of verified emissions reductions/enhanced removals.</p> <p>Defining safeguards goals also means considering what national policies could benefit from addressing and respecting REDD+ safeguards. The safeguards goals should be consistent with the country's overall goals for REDD+ in terms of additional benefits, beyond climate change mitigation, such as poverty alleviation or biodiversity conservation. Ultimately, safeguards goals are about a country's expectations towards the social and environmental outcomes of its engagement in REDD+.</p>	<p>Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards</p>
Institutional arrangements	<p>In the context of REDD+ safeguards, institutional arrangements refer to the (formal and informal, state and non-state) institutions, their mandates, procedures and capacities for implementing a country's policies, laws and regulations, (together with private sector standards and customary norms of local communities), serving to define who will be responsible for ensuring safeguards are respected when implementing REDD+ activities. This can include arrangements to strengthen the capacity of different stakeholders to respect safeguards.</p>	<p>Adapted from: Meridian paper on REDD+ Safeguards: Practical Considerations for Developing a Summary of Information</p>
Plus activities	<p>Those activities agreed under the UNFCCC that constitute the 'plus' in REDD+, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (c) Conservation of forest carbon stocks; (d) Sustainable management of forest; (e) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks. 	
Policies, laws, and regulations (PLRs)	<p>Policies, laws, and regulations (PLRs), and also operational plans and programmes to implement these PLRs, serve to define how safeguards are to be applied when implementing REDD+ activities. .</p> <p><u>Policies</u>: strategic, guiding or planning documents prepared by a (typically, but not exclusively governmental) institution and that describes a vision and political direction to address a specific issue.</p> <p><u>Laws</u>: legally binding acts, enacted by a legislative body (e.g. Parliament), which typically create rights and obligations that can be judicially enforced.</p> <p><u>Regulations</u>: issued by an executive body (e.g. a ministry) as legally binding instruments to apply the laws and to provide operational directives.</p> <p>Some PLRs may also serve as policies and measures (PAMs), to reduce greenhouse gas emissions/enhance their removals, as conveyed in the National REDD+ Strategy/Action Plan. For example, a policy to designate new protected areas, targeting sites of conservation importance and emissions reduction/enhanced removal potential, is both a REDD+ PAM and a safeguards PLR.</p>	<p>Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards</p>
REDD+ actions	<p>Specific national and sub-national policies and/or measures, tackling underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, or to support more effective/extensive plus activities, within the five REDD+ activity categories agreed under the UNFCCC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Reducing emissions from deforestation; (b) Reducing emissions from forest degradation; (c) Conservation of forest carbon stocks; (d) Sustainable management of forest; and (e) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks. 	<p>Adapted from: ClientEarth: A Guide to Understanding and Implementing the UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards</p>

Term	Definition	Source
Respecting safeguards	Effective application of policies, laws and regulations, through the associated institutional (and individual) arrangements, to ensure they are implemented in practice and affect real and positive outcomes on the ground.	Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards and Meridian paper on REDD+ Safeguards: Practical Considerations for Developing a Summary of Information
Safeguards	<i>"A measure taken to protect someone or something or to prevent something undesirable"</i> (i.e. do no harm). They have wide remit and can apply to a project, set of projects or more widely to programmes as well as act as policies. In the REDD+ context, the Cancun Safeguards also explicitly seek to enhance environmental and social benefits (i.e. do good).	Oxford Dictionary
Safeguards information system (SIS)	A system providing information on how all of the Cancun safeguards are addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities. This may consist of a combination of existing systems and sources of information, together with new systems or information to fill gaps as needed. Required as a key piece of national REDD+ architecture (or "Warsaw Framework for REDD+ pillar") under the UNFCCC, as well as eligibility for REDD+ results-based payments.	UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards
Scale of REDD+ implementation	Refers to the geographical level and area(s) in which a country intends to implement REDD+ actions (i.e. area covered by the forest reference level/forest reference emissions level, with related monitoring and measurement, reporting and verification of emission reductions/enhanced removals). The UNFCCC requires REDD+ national strategies/action plans (NS/AP), forest monitoring systems and safeguard information systems to all be developed at the national level, highlighting the crucial role of the national government in tackling drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (in addition to any barriers to plus activities) that cannot be dealt with at the subnational level alone. A country may, however, opt in its NS/AP to focus its REDD+ efforts in one or more key <i>subnational</i> area(s), which may correspond with, or be larger than, the area(s) for which it seeks to receive payments for climate change mitigation results.	Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme REDD+ Academy Learning Journal: 4. National Strategies or Action Plans
Scope of a country approach to safeguards	The activities to be covered by the safeguards as defined by the country. UNFCCC requirements indicate that safeguards be applied to all relevant REDD+ activities, i.e. the policies and measures identified in the National Strategy / Action Plan. A country may go beyond the forestry sector and include other land use sectors implicated as key drivers of deforestation/forest degradation, and could apply the safeguards to a scope broader than REDD+ with a view to attract other sources of investment and achieve domestic policy goals.	Adapted from: UN-REDD Programme Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards
Summary of information	A UNFCCC requirement to obtain REDD+ results-based payments, the summary of information is the means by which REDD+ countries will communicate internationally to the UNFCCC how they are addressing and respecting the safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation. It is likely (although not explicitly required by the UNFCCC) to be a product of a national safeguard information system (SIS). The summary of information can be seen as a means through which each developing country tells its "story" of how the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities, thus increasing transparency. It may also include quantitative and qualitative information drawn from a SIS.	Adapted from: Meridian paper on REDD+ Safeguards: Practical Considerations for Developing a Summary of Information See: UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17



ANNEX II SELECTED EXAMPLES OF EXISTING INFORMATION SOURCES AND SYSTEMS THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR REDD+

Type of information system or source	Example of safeguard-relevant information
National or subnational policies, laws and regulations	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) information on the enabling environment for REDD+ b) what is required by law to operationalize the safeguards (e.g. Rapporteurs reports on application of access to information laws, specifically sections on natural resources) c) information on relevant international conventions and agreements ratified by the country (e.g. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans for Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity) d) information on how the forest governance structures established by law are enforced in practice e) information on whether and how indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights are reflected in existing legislation
National and subnational censuses	Information on population distribution, users of forests and trees outside forests, sectoral employment, etc.
Other government institutions' statistical data	GDP by activity/sector; commodity markets; Ministry of Justice or courts records that may help assess the effectiveness of law enforcement practices; etc.
Land registries and cadastral databases	Information on land parcels; land use; demarcation/boundaries; documentation of tenure rights and rights-holders; value of land; taxation; disputes over tenure rights; etc.
Reports from national audits applied to the forest sector or REDD+, e.g. civil society-led social audits, or institutionally led environmental audits performed by dedicated institutions (e.g. Court of Audit, Court of Accounts)	Information provided by oversight bodies on the implementation and management of protected areas; community scoring of governmental performance on specific governance issues; etc.
Grievance redress mechanisms	Feedback and information from relevant stakeholders, including those more marginalized, such as indigenous peoples, women, youth and the disabled regarding the impacts of REDD+ actions and the effectiveness of safeguards implementation
Project- and jurisdictional-level REDD+ standards such as Verified Carbon Standards; Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards; and subnational application of REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards	Principal-, criteria- and indicator-level information on governance, social and environmental policies, process and outcomes. In some cases, such standards information has been incorporated as screening criteria into national registries of site-based REDD+ projects.
National and alternative reports to human rights conventions (e.g. National Human Rights Institutions, reports to Universal Periodic Review)	Information about national legislation related to international human rights standards and their implementation, national human rights records, etc.

Type of information system or source	Example of safeguard-relevant information
National forest monitoring processes, including remote sensing/satellite monitoring, forest inventories, greenhouse gas inventories	Geospatial and field-based information on forest cover and land use change; the extent of forest resources; forest ecosystem health; tree species biodiversity; productive, protective and socio-economic functions of forests; etc.
Sustainable forest, biofuel, land use and agricultural commodity standards or certification schemes, including auditing reports (e.g. Forest Stewardship Council; Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards; roundtables on sustainable biofuels, cocoa, palm oil, soy)	Workers' rights and employment conditions; indigenous peoples' legal and customary rights; ecosystem services; high conservation value areas; tenure; anti-corruption measures; land-use change; biodiversity; crop management techniques; compliance with local, national and ratified international laws and ILO conventions; community engagement; etc.
Environmental information systems	Natural resources use and management, biodiversity and ecosystem services information, forest management practices and law enforcement
Financial reporting systems	Budgetary allocations associated with relevant PLRs and their implementation
Customary norms and non-statutory PLRs	Free, prior and informed consent procedures; voluntary codes of conduct and customary practices
Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement countries' Timber Legality Assurance System	<p>Information on legality of timber production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) national timber legality definition, including relevant laws and criteria and indicators to assess legality of timber production b) geo-referenced information on conservation and production forests, including information on timber production and timber product movements (at the level of individual forest management units) c) information on compliance within the supply chain
Reporting against national, regional and international criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management, including processes such as the International Tropical Timber Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Montreal Process.	Information on conservation protected areas and relevant procedures; forest harvesting practices and planning; species and genetic diversity; management guidelines for reduced/low impact logging; utilization of wood and non-wood forest products; protection of soil productivity and downstream catchment values; institutional framework; employment in the forest sector; community participation; etc.
Living Standards Measurement Studies	Forests and forest products' contribution to households' cash and subsistence economies; information on forest user groups; community benefits from forest-related land use or management practices; etc.
Relevant meeting or workshop reports	Information on multi-stakeholder engagement, key stakeholders, etc.
Other systems or sources supporting national implementation of and reporting to international conventions, e.g. biodiversity data centres and networks, etc.	Information on the implementation of international conventions

Type of information system or source	Example of safeguard-relevant information
Other sources of relevant nationally validated information, collected by non-state actors such as indigenous peoples, local communities or civil society (e.g. community-based or collaborative forest monitoring)	<p>Primary information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) forest cover change, forest quality (including information on biological diversity) and drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (i.e. threats to forest resources) b) changes in rural livelihoods (e.g. financial, human, natural, physical and social assets), livelihood strategies, human well-being, local governance procedures, etc.



ENDNOTES

1. Sometimes called “co-benefits” “multiple benefits”, or “non-carbon benefits” of REDD+.
2. Throughout this paper, “REDD+ actions” refers to the specific policies and measures, under the five REDD+ activity categories agreed under the UNFCCC (Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 70 (a-e), elaborated in the national REDD+ strategy or action plan and put in place to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (and/or enabling “plus activities”, i.e. conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks).
3. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 69.
4. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(d).
5. Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 3.
6. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71; Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 3.
7. Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix I, paragraph 2.
8. Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix I.
9. Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71.
10. Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2.
11. Decision 11/CP.19, paragraph 5.
12. Decision 12/CP.19, paragraph 4.
13. Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 4; Decision 12/CP.19, paragraph 2.
14. Decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 64; Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 4.
15. Draft decision __/CP.21, paragraph 5. Note that, at the time of writing, this guidance on summary of safeguards information content constituted a draft decision proposed by the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice for approval at the 21st Conference of the Parties.
16. UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2.
17. Some countries are in the process of developing subnational SIS, seeing value in piloting REDD+ in a province or a state or in building their SIS as an aggregation of subnational systems. The UNFCCC, however, only requires countries to develop a national system for providing information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected.
18. More information on the broader development and application of a country approach to safeguards can be found here:
 - UN-REDD Programme (2015a) Country Approaches to Safeguards
 - Rey & Swan (2014) A Country-led Safeguards Approach: Guidelines for national REDD+ Programmes
 - UN-REDD Programme (2013a) Framework for Supporting the Development of Country Approaches to Safeguards
 - i.e. conservation of forest carbon stocks; sustainable management of forests; and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.
19. UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2.
20. For example, the Benefit and Risk Assessment Tool of the UN-REDD Programme, or the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment required under the FCPF.
21. This process has been variously described as “clarifying the safeguards”, “elaborating the safeguards”, “unpacking the safeguards”, “developing a national interpretation of the safeguards”, “developing a national specification of the safeguards”, or “contextualizing the safeguards”.
22. As defined in the broadest sense and including codified statutory policies, laws and regulations, as well as implementing plans and programmes, together with ‘non-statutory PLRs’, such as corporate environmental and social responsibility policies and industry standards for sustainable commodity production, etc.
23. Such as those for respecting the right to free, prior and informed consent, or procedures for screening and implementing environmental and social impact assessments or social and environmental management plans.
24. UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2.
25. UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2.
26. In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, a number of countries have indicated that their SIS should be aligned to national policy agendas related to the environment, forest management as well as sustainable development goals (UN-REDD Programme, 2015).
27. cf. Norway’s 2014 submission to the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice on the types of information from a SIS for REDD+ that could be provided in summaries by developing country Parties.
28. Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 3.
29. Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 11.
30. 12/CP.17, paragraph 4.
31. Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 6.
32. Note that these SIS design considerations do not constitute requirements, on the part of UNFCCC or even UN-REDD, for SIS development, and should be viewed in the context of the relevant UNFCCC decisions.
33. Note that a more comprehensive REDD+ glossary is available on the UN-REDD Programme Collaborative Online Workspace.



TECHNICAL RESOURCE SERIES

UN-REDD Programme Secretariat

International Environment House,
11-13 Chemin des Anémones,
CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland.
un-redd@un-redd.org

Website: www.un-redd.org

Online Workspace: www.unredd.net



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The United Nations Collaborative Programme
on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and
Forest Degradation in Developing Countries