KEY MESSAGES

• The present brief synthesizes best practices on how to meet the safeguards information system requirements and produce summaries of information on safeguards based on a decade of collective country experience.

• A country approach to safeguards constitutes a practical strategic framework to assist countries in meeting the safeguards requirements under the Framework Convention on Climate Change and other relevant safeguards requirements, which helps stakeholders to explore what the safeguards mean in the specific country context by following certain indicative steps.

• A safeguards information system can be understood as a set of institutional arrangements coupled with technological solutions for compiling, managing and disseminating information, which builds on existing country information systems and sources.

• A safeguards summary of information reports on how a country has addressed and respected safeguards. It is a key tool to ensure the transparency of REDD+, promote stakeholder confidence in safeguards processes, and communicate countries’ progress and performance with regard to safeguards.

• In the coming decade, countries will need to turn their attention to stepwise improvements in addressing and respecting safeguards throughout the implementation of REDD+ and to improvements in providing information on how they do so. Countries may also be required to fulfil safeguards requirements beyond those of the Framework Convention on Climate Change to access results-based payments.
INTRODUCTION

Under the REDD+ policy and incentives mechanism for climate change mitigation, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change requires participating countries "to develop ... a system for providing information on how [the 'Cancun'] safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of [REDD+] activities" (Framework Convention on Climate Change decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71 (d)). Under that system, commonly known as the safeguards information system (SIS), countries are required to periodically produce summaries of information on safeguards (Framework Convention on Climate Change decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 4). Seven safeguards are required to be addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ initiatives (Framework Convention on Climate Change decision 1/CP. 16, appendix I, paragraph 2).

The implementation of activities under the REDD+ mechanism has the potential to deliver social and environmental benefits that go beyond the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, but it may also entail potential risks to people and the environment. Safeguards are principles or measures that aim to protect or to avoid risks ("do no harm"), while promoting benefits ("do good"). Seven safeguards, also known as the "Cancun safeguards", were agreed for REDD+ at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2010.

Figure 1. The REDD+ “Cancun safeguards”.

A
Actions are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements

B
Transparent and effective national forest governance structures

C
Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities

D
Full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders

E
Actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, and enhance other social and environmental benefits

F
Actions to address the risks of reversals to ensure sustainability

G
Actions to reduce displacement of emissions

What are the REDD+ ('Cancun') safeguards?
The three key safeguards requirements are as follows:

1. Safeguards need to be promoted and supported throughout REDD+ implementation.

2. A national safeguards information system on how safeguards are addressed and respected needs to be put in place.

3. Safeguards summaries of information, reporting on how the safeguards are addressed and respected, need to be produced periodically.

The UN-REDD Programme guidance and tools were designed to enable countries to take a robust and flexible approach to meeting the safeguards requirements under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and potentially other safeguards-related requirements, in a way that reflects different national circumstances, helping countries to achieve REDD+ readiness in relation to safeguards and to access REDD+ results-based payments. The present brief seeks to document common experiences, good practices and lessons learned from countries that have successfully developed elements of their safeguards approaches.

SAFEGUARDS PROCESSES AND HIGHLIGHTS

Since 2008, the UN-REDD Programme has worked with national partners to support safeguards processes in 36 countries, through promoting country approaches to safeguards; helping to design safeguards information systems and make them operational; helping to draft or review safeguards summaries of information; and promoting knowledge exchange. More information on the support provided can be found below. The work has focused on the safeguards requirements under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, associated mainly with the REDD+ readiness phase. In certain cases and according to countries’ specific circumstances, additional safeguards frameworks and donor requirements have been considered, in particular the safeguards requirements of the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility.

(i) Country approach to safeguards

A country approach to safeguards refers to the existing governance arrangements and processes – such as policies, laws, regulations and institutions – that countries can draw upon to respond to safeguards requirements for REDD+,
aligning with national goals. This approach has the potential to provide a single, unified approach through which a country can accommodate the safeguards obligations of different initiatives, donors and investors.

Country approaches to safeguards can help stakeholders to explore what the safeguards mean in their specific context; inform the design of more sustainable REDD+ policies and measures (PaMs); engender country ownership; and build confidence in REDD+ actions that will benefit both people and nature.

Each country will have its own particular approach to safeguards, reflecting its unique needs and circumstances and taking into account the range of socio-economic issues and environmental concerns, including gender issues, that are likely to be important in addressing its drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Country approaches to safeguards evolve over time, building on or strengthening existing governance arrangements.

Country approaches to safeguards are built through participatory and inclusive processes that engage key stakeholders for REDD+ and the safeguards (such as government institutions, private sector entities, civil society organizations, women, men and young people from forest-dependent communities, indigenous peoples and smallholders) and identify ways to ensure the appropriate consultation and participation of stakeholders in decision-making processes. Furthermore, consideration of the gender approach helps to assess the situation of relevant stakeholders and promotes gender-sensitive processes.

The UN-REDD Programme has developed a conceptual framework for country approaches to safeguards, which identifies three core elements: policies, laws and regulations (PLRs); institutional arrangements; and information systems and sources (see figure 2).

In this context, two tools have been developed for designing country approaches to safeguards and assessing the benefits and risks associated
LESSONS LEARNED ON COUNTRY APPROACHES TO REDD+ SAFEGUARDS

- A country approach to the safeguards and their processes should ensure regular and frequent exchange with other REDD+ readiness elements (including the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ plus) and ensure synergies with the essential components of REDD+ architecture that will operate throughout the period for the implementation of policies and measures.

- Building and strengthening existing governance arrangements is central to the country approach to safeguards, including defining the institutional roles and responsibilities associated with addressing, respecting and reporting on safeguards.

- Engaging stakeholders is paramount in any country approach to safeguards and will define the quality and ownership of processes and outcomes. That relates to how, when, where and to what degree different constituencies are engaged in the implementation of REDD+ and related safeguards activities.

More information on lessons learned is available in the technical resource *Country Approaches to REDD+ Safeguards: A Global Review of Initial Experiences and Emerging Lessons*.

A number of general characteristics for safeguards information systems have been agreed under Framework Convention on Climate Change decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 2, according to which the system should:

1. Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis;
2. Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time;
3. Provide information on how all the safeguards are being addressed and respected;
4. Be country-driven and be implemented at the national level;
5. Build upon existing systems, as appropriate.

LESSON LEARNED ON COUNTRY APPROACHES TO REDD+ SAFEGUARDS

(ii) Safeguards information system

A safeguards information system is a system for providing information on how safeguards are being addressed or respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities. It is generally understood to be a domestic institutional arrangement, and often a technological solution (for example, a web platform), that builds on existing national (and subnational, as desired) information systems and sources.

Consideration of gender in the approach for mapping data sources and compiling gender-related information for the safeguards information system will enable gender issues to be highlighted and addressed. A safeguards information system also provides input for developing safeguards summaries of information.
In addition to the Framework Convention on Climate Change guidance, the UN-REDD Programme has identified four key SIS design considerations, based on country experiences and consultations with key stakeholder constituencies. Those key considerations are set out in detail in the technical brief entitled REDD+ safeguards information systems: practical design considerations, and are also summarized in figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Key design considerations for REDD+ safeguards information systems.
Some key functional responsibilities were identified in the operation of safeguards information systems, based on initial country experiences with launching the systems. Those responsibilities are examined in the brief entitled REDD+ safeguards information systems: moving from design to operation, and they are also summarized in figure 4 below.

As the implementation of REDD+ progresses, it is likely that iterative improvements will be made to the design choices and processes of countries’ safeguards information systems in order to expand or refine their objectives, structure, functions, institutional arrangements and technological platforms.

Figure 4. Key operational considerations for REDD+ safeguards information systems.
LESSONS LEARNED ON SIS DESIGN AND OPERATION

- First and foremost, a SIS should achieve national objectives, in addition to meeting the requirements under the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Aligning SIS objectives with national policy agendas related to the environment, forest management and sustainable development is essential to justify the effort and costs of SIS development and operation, even if costs are not significant.

- The operation of a SIS entails defining institutional arrangements and procedures that serve to manage, analyse, validate and disseminate environmental and social information from different government agencies and sectors across all areas of REDD+ implementation.

- A key technical challenge is the development of a new database or online platform, or the modification of an existing one, for the management and dissemination of safeguards information in a manner commensurate with the information available and country capacity.

More information on lessons learned from country experiences on SIS can be found in the briefs on Practical Design Considerations for REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems and REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems – moving from design to operation.

(iii) Summaries of information

Summaries of information are country reports on the ways in which the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected within the context of a national REDD+ strategy. Summaries should be provided periodically: initially, upon commencing the implementation of REDD+ activities, and subsequently at least every four years throughout the implementation of REDD+. Summaries can be submitted to the Framework Convention on Climate Change online portal at any time. Countries are encouraged to improve the information contained in their summaries over time using a stepwise approach.\(^4\)

According to the guidance provided on the content of summaries of information in Framework Convention on Climate Change decision 12/CP.17, they should include information on the following:

1. The REDD+ activity or activities in question;

2. National circumstances relevant to addressing and respecting the safeguards;

3. A description of each Cancun safeguard in accordance with national circumstances;

4. Existing systems and processes;

5. How each safeguard has been addressed and respected;

6. Other relevant information.

Summaries of information are key tools for sharing information on safeguards and provide an opportunity for promoting confidence in safeguards processes. A brief has been drafted, entitled Summaries of information: how to demonstrate REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected, which draws on the key elements of summaries of information submitted to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and on country experiences in developing them.

In addition, key recommendations have been identified for developing safeguards reports,

\(^4\) Framework Convention on Climate Change decisions 1/CP.16, 12/CP.17, 12/CP.19 and 17/CP.21
The following compilation of experiences lists a number of lessons learned regarding summaries of information (for more details, see the two briefs mentioned above):

- The first summary of information provides an opportunity to collect relevant information to create a baseline on safeguards, test drafting and consultation processes, build capacity, and prompt decisions on institutional arrangements related to REDD+ safeguards processes.

- Second and subsequent summaries can complement the information presented in previous summaries, in particular information on ways in which the safeguards are respected and on the environmental and social outcomes associated with REDD+ implementation. They can also provide information on the incorporation of a gender-responsive approach in REDD+ design and implementation, on gaps identified in addressing and respecting safeguards and on measures taken to address such gaps.

- Adequate human and financial resources are needed to draft summaries of information, including support for compiling, organizing and editing the information, for conducting consultations, and for communications activities. Additional efforts may be required to demonstrate improvements in the quality and comprehensiveness of information included in subsequent summaries.

CONTRIBUTION OF SAFEGUARDS TO “BUILD BACK BETTER” IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

Country-tailored policies and measures that enhance non-carbon social and environmental benefits are essential for lasting and transformative REDD+ implementation in the context of holistic post-pandemic recovery responses. Socioeconomic recovery packages should foster social and environmental resilience while ensuring social equity, inclusion and the realization of human rights for local communities and indigenous peoples.

The REDD+ safeguards strategically allow for the mainstreaming of social and environmental priorities into forest- and land-based recovery actions by strengthening governance and ensuring the full and effective participation of stakeholders and the respect of the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in the design and implementation of those actions. The safeguards encourage a “do-good” approach, which could be part of policy and financial recovery responses, by simultaneously promoting several benefits that contribute to poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem resilience and the generation of opportunities for rural development.
based on a review of existing summaries of information. The key recommendations are set out in a brief, entitled Summaries of information: initial experiences and recommendations on international REDD+ safeguards reporting.

**IMPACT**

Safeguards processes and results are linked to other elements of REDD+ implementation (such as REDD+ national strategies or action plans and participatory processes, among others).

Key impacts of UN-REDD Programme support on safeguards as at September 2020 included the following:

- Thirty-six developing countries had received support to meet Framework Convention on Climate Change safeguards requirements in the development of their approaches to safeguards and had determined the governance arrangements necessary for addressing and respecting REDD+ safeguards.

- Several countries had posted key information on safeguards online for the public, as follows:
  - Six countries had put their SIS online (Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Viet Nam);
  - Seven additional countries had designed their SIS (more information is set out in the Safeguards Country Resources Hub);
  - Eleven countries had reported on what they had done to address and respect the REDD+ safeguards, with UN-REDD support or technical assistance, by submitting summaries of information to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Ecuador, Mexico, Myanmar, Paraguay, Viet Nam and Zambia).

- Environmental and social (non-carbon) benefits that could result from the implementation of REDD+ had been identified and used to inform the design of REDD+ policies and measures. Twenty-two countries had been supported in capacity-building and through analyses that had helped them to plan for REDD+ implementation and identify places suitable for a range of forest conservation, sustainable management or restoration actions.

- Capacities had been strengthened to plan and implement safeguards activities. Extensive collective experience and lessons learned had been shared and made available to countries on webpages and in other resources that are set out in the websites and resources section at the end of the present brief.

**INNOVATION AND SUCCESS FACTORS**

A number of key factors have promoted the success of UN-REDD Programme partner countries in implementing their safeguards processes. These include the following:

- Developing a conceptual framework for addressing and respecting safeguards. Country approaches to safeguards have enabled comprehensive but flexible approaches to be devised for responding to safeguards requirements under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, specific funding requirements and country needs.

- Laying the groundwork to develop country approaches to safeguards with social and environmental assessments. Different social and environmental assessments (for example, on risks and benefits, policies, laws and regulations and other topics) have provided inputs for the development of country approaches to safeguards. That information has also guided the development of safeguards information systems and the drafting of

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5 Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Mongolia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Zambia have designed their SIS with support from the UN-REDD Programme.
summaries of information. Country work on mapping the social and environmental benefits of REDD+ has helped to determine where REDD+ actions can be implemented in a way that secures additional benefits while avoiding risks.

- Supporting participatory, inclusive and gender-responsive multi-stakeholder approaches. Ensuring that key stakeholders can participate in a comprehensive, culturally-appropriate and gender-responsive way – in particular, local actors such as indigenous peoples and local communities – and that the relevant issues for addressing and respecting safeguards are covered. Participatory platforms have been structured and strengthened, including through safeguards technical working groups.

- Promoting collaboration. Collaboration with a range of partners and institutions was promoted for implementing safeguards activities in countries from different regions.

- Capturing and sharing lessons. The development of knowledge exchanges and communications and technical resources on safeguards has proven to be a key success factor.
CONCLUSION

Countries have been developing their approaches to safeguards to meet the requirements for REDD+ under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, together with those of other relevant initiatives (notably the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank). In addition to the safeguards requirements under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, which are the focus of the present brief, various entities making results-based payments have their own safeguards policies and procedures that countries need to meet.

After little more than a decade (2008–2020) of implementing initiatives focused on REDD+ readiness, 15 countries have put their SIS online; 17 countries have submitted one or more summaries of information to the Framework Convention on Climate Change; and seven pioneering countries have met safeguards requirements and other requirements to access results-based payments totalling over $1.36 billion.

Getting started with a simple, flexible safeguards information system, in line with in-country capacity, has been shown to be a pragmatic approach. Countries whose safeguards information system is up and running will need to continually improve its structure and functionality over time, using a stepwise approach. The continued operation of such systems requires the sustained allocation of budgetary resources and can be financed – at least in part – by reinvesting the revenues obtained from results-based payments under REDD+. Initial information from national REDD+ investment plans, supported by the UN-REDD Programme, indicates that the cost of meeting Framework Convention on Climate Change safeguards requirements could represent 0.5 per cent to 5.0 per cent of the total cost of REDD+ implementation.

The most recent summary of information will be required for countries to access results-based payments for any given reporting period. Summaries of information can also be viewed as a one-stop-shop reporting opportunity on
Looking to the future, over the next decade, REDD+ will need to focus on implementation at scale, moving attention away from safeguards information system design and first summaries of information and towards ensuring that stepwise improvements are made in addressing and, in particular, in respecting the safeguards, throughout REDD+ implementation. Donors, funds and emerging forest carbon markets paying for results are placing increasing attention on the ways in which countries are addressing and respecting safeguards in the implementation of REDD+ strategies and in the achievement of emissions reduction results. The need to fulfill safeguards requirements also constitutes a key technical challenge, in that the requirements often go beyond those of the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

To continue safeguarding people and nature while implementing REDD+ initiatives and to secure payments for results, countries and their development partners will need to demonstrate the application of safeguards that meet the expectations of high-quality and possibly higher-priced emissions reductions and enhanced removals.

10 Those high-quality reductions and enhanced removals are expected to be compensated at a higher price. As an example, all results-based payments from the Green Climate Fund Pilot Programme to date have been made at a rate of $5 per ton of CO2e, the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Carbon Fund has signed emissions reductions purchase agreements at the same price, and the first payment under the Indonesia-Norway bilateral agreement has been made at the same rate. The Gabon-Norway REDD+ bilateral agreement, however, has set future payments at $10 per ton of CO2e and the Emergent Forest Finance Accelerator is looking to offer floor price guarantees above $5 per ton of CO2e. In the last two cases, however, countries would need to achieve compliance with The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard of the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART-TREES) initiative to be paid those higher prices.
WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

- Safeguards technical knowledge page
- Safeguards country resources hub
- Multiple benefits technical knowledge page
- Multiple benefits country resources hub
- Conceptual framework for country approaches to safeguards (Technical Brief, 2016), available in English, French and Spanish
- REDD+ safeguards information systems: practical design considerations (Technical Brief v.2.0, 2017), available in English, French and Spanish
- REDD+ safeguards information systems: moving from design to operation (Info Brief, 2020), available in English
- REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems: Moving from design to operation (Workbook, 2020), available in English
- Summaries of Information: How to demonstrate REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected (Info Brief, 2016), available in English, French and Spanish
- Summaries of Information initial experiences and recommendations of international REDD+ safeguards reporting (Info Brief, 2020), available in English
- Learning journals - Module 3: REDD+ Safeguards under the UNFCCC (REDD+ Academy 2nd edition, 2018), available in English, French and Spanish
- Infographic on REDD+ safeguards (2019), available in English, French and Spanish
- Country Approaches to Safeguards: Framework for Clarifying the Cancun Safeguards (Technical document v.1.2, 2016), available in English
- UN-REDD Programme Benefits and Risks Tool (BeRT) (Workshop kit. Facilitator’s guide, version 2.1, 2017), available in English, French and Spanish
- UN-REDD Programme Country Approach to Safeguards Tool (CAST) (Excel-based tool, 2015), available in English, French and Spanish
- Country Approaches to Safeguards (Flyer, 2014), available in English, French and Spanish

BLOGS

- Chile launches co-benefits system for its national strategy (September 2020). Read more. Also available in Spanish.
- Peru presents its first report on REDD+ safeguards (September 2020). Read more. Also available in Spanish.
- Forests for people: Myanmar puts its REDD+ Safeguards Information System into practice (June 2020). Read more
- Government and civil society discuss Myanmar’s REDD+ Safeguards Information System (April 2020). Read more
- Herramientas para la implementación del Sistema de Salvaguardas REDD+ en México (Spanish) (April 2020). Read more
- Suriname’s journey towards developing its REDD+ Safeguards Information System (April 2020). Read more
- 2019 progress on REDD+ safeguards: A year in review (February 2020). Read more
- Planning for REDD+ benefits beyond carbon (February 2020.) Read more
- Learning about Safeguards Information Systems in Latin America (February 2020). Read more. Also available in Spanish
- Honduras endorses a cultural safeguard for REDD+ (December 2019). Read more
- Viet Nam, Myanmar and Cambodia share lessons on SIS operations (December 2019). Read more
- Using spatial analysis to inform planning for REDD+ benefits beyond carbon in Argentina (November 2019). Read more
• Planning for REDD+ benefits beyond carbon (November 2019). Read more
• REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems: What Latin America countries are doing to put their systems into operation (August 2019). Read more
• Zambia becomes the first African country to report on REDD+ safeguards (May 2019). Read more
• Enfoque Nacional de Salvaguardas para REDD+ en el Perú (Spanish) (May 2019). Read more
• Q&A: REDD+ safeguards work in Mongolia (April 2019). Read more
• Viet Nam becomes the first country in Asia-Pacific to fulfil the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (February 2019). Read more
• Summaries of information: The next generation (January 2019). Read more
• African countries up their REDD+ safeguards game to take ownership of national processes (July 2018). Read more
The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries.

UN-REDD PROGRAMME
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