

Robust Safeguards will ensure measurable results for REDD+

November 2012

The Cancún agreement lists seven safeguards in accordance with which REDD+¹ activities are to be undertaken, and which are to be promoted and supported:

- consistency with existing forest programmes and international agreements;
- transparent and effective national forest governance structures;
- respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities;
- full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders;
- protection of natural forests and biodiversity;
- addressing the risk of reversals (“permanence”); and
- addressing the risk of displacement of emissions (“leakage”)

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) has been tasked with providing guidance on systems for information on how REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+. In order for REDD+ to be effective as a global mechanism, it is important that such guidance **not only focuses on how information will be provided, but develops a clear framework on what kind of information is provided**, and how it is monitored so that it is comparable at the international level. In other words: An international REDD+ mechanism **needs international common standards on safeguards** and it is crucial to have a consistent approach to both assessing and monitoring social and biodiversity impacts of REDD+.

Existing institutions have acknowledged this and have developed, or are developing, new policies and approaches. The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) has in 2011 adopted a “Common Approach” to Environmental and Social Safeguards in order to ensure its delivery partners are not working under different standards. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has developed, for the first time, a set of environmental and social safeguard policies that all its implementing agencies need to apply. UNREDD is currently developing joint social and environmental standards.

The current major developments in safeguard frameworks constitute progress and need to inform the UNFCCC process, but further upward harmonisation of approaches is necessary. Current frameworks are largely based on World Bank policies, however in order to yield positive results for REDD+ they would need to be strengthened to ensure:

- the effective **protection of knowledge and rights of, and clear benefits for, indigenous peoples and local communities**, and the implementation of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) principle;
- the effective **protection of natural forests and native biodiversity**;
- **measurable progress towards transparent and effective governance**; and
- **compliance with relevant international conventions and agreements**.

Transparency, Accountability and Compliance are necessary

Experience over the past years has shown that safeguards are ineffective without mechanisms in place to ensure compliance and accountability. Information systems need to be designed to be **transparent and publicly accessible**, include participatory and independent monitoring approaches and produce relevant quality information to allow for tracking of how safeguards are addressed and respected.

¹ Given the drastic need for global emission reductions, Greenpeace believes that REDD+ financing should currently be directed to halting industrial-scale deforestation and degradation where it occurs, and preventing it from occurring in forests at high risk (rather than to certain “+” activities such as afforestation).

The need for **accountability/grievance mechanisms at national and international level** has been acknowledged and embraced by a number of institutions today. These mechanisms must be independent, transparent, effective and accessible to local communities and indigenous peoples. Since governance and capacity is weak in many REDD+ countries, a mechanism needs to be established at international level to ensure that local communities and indigenous peoples' grievances can be addressed in cases where national level mechanisms are dysfunctional.

Governance is the key to everything else

Sound governance has proven key to effective REDD+ implementation. In fact, the successful realisation of other safeguards is – directly or indirectly – contingent on good governance. Guidelines and frameworks for monitoring governance have been developed by many sources, among others the World Bank and FAO, as well as UNREDD in co-operation with the Chatham House. In addition, the FLEGT process has developed useful expertise in strengthening and assessing forest governance and in promoting participatory approaches. The Governance of Forest Initiative of the World Resources Institute has developed useful indicators to monitor and assess forest governance that can be built upon.

“Low-hanging fruit” are tempting but unhealthy: Protect natural forests!

Experience from REDD+ countries today shows that there is a tendency to reach for the “low-hanging fruit”. Afforestation, reforestation or even small incremental changes in existing forest exploitation schemes appear to be preferred REDD+ activities. This approach will not lead to reducing, reversing, and/or halting forest loss. On the contrary, scarce **REDD+ funds need to be used to protect natural forests from deforestation and degradation**, with an emphasis on Intact Forest Landscapes and other primary forests, other biodiversity hotspots, and peatlands forests, while ensuring the respect of indigenous peoples' and local community rights. Preventing destruction and degradation of natural forests has the greatest potential for reducing emissions, and these forests are generally the most resilient in their intact state. Natural forest ecosystems also play a vital role in facilitating the adaptation of humans and other species to climate change². Without a clear prioritisation of activities in favour of protecting natural forests REDD+ will be a lost cause.

Save time and cost - build on experience and existing expertise

In order to avoid duplication, save costs, and to ensure REDD+ action does not undermine actions and objectives of Parties in other sectors, **synergies need to be created with other UN conventions and existing processes**. In addition to the above-mentioned guidance on monitoring governance, existing expertise that needs to inform guidance on safeguards includes the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), as well as international Human Rights Instruments such as UNDRIP and other relevant conventions and agreements.

Stop confusing the forests for their trees – protecting forests and people first

The implementation, monitoring and reporting of safeguard measures is currently grossly underfunded compared to the resources provided for carbon accounting and measurement, design of pilot projects to generate carbon credits, and other measures to prepare countries for a (non-existing) future carbon market. This gap needs to be closed urgently. Strong safeguards provide the enabling conditions to sustainably reduce and ultimately halt forest loss through addressing the drivers of deforestation. Safeguards are thus inextricably linked to and directly contribute to generating measurable and durable results for REDD+. **Safeguards must therefore not be treated as an afterthought, but need to be front and centre if REDD+ is to succeed.**

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² SCBD (2009). Connecting Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Report of the Second Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change. CBD Technical Series No. 41 <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-41-en.pdf>