Conservation International ~ Environmental Defense Fund
~ National Wildlife Federation ~ Rainforest Alliance ~
The Nature Conservancy ~ Union of Concerned Scientists ~
World Vision International
September 15, 2014

Submission on Safeguard Information Systems before the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice within the UNFCCC

I. Background

This submission responds to the invitation made at the 38th meeting from the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), directed to countries and admitted observer organizations to submit *their views on the type of information from systems for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected that would be helpful and that may be provided by developing country Parties*.

Furthermore, this submission includes information that the SBSTA invited to present on *experiences and lessons learned from the development of systems for providing information on how all the safeguards are being addressed and respected and the challenges they face in developing such systems*.

II. The Value of a Strong Safeguards Information System (SIS)

A primary purpose of the Cancun safeguards is to ensure that REDD+ avoids negative social and environmental impacts and that it enhances other social and environmental benefits. As such, robust systems for providing information on how all the safeguards are being addressed and respected, and the public and transparent disclosure of information from these systems, including through the provision of summaries to the UNFCCC, is vital to the sustainability of REDD+. The development of a safeguard information system (SIS) and the provision of information to the UNFCCC are opportunities for REDD+ countries in the following ways:

- **A strong SIS can improve overall REDD+ implementation.** Collecting and sharing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected will help REDD+ countries to understand what is working and what is not, enabling them to engage in adaptive management and improve their overall implementation of REDD+. An SIS can also help to identify problems early on, before they result in failure of the program or delays in financing.
- **A strong SIS builds confidence in REDD+ at local and international levels.** Using inclusive multi-stakeholder processes to collect and review information for an SIS promotes transparency and participation and increases the confidence of local communities and other local and national stakeholders, as well as international observers and REDD+ donors, with respect to REDD+ activities.
- **A strong SIS facilitates the flow of finance.** Safeguards are important to the public and private entities that fund REDD+. An SIS can provide them with the information they need to invest in REDD+ with confidence. An SIS can also enable countries to demonstrate the provision of social and environmental benefits, which may enable them to access additional sources of financing, such as adaptation, development or biodiversity funding.

Decision 12/CP.17 provides important guidance for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected. Emerging experiences with REDD+ are an additional source of information that countries could use as they design their own systems. Key lessons from early experiences with REDD+ show that both the process that is used and the specific types of information that are collected are critical. Below we describe elements of good practice that will lead to a more robust SIS, and we present examples of their application.

III. The Importance of Stakeholders in Developing an SIS

The context for REDD+ differs among countries, and the specific information that countries are able to provide on how all of the REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected will vary for that reason. Therefore, in developing an SIS that identifies and can credibly address the potential impacts of REDD+ activities, each country will need to include the inputs of the stakeholders who would potentially be affected by them, including women and vulnerable and marginalized groups. A participatory process that draws from the knowledge and experience of the relevant stakeholder groups is essential so that appropriate indicators, monitoring methods, analyses, dissemination, and feedback mechanisms can be applied.

A growing body of evidence highlights the value of a multi-stakeholder process for REDD+ safeguards, and several publications provide detailed guidance on aspects of a safeguards system[1]. Countries should build on the lessons and guidance produced by these initiatives and should continue to share lessons learned.

IV. The Type of Information to be Compiled

The information generated through an SIS should track progress towards the fulfillment of the safeguards. Based on experiences from countries that are developing their SIS, the Secretariat of the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (SES) Initiative has identified five elements of a SIS (Figure 1). These elements provide a useful framework for identifying and organizing the types of information that should be presented regarding how safeguards are being addressed and respected.

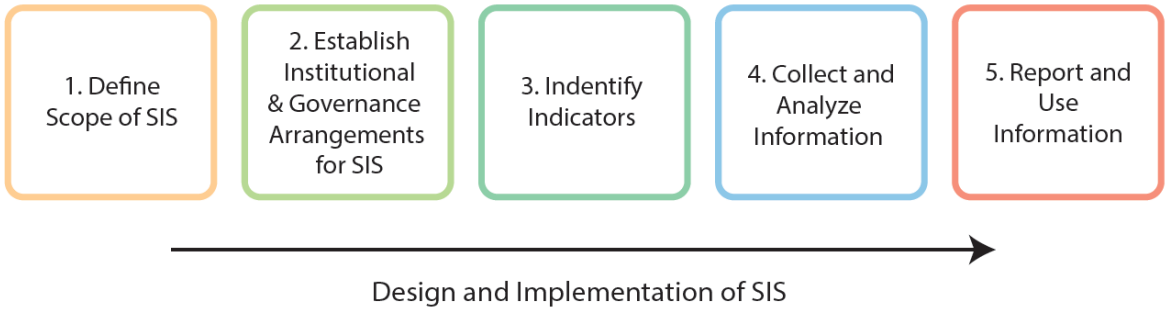

Figure 1. Elements of the design and implementation of a Safeguards Information System. Reproduced from Durbin, J., A. Lhumeau, P. Franks, A. Quesada. 2014. Experiences, challenges and lessons learned about REDD+ safeguards information systems (SIS). Available at www.redd-standards.org.

[1] Examples include:

Lawlor, K. 2013. Methods for Assessing and Evaluating Social Impacts of Program-level REDD+. USAID-supported Forest, Carbon, Markets and Communities Program, Washington, D.C. Available at http://www.fcmcglobal.org/documents/LISA_REDD_Methods_Review.pdf

REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards Initiative. 2012. Guidelines for the use of REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards at country level. Available at http://www.redd-standards.org/

Rey, D. & Swan, S.R. (2014) A Country-led Safeguards Approach: Guidelines for National REDD+ Programmes. SNV – The Netherlands Development Organisation, REDD+ Programme, Ho Chi Minh City. Available at http://www.snvworld.org/node/9170/

Richards, E.M. and S.N. Panfil. 2010. *Manual for the Social Impact Assessment of Land-based Carbon Projects*. Forest Trends, CCBA, Rainforest Alliance, Flora and Fauna International. Washington, DC. Available at http://www.forest-trends.org/publication_details.php?publicationID=2981

Wongbusarakum, Supin, Erin Myers Madeira, Herlina Hartanto. Strengthening the Social Impacts of Sustainable Landscapes Programs: A practitioner's guidebook to strengthen and monitor human well-being outcomes. The Nature Conservancy. Arlington, VA. 2014.

1. Define Scope of SIS

The Cancun safeguards are written to be broadly applicable, and countries must therefore describe how they are applying the safeguards for their own context. A country should describe its specific objectives for each of the safeguards in a way that is easy to understand and so that progress towards achievement can be tracked[2]. These objectives should be developed in light of the activities planned in the national REDD+ strategy or action plan.

Furthermore, it is essential that countries provide a description of the actions that they are taking to achieve each safeguards objective**.** These actions should reflect a logical sequence of intermediate outcomes that lead to the achievement of the safeguards objectives.

2. Establish Institutional & Governance Arrangements for SIS

It is also essential that countries provide a description of the institutional and governance framework that they are using to ensure that the safeguards are being addressed and respected and that the SIS is providing credible information. Countries should describe how domestic laws, policies, procedures, and international agreements or instruments that the country has ratified, support the safeguards. Through these steps, the SIS can promote policy coherence/integration and institutional coordination.

3. Indentify Indicators

Indicators that can be used to track progress towards meeting key intermediate outcomes should be identified. This includes, for example, indicators related to process and governance, as well as long-term impacts of the REDD+ program. These indicators should be clearly described, including the methods used to measure and the frequency of measurements. The methods should be chosen so that they can be repeated over time as a way to measure progress towards achieving the safeguards objectives. The sampling methods used should also be described to demonstrate that the measurements are representative and differentiated to permit an understanding of impacts on different stakeholder groups. To avoid duplicate efforts, countries should review existing data collection initiatives to identify synergies.

4. Collect and Analyze Information

For each of the indicators, results should be collected, compiled and analyzed in a transparent way. Data can often be collected by stakeholders and data analysis should be include competent specialists in the field relevant to each safeguard, for example social or biodiversity impact assessment and governance specialists. The methods used for analyzing data must be clearly described so that stakeholders can understand and validate the information. The type of information to be provided should include the source of the information, such as whether it is data collected remotely or through field research, ground truthing, by indigenous people, local communities, women and other relevant stakeholders.

[2] The widely-use SMART criteria are useful: Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, and Time-bound.

5. Report and Use Information

All SIS information should be transparently reported in a format and location that is available to the global stakeholder community. This means that information must be made available in different ways, including through the Internet, but also in ways that are accessible to the stakeholders affected by REDD+. This may mean producing documents in different languages and designing a strategy to promote awareness of how stakeholders may obtain the SIS information.

In order to assess the reliability of the data provided, any steps taken to verify and/or review the information or ensure its accuracy, including any independent monitoring, audit or analysis and/or multi-stakeholder review should be described. This should be coupled with any response to the information, including steps taken by the REDD+ country to address weaknesses or gaps and improve implementation.

For the initial submission of information about how safeguards are being addressed and respected, it will be important for countries to include information that describes the starting conditions that are relevant for each of the safeguards. This starting point, and information that is collected subsequently, is essential for understanding trends and for improving the implementation of REDD+ over time.

V. Case studies on SIS development and implementation

Though no country has a fully implemented and operational SIS, valuable experiences are being gained by both national and sub-national governments. These experiences serve to highlight key challenges as well as potential solutions. Below we reproduce some of these experiences as described in Durbin et al. (2014). These experiences were compiled during the REDD+ SES Initiative's Learning and Exchange workshops held in Merida, Mexico in July 2014.

Case study 1 - Experience interpreting REDD+ safeguards and developing indicators to fit the country context in Ecuador

Ecuador has interpreted the Cancun safeguards to fit the country context and developed a series of indicators along with methodological factsheets for each indicator. Ecuador used the REDD+ SES, UN-REDD tools, World Bank safeguards and other tools to develop their indicators. In addition, Ecuador migrated from a REDD+ SES Standards Committee that included government and civil society with an oversight role, to a civil society REDD+ Roundtable that advises on a broader range of REDD+ activities including SIS.

Challenges

- Complex and confusing international support with multiple safeguards approaches
- Articulation with other sectors beyond REDD+
- Designing a SIS without having a clear National REDD+ strategy and national approach to safeguards
- Linking the national SIS with the REDD+ SES indicators previously developed with broad stakeholder participation
- Establishing a stakeholder body with a broad advisory role for all REDD+ activities after the experience of a multi-stakeholder (government and civil society) body only overseeing use of REDD+ SES

Solutions

- Design a national approach to SIS and develop new indicators based on the national interpretation of safeguards
- Develop practical institutional arrangements that can be implemented immediately
- Increase political willingness to implement safeguards and SIS
- Link Cancun safeguards e, f, and g with measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of carbon

Case study 2 - Engaging stakeholders and developing a work plan for SIS in the Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico

Mexico has developed a national institutional framework for REDD+ and is in the process of finalizing its National Strategy (ENAREDD) and developing a national safeguard system and safeguards information systems (SIS). Mexico has also engaged in several REDD+ early actions in different areas of the country, including the Yucatan Peninsula (composed of three states: Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán). The three states of the Yucatan Peninsula committed to respect REDD+ safeguards and chose to develop several activities that will provide input to the national SIS as part of their early actions. One of the activities is piloting the use of REDD+ SES with support of the Mexico REDD+ Alliance funded by USAID (M-REDD). The piloting of REDD+ SES has led to the elaboration and adaptation of a work plan in collaboration with key local and national players; the establishment of a multi-stakeholder facilitation team that ensures that the process is implemented; use of existing participatory platforms for awareness raising and capacity building; a call for nominations of participants to join multi-stakeholder REDD+ SES Standards Committee; and activities to support a multilevel and cross-sector coordination.

Challenges

- Ensuring the political will needed to support efforts to respect safeguards
- Linking the national level REDD+ approach with the state level approach and ensuring state level representation at the national level
- Establishing multilevel integration to nest State processes into national processes creates challenges for governance and indicator definition, including the harmonization of terms (international, national, state and local)
- Establishing processes to ensure transparency
- Developing indicators with meaning for local stakeholders who are undertaking REDD+ activities
- Including all relevant actors in the multi-stakeholder committee
- Providing adequate capacity building for the process of interpretation and prioritization of indicators

Solutions

- Design a work plan that integrates the implementation of a monitoring plan and capacity building efforts at a local scale, and links local and national level actions
- Build on existing participatory platforms, for example in the Yucatán Peninsula, the existing REDD+ Advisory Committee for the three States
- Share REDD+ SES work plan with national and local key players involved in the REDD+ process
- Translate safeguards into tangible examples that participants can relate to in the awareness raising and capacity building activities
- Promote inclusive governance that involves communities
- Develop indicators relevant for different levels and use examples and terms that the communities understand
- Establish a facilitation team to ensure that plans are implemented; propose processes that take into account local priorities for timing and use the appropriate channels for information sharing; send targeted invitations to ensure balanced participation and secure funding to support participation of local groups/communities
- Develop a participatory process that helps stakeholders to identify potential risks that the indicators should address

Case study 3 - Experience developing a methodology for disseminating information about indicators and how they should be drafted in San Martin, Peru

The methodology for supporting stakeholder participation in the interpretation of safeguards indicators includes a training module on safeguards and REDD+ SES and explanation of what is an indicator. It was developed by a consultant who worked with the facilitation team and was tested with officials of the Government of San Martin and approved by the REDD+ Roundtable, the multi-stakeholder body that guides the implementation of REDD+ in the Region.

Challenges

- Accommodating the interests of many diverse stakeholders and donors
- Harmonizing the use of REDD+ SES in the Region of San Martin with SIS at a national level
- Achieving a consensus among the stakeholders about the concepts of the methodology for interpretation of indicators
- Implementing the agreed methodology for interpretation of indicators
- Adapting the methodology so it can be used by marginalized groups
- Validating, field testing and adjusting the methodology

Solutions

- Provide capacity building for the development of indicators (what is an indicator? characteristics, etc.)
- Develop a version of the indicator development methodology that is easy to understand and disseminate broadly so stakeholders know how they can participate
- Ensure capacity building for the multi-stakeholder safeguards committee that oversees the development of indicators
- Involve the multi-stakeholder safeguards committee in designing the methodology for the interpretation of indicators

Case study 4 a - Experience prioritizing indicators for development of a safeguards monitoring plan in Nepal

In Nepal, around 65 indicators were prioritized from the complete set of 98 indicators that had been developed through a multi-stakeholder process. At the same time, they identified indicators that would be used for the second assessment after 3 years. This prioritization of indicators for the first assessment was based on relevance to the current stage of development of REDD+ in Nepal. The prioritization was done by a small technical working group of 2 government staff and 6 civil society representatives. The first cut was done through scoring followed by negotiation within the technical group where there were concerns about the outcome of the scoring. The process took around 12 hours.

Challenges

- Defining the relevancy criteria for determining priority indicators - different stakeholders had different interpretations regarding relevance
- Providing capacity building for the different technical working group members to have a good understanding of the indicators and the process for scoring the indicators
- Allowing sufficient time for discussion and negotiation among stakeholders on the working group

Solutions

- Define a structured approach to prioritizing indicators
- Use a numerical method to prioritize indicators
- Include different stakeholders in the prioritization process
- Prioritizing indicators gives more focus for developing the monitoring plan
- Work on prioritization of indicators in small groups

Case study 4 b - Experiences developing and implementing a safeguards monitoring plan in Central and East Kalimantan, Indonesia

In Central Kalimantan, a monitoring plan has been developed and an assessment at provincial level and at one sample site has been conducted (a second site-level assessment is underway), and there are plans for the institutionalization of the safeguard information system.

Challenges

- Defining the institutional arrangements for monitoring safeguards
- Developing the long term Institutional arrangements/structures took a long time
- Establishing institutional coupling of carbon MRV and SIS

Solutions

- Coordinate between the monitoring of carbon, safeguards and non-carbon benefits
- Give the same committee responsibility for overseeing carbon MRV and SIS
- Institutionalize the monitoring plan (what information is collected, using what methods, when, where, by whom etc.)
- Define the opportunities and procedures for communities and other stakeholders to participate in monitoring
- Design the organizational structure and flow of information

Case study 5 - Experience developing a safeguards assessment report in Acre, Brazil

The Institute of Climate Change and Ecosystem Services Regulation (IMC) and CARE Brazil have facilitated a multi-stakeholder process to use REDD+ SES to monitor the social and environmental performance of SISA. Since August 2010, the State of Acre Brazil, has been using the REDD+ SES to establish a governance structure, to guide a state-level interpretation of indicators and to assess progress with respect to the indicators. CEVA is composed of 4 civil society members who are elected by the civil society representatives on three State Councils relevant to the environment, and 4 members designated by the State government. An Indigenous Working Group was created by CEVA to include an important but marginalized stakeholder group, since they are not included in the councils. After broad consultations and approval by CEVA the State of Acre adopted 7 principles, 22 criteria and 52 indicators and designed a checklist for each indicator that will be used to develop an assessment report every two years. The assessment process was led by IMC in 2013 based on a monitoring manual developed with and approved by CEVA after stakeholder review. The assessment process starts by identifying and prioritizing the positive progress and gaps with respect to each indicator, then developing an action plan that addresses the gaps and strengthens the positive aspects. The checklist, the summary of gaps and the action plan are currently being revised through stakeholder consultation before being validated by CEVA, three multi-stakeholder state commissions (CEMACT, CEF and CDRFS) and the Indigenous Working Group. The action plan will be implemented to improve the SISA before the assessment will be repeated in two years' time.

Challenges

- Establishing a broad participatory process
- Defining the monitoring plan and assessment process
- Securing the resources for assessment

Solutions

- Create an institutional framework to guarantee effective stakeholder participation in overseeing the SIS (CEVA)
- Conduct capacity building and awareness raising to encourage stakeholders to participate actively
- Use the existing joint government and civil society State Councils to integrate multiple stakeholders in Acre
- Create new institutions and structures if existing structures do not include key stakeholders, such as indigenous peoples
- Ensure transparency, for example the monitoring plan and assessment process were developed by an independent agency (Imaflora), published and discussed in workshops with stakeholders before being approved by CEVA
- Encourage effective social participation by organizing public consultations on the assessment report and action plan
- Develop an indicator assessment checklist or guide to assist with the assessment of progress for each indicator