

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests Observer (IGO) to the UNFCCC

A submission in response to Draft SBSTA 41 call for guidance on:

Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries

Specifically, 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.

Community forestry and community-based forest landscape management: An important existing framework for safeguard information system design, implementation, monitoring and reporting

CF offers a valuable approach to Safeguard Information Systems and needs to be prioritized. Community forestry and related community-based forest landscape management is an effective approach for reducing forest loss and degradation and improving forest conservation and restoration. It is a powerful approach for improving the rights, governance and fairer access to benefits of local people and smallholders and consequently, their livelihoods and food security. The definition of community forestry has evolved from a narrowly defined technical field to a broader concept that includes all aspects, initiatives, sciences, policies, institutions, and processes that are intended to increase the role of local people in governing and managing forest resources. It consists of informal, customary and indigenous, and formal or government-led initiatives. Community forestry covers social, economic, and conservation dimensions in a range of activities including indigenous management of sacred sites of cultural importance, small-scale forest-based enterprises, forestry outgrower schemes, company-community partnerships, and decentralized and devolved forest management.¹

RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests:

- Referring to recommendations on community forestry linked safeguard systems from the **ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN)** 2013 Annual Conference,
- Incorporating results from the joint **ASFN – ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network –Forests and Climate Change (ARKN-FCC)** regional experts consultation organized in Jakarta, Indonesia, 9 September 2014;
- Building upon the 2009 **RECOFTC** submission to SBSTA 29 on *Community-based forest management: a key element of effective REDD methodologies*;
- Endorsing the 2014 submission on Safeguard Information Systems made by the **Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)**, *Safeguards Information System (SIS): What should SIS deliver for Indigenous Peoples?*; and
- In support of the 2014 *Palangka Raya Declaration on Deforestation and the Rights of Forest Peoples*;

¹ For RECOFTC's definition of Community Forestry (CBFM), see page 3 of RECOFTC's Strategic Plan 2008-13, downloadable from <http://recoftc.org/site/>

consider the following points to be critical for the design and implementation of effective Safeguard Information Systems (SIS):

- 1. Community-based forest management (CBFM) provides a sound and rights-based framework** through which multiple benefits can be realized and safeguards effectively and equitably designed, implemented, monitored and reported on with direct involvement of forest-dependent communities and indigenous peoples.
- 2. Recognition of local stakeholder rights and access to forest areas should be formalized** through the provision of community forestry titles or other equivalent processes of forest management devolution. Three main clusters of safeguards may be understood to be reflected in the Cancun safeguards (social, environmental and carbon-based). We consider that the latter two types of safeguards follow from ensuring the first. There is abundant evidence that insecure access and tenure rights of forest-based people do not incentivize sustainable management of forest landscapes and conversely may result in deforestation and forest degradation, while provide secure access and tenure incentivizes sustainable management.
- 3. The need to ensure sustainable livelihoods is of critical importance**, particularly at local levels. Forest quantity and quality are often directly related to the security forest-dependent peoples experience in ensuring their livelihoods. As REDD+ payments are unlikely to be sufficient (or delivered in a timely enough manner) to offset lost opportunities at least in the short-term, sustainable conservation of forests and associated carbon stocks requires that sufficient benefits are derived from forests for local communities. Beyond the multiple benefits of forests, there is a need for the removal of restrictive regulations on the sustainable harvest of timber and non-timber forest products.
- 4. CBFM provides a valuable existing local institution most directly linked to local level forest management**, and often with existing measures in place to ensure equitable representation, participation and benefit-sharing among local level stakeholders. This responds to the widely stated need for multi-stakeholder, participatory approaches to safeguard interpretation, address and implementation in national contexts.
- 5. Opportunities for joining up monitoring activities at local levels for multiple objectives should be explored and developed accordingly.** There is now abundant experience that local communities can be effective forest biomass monitors delivering high quality results. It is important that carbon monitoring associated with REDD+ not be undertaken as a separate activity and be combined to the degree possible with safeguards monitoring.
- 6. Capacity building for safeguards and SIS awareness can utilize existing CBFM institutions, learning platforms and relevant experiences** as effective channels for ensuring strong capacities for safeguard development, implementation, monitoring and reporting. As safeguards pertain in large part to local communities and indigenous people, it is essential that they, and local level forestry officials, are cognizant and informed of respective rights, roles and responsibilities as relate to REDD+ (and more broadly dependent on national scope of safeguards).
- 7. CBFM related policies, regulations and institutions serve as an important basis for REDD+ countries to pursue a Country-led Safeguards Approach (CSA)** which builds upon existing national legal, institutional and compliance frameworks with a view to strengthening existing systems and reducing the burden of establishing new mechanisms.

8. Incorporation of CBFM can be a ready-made platform for jointly developing and improving national SIS and ensuring their ultimate effectiveness and success.

Recognizing the sovereign right of states to establish SIS appropriate for their national contexts and capacities, we assert that unless key stakeholders to whom the safeguards relate are not closely involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of SIS, there is strong likelihood that such SIS will not be effective and will not respond to the spirit in which SIS was proposed.

9. A critical element of SIS is a validated and nationally accepted agreement on key drivers of deforestation,

including rejection of the blanket assertion that shifting cultivation is a major driver. CBFM can serve as an evidence-based platform for better understanding and developing consensus on key drivers and deforestation and how traditional and indigenous land management practices, such as shifting cultivation, may or may not contribute to this.

10. CBFM also allows for significant and multiple non-carbon benefits such as support for climate change adaptation, preservation of traditional and indigenous knowledge and culture, biodiversity conservation, local-level institutional strengthening, livelihoods security, etc. This is in addition to providing a valuable, pre-existing framework for designing, implementing and monitoring SIS.

11. CBFM structures provide an organized approach for collective grievance submission and strengthen potential for equitable and effective redress.

An appropriate framework for conflict resolution at local levels may be mechanisms already established within CBFM.

12. We consider it necessary that in order for SIS to retain integrity and relevance, that while being flexible and evolving according to national circumstances that further guidance be provided by the UNFCCC to REDD+ countries on certain minimum types of information to be interpreted, addressed and respected. These include but are not limited to:

- Existing legal, institutional and compliance frameworks in the country
- Benefit sharing mechanisms
- Multi-stakeholder working groups on safeguards
- Participatory processes involved
- Flexibly designed minimum set of indicators
- Grievance and mechanisms for redress