Briefing/Information note

UN-REDD
PROGRAMME

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WEBINARS on Capacity Building on REDD+ Safeguards in LAC.

LAC practical experiences in developing country approaches to safeguards and safeguards information systems

More than 70 technical experts and specialists from 13 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, whose work is linked to REDD+ safeguards, took part in webinars on this subject organized by the UN-REDD Programme in August 2016.

During these virtual exchanges, in which the main objective was to promote dialogue on progress and findings regarding safeguards, participating countries had the opportunity to learn more about the practical experiences of several countries in the region with regard to country approaches to safeguards and progress towards the development of a safeguard information system (SIS).

The first webinar focused on the exchange of experiences on different elements of a country approach to safeguards for contributing to multiple requirements; countries were able to discuss and learn from the experiences of Colombia and Chile. The main conclusions from this webinar include:

The development of a country approach to safeguards is an **iterative process**, and includes, among other aspects, the **definition of objectives and scope**, in addition to the **national interpretation of safeguards in the country context**. The latter can help to meet UNFCCC requirements, and can contribute to other objectives and requirements of different safeguard processes. A SIS and a summary of safeguards information can collect and report information on multiple objectives and requirements. In addition, other safeguards processes, such as the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA), required by the World Bank to implement pilot Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) projects, can provide important inputs for a country approach to safeguards.

The virtual meeting between countries illustrated that there are significant synergies between different processes and safeguards requirements, but there are also challenges in meeting multiple requirements, among which the following have been identified:
- The common understanding of multiple requirements by various actors;
- The degree of complementarity between different processes and requirements;
- Substantial differences in content, processes and products;
- Different scopes and geographical areas (national, sub-national and project level) of the application of safeguards; and
- The sequence of steps and organization of activities to develop a country approach.

In the case of Colombia, a Safeguards Committee has been established for the articulation of common safeguards work processes, composed of the Ministry of Environment, GIZ, FCPF and UN-REDD. As the process was started in 2013, it already has a significant amount of technical, social, legal and institutional inputs, which together with initial processes of dialogue and capacity building for the SESA, were compiled and analyzed as a basis for the national safeguards interpretation and the country approach to safeguards.

Between 2011 and 2015, Colombia made progress generating inputs for, and in 2016 continued to consolidate, the National Safeguards System (NSS), which includes the national safeguards interpretation and legal, institutional and compliance frameworks. By 2017 Colombia plans to consolidate the design of their safeguards information system, linking the grievance resolution mechanism, and presenting a summary of safeguards information to the UNFCCC.

Colombia also emphasized the role of grievance resolution mechanisms included in local legal frameworks to promote and ensure the transparency of capacity building and awareness-raising processes. These efforts help to address the requirements of the UNFCCC, the World Bank (specifically, the SESA and the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)), and the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Colombia, Norway, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Colombia's experiences also highlighted the importance of articulation between the Cancun safeguards, the SESA, and the ESMF, through management and compliance frameworks; and the importance of reaching consensus among national actors on a working approach to safeguards, from the national safeguards interpretation, to the submission of the summary of safeguards information, and integration with grievance resolution mechanisms.

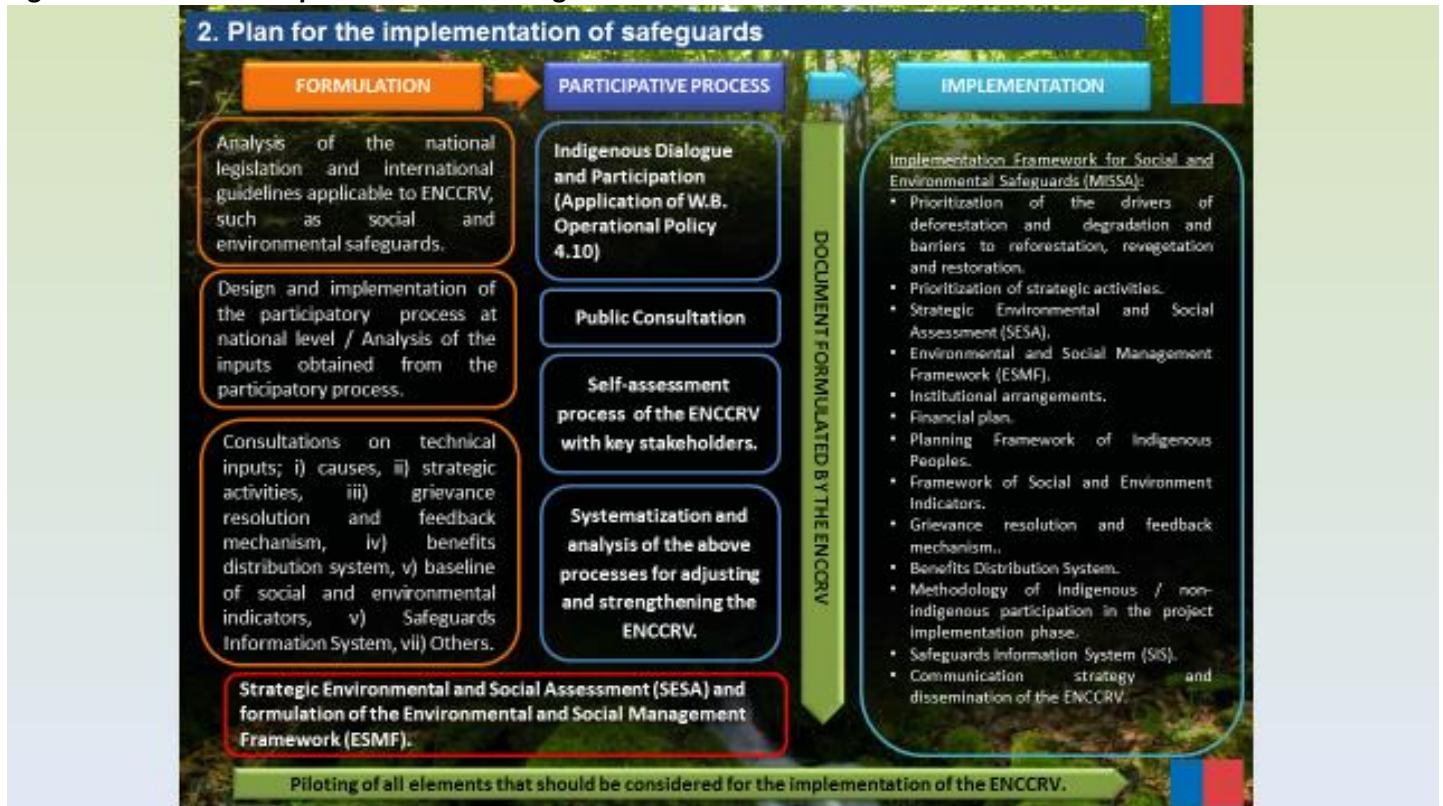**Figure 1. Conceptualization of Colombia's National Safeguards System (NSS)**

Social and environmental safeguards for REDD+ in Colombia. UN-REDD Programme Colombia, 2016.

Chile, for its part, recently completed its Plan for the Implementation of Social and Environmental Safeguards from the Indigenous Public Consultation and Self-evaluation of the National Strategy on Climate Change and Plant Resources (ENCCRV), as a tool to delineate the participatory process and indigenous dialogue for the formulation and implementation of the ENCCRV.

This includes addressing and respecting social and environmental safeguards through the national legal framework as well in various international commitments, including the requirements of several donors, which are not limited to REDD+. This approach is also articulated to the guidelines and methodology for the SESA, and the formulation of the ESMF.

In this way, safeguards have helped shape participatory processes, including workshops on the development of the ENCCRV, the processes of indigenous dialogue and participation, and the process of self-assessment in Chile, in line with UNFCCC guidelines and World Bank operational policies, as well as other international commitments. Chile has also integrated gender issues and a grievance resolution mechanism, as well as awareness-raising and communication elements, into the design and implementation of the Strategy.

Figure 2. Plan for the implementation of safeguards in Chile

Plan for the implementation of social and environmental safeguards in Chile: Public consultation, dialogue and indigenous self-evaluation. CONAF, 2016.

With regards to **lessons learned and challenges** related to building capacity on safeguards, Colombia explained that it is necessary to be clear about what safeguards will be applied to, which will then allow you to define, for example, how the national interpretation of safeguards is applied to specific policies and measures. Also, the importance of the context of specific audiences that receive information on safeguards, and their levels of knowledge on the subject and involvement in the process, were emphasized. On this point, Chile noted that environmental education at all levels of society is essential; the ENCCRV therefore includes a capacity-building component, taking into account the context of the various stakeholders.

The general conclusions of this session are outlined as follows:

- The development of a safeguards approach is not a linear process, but rather is iterative and flexible. It includes some common steps and elements, including the definition of objectives and scope, and the national interpretation of safeguards.

- The process is useful to meet the requirements of the UNFCCC and to contribute to meeting the requirements of other donors; however, as Colombia explained in its considerations, it can also be seen as a tool and an opportunity to consolidate REDD+ governance processes, as well to provide information on and help validate REDD+ policies and measures.

- The existence of a solid legal framework and extensive existing regulation can contribute substantial inputs to a country approach to safeguards; however, at the same time they constitute a challenge at the country level, in terms of collecting amounts information and achieving a coherent process.

- According to the experiences presented by countries, it is clear that the scope of safeguards approaches can contribute to processes and requirements beyond the UNFCCC; approaches can be applied to various REDD+ initiatives, and international commitments, such as in the case of Chile.

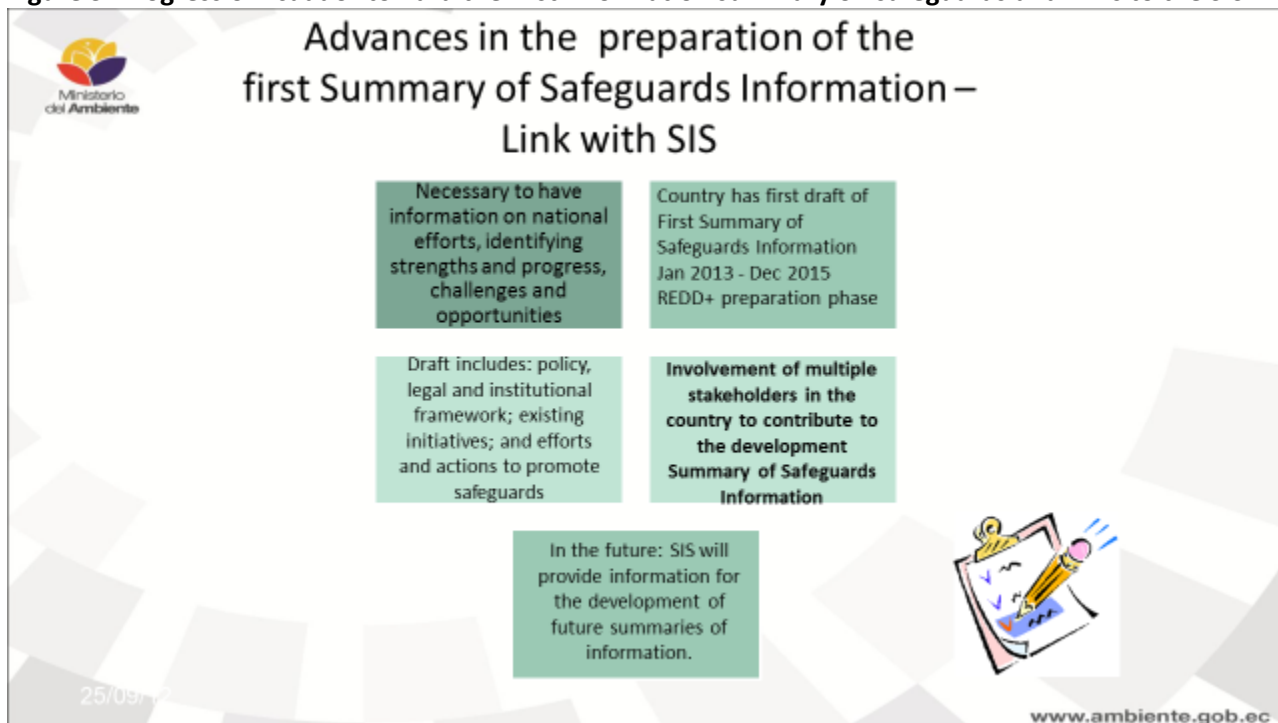## Towards the design of a safeguards information system (SIS)

Webinar 2 took a closer look at practical experiences for the design a safeguards information system, as well as key design elements, with special emphasis on institutional arrangements, the integration of existing information systems, and the collection and development of indicators and other types of information for the SIS.

The dialogue was enhanced by Ecuador and Mexico sharing their practical experiences and progress toward developing their safeguard information systems.

In this context, Ecuador explained the importance of defining a country approach to safeguards, which includes the national interpretation and definition of scope, as well as the identification and prioritization of existing information systems, and institutional arrangements for defining roles and operating functions of the SIS.

Ecuador also reflected on the importance the building of technical, human and institutional capacities for the implementation of SIS, as well as for the development of the summary of safeguards information.

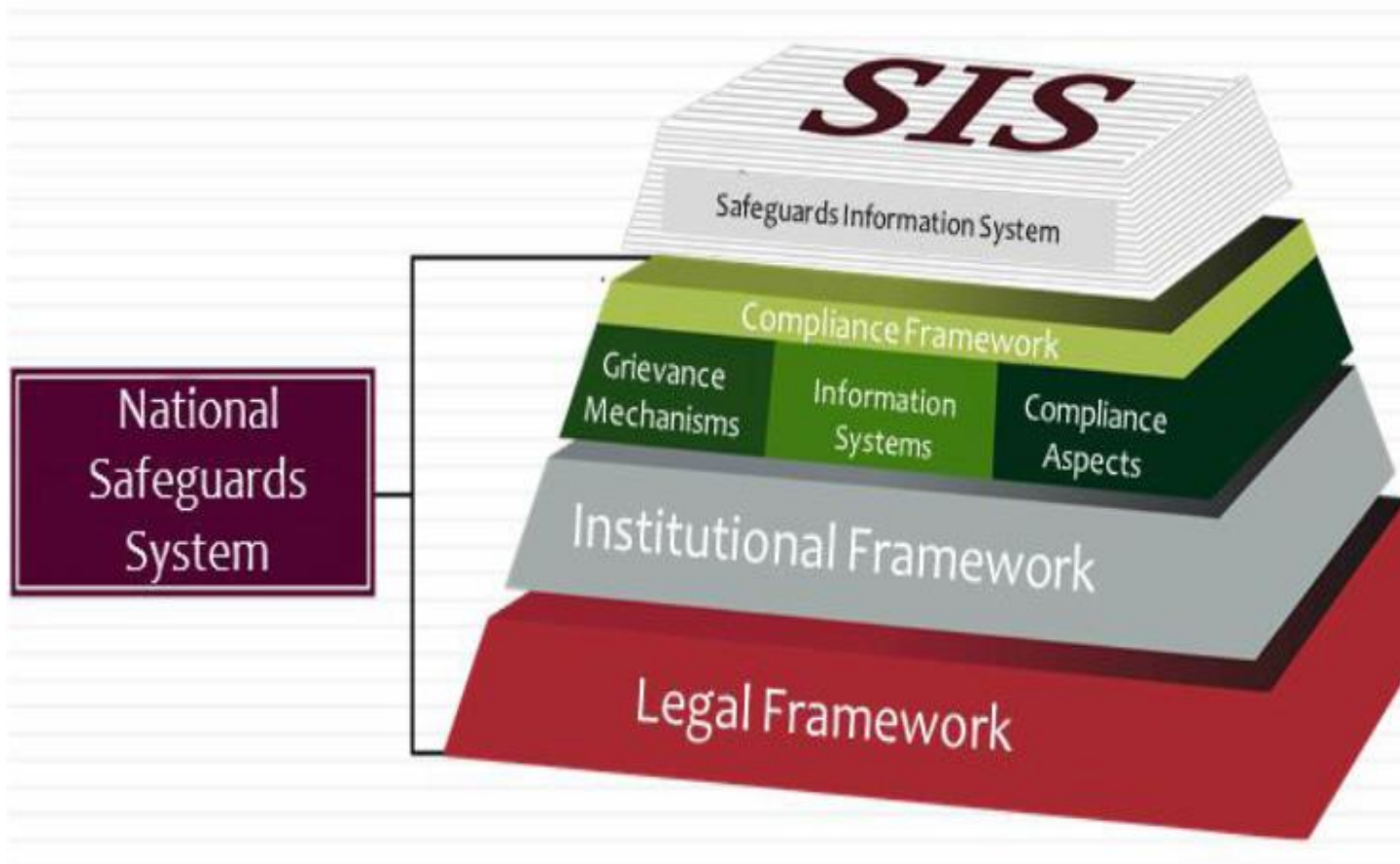**Figure 3. Progress of Ecuador toward the first information summary on safeguards and links to the SIS**

REDD+ safeguards and Safeguards Information System in Ecuador. MAE. 2016.

Speaking about its experiences, Mexico noted that its National REDD+ Strategy provides for the creation of a **national safeguards system (NSS),** based on the country's governance system and the **safeguards information system (SIS)**. The SIS is being developed based on existing systems at the national level to present integrated information and monitor compliance with safeguards.

To create the SNS and SIS, Mexico emphasized the importance of the following: a strong national legal and institutional framework; participatory development of the SNS and the National REDD+ Strategy; the integration of the approaches, systems and national and sub-national inputs; and the importance of a robust analysis of existing systems.

Figure 4. Elements of Mexico's National Safeguards System (NSS)

Towards the design of the Safeguards Information System in Mexico. CONAFOR, 2016.

As initial considerations for the construction of SIS, Mexico explained in detail their progress and how it has taken into account the clear definition of its objectives, inputs and information sources, functions, scope, format and distribution of information about the SIS.

The general **conclusions** of this webinar include:

- The SIS will vary according to national circumstances. It is important to link the SIS to broader national systems of relevance. This will allow the construction of the SIS to be articulated with national instruments for implementing safeguards such as legal, institutional and compliance frameworks that enable safeguards to be addressed and respected on the ground.
- For the creation of broader national approaches to safeguards, clear definitions of national objectives and scope are required; this is also essential for the design of SIS.
- A key lesson is the importance of building the SIS based on existing systems, in order to take advantage of (human, institutional and financial) resources and existing information systems.
- The experiences of countries analyzed show that a broad and informed participation process from the outset is important for the construction and development of safeguard information systems. This is crucial for ensuring their legitimacy, and demystifying what they are and what safeguards are being applied to.

- Another important point is the articulation and implications of national and sub-national level approaches and legislation to address and respect REDD+ safeguards, according to the political model of the country.
- The importance of culturally appropriate communication and sharing of information on safeguards that is relevant for different stakeholders, particularly indigenous peoples, in line with their traditions and context, has also been identified as a key point.
- Finally, considerations of cost and feasibility of operating the SIS must be taken into account according to the intended scope of the system, and financial scenarios for REDD+.

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ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:
Please find below the agendas and links to the presentations made in these online training courses.

WEBINAR 1: Development of national approaches to REDD + safeguards to meet multiple requirements. August 2, 2016

Introductory presentation: Safeguards conceptual framework safeguards: Approaches to contribute to multiple requirements	Judith Walcott, Programme Officer, UN-REDD Programme (UNEP-WCMC)
Colombia's experience: REDD+ social and environmental safeguards in Colombia	Andrea Camacho, REDD+ safeguards specialist, UN-REDD-Programme Colombia
Chile's experience: Plan for the implementation of social and environmental safeguards in Chile: Public consultation, dialogue and indigenous self-evaluation	Pamela Hidalgo, Officer in the Unit of Indigenous and Social Affairs, National Forestry Corporation of Chile, CONAF

WEBINAR 2: Towards the design of a Safeguards Information System . August 9, 2016

Introductory Presentation: Practical experiences in designing a safeguards information system	Judith Walcott, Programme Officer, UN-REDD Programme (UNEP-WCMC)
Ecuador's experience: REDD+ safeguards and Safeguards Information System in Ecuador	Victoria Suárez, Technical Safeguards Specialist, UN-REDD Targeted Support, Ministry of Environment of Ecuador
Mexico's experience: Towards the design of the Safeguards Information System in Mexico	Norma Pedroza, Safeguards Coordinator, National Forestry Corporation of Mexico, CONAFOR

The recordings (Webinar 1 and Webinar 2) and other relevant materials are also available on the UN-REDD Programme Workspace: Webinars on Safeguards 2016. If you have not registered yet, you can do so here.

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