

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

INFO BRIEF

AFRICA REGION



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REDD+ safeguards and safeguards information systems in Africa

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KEY MESSAGES

1. A regional South-South knowledge exchange event convened in Accra, Ghana, in June 2018. Participants engaged in rich discussions and shared experiences on progress, challenges and lessons learned from efforts to meet safeguard requirements for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+). The experiences from the 10 participating African countries, Peru and Viet Nam – as representatives for the Latin American and the Caribbean and Asian-Pacific regions respectively – are synthesized in this brief.
2. REDD+ countries in the Africa have made progress in developing approaches to address (incorporate in policies, laws and regulations) and respect (implement) safeguards, and also in developing national-level safeguards information systems (SIS). Some countries have started drafting their first summaries of information on safeguards, while others have clarified their needs for creating a SIS.
3. Opportunities for countries to exchange lessons have proved to be valuable learning experiences and made safeguard approaches more efficient and effective throughout the region. Further opportunities for South-South knowledge exchange within the region and with other regions will accelerate collective learning and advancement on safeguards.

READ THIS BRIEF ...

- you are involved in national processes to meet REDD+ safeguard requirements, particularly SIS design processes
- you want to learn about what other countries in Africa have done to meet these requirements
- you are working on other aspects of REDD+ and want an overview of progress on REDD+ safeguards to date.

INTRODUCTION

A number of developing countries are making progress with their preparations for REDD+ under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹ Some developing countries have now produced national REDD+ strategies and established forest reference emissions levels (FREL)/forest reference levels (FRL) and national forest monitoring systems (NFMS). These, however, are only three of four requirements developing countries are expected to meet in accordance with the Warsaw Framework for REDD+. As agreed by Parties to the UNFCCC in Cancun, Mexico, developing countries are also expected to address and respect a set of seven safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation. To do this, countries should establish a safeguards information system (SIS) that monitors the implementation of the “Cancun safeguards” and submit regular summaries of information on how these are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation.²

In addition to these four requirements, pilot projects at the subnational and national levels, financed by various initiatives – such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) through their Carbon Fund,³ the BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes⁴ and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) – each have their own additional safeguards requirements.

Most recently, the GCF – the financing arm of the UNFCCC – has established different safeguard requirements for a pilot programme for REDD+ results-based payments.⁵ Eligibility requirements include the country having a SIS in place and submitting its most recent summary of information on how the Cancun safeguards have been addressed and respected, which will be assessed using a scorecard. There are also further requirements related to the fund’s interim environmental and social safeguards.

In response to the challenge of meeting multiple safeguard requirements, countries have been adopting different safeguard approaches depending on their level of REDD+ development, primary sources of readiness funding and existing in-country capacities. The various approaches to meeting different REDD+ safeguard requirements have

generated a wealth of experience for countries, and, in the spirit of South-South cooperation and learning, a knowledge exchange event was held in Accra, Ghana on 12–13 June 2018,⁶ to capture and share these experiences.

The event provided an opportunity for REDD+ countries across Africa to share experiences and lessons learned to date and discuss common challenges and potential solutions. Attending the event were national-level stakeholders and experts involved in developing safeguard approaches from Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Zambia. Guests representing two other tropical forest regions where REDD+ is being pursued – Peru for Latin America and the Caribbean and Viet Nam for Asia-Pacific – were also present.

This information brief presents the issues discussed during the event as well as key experiences and lessons learned from the participating countries in general. The brief is structured around two main themes: 1) how to address and respect REDD+ safeguards; and 2) how to design and operate safeguards information systems.

ADDRESSING AND RESPECTING SAFEGUARDS

UNFCCC requirements and guidance

To ensure both carbon and non-carbon (environmental and social) risks are reduced and benefits are enhanced from REDD+, Parties to the UNFCCC decided that, regardless of the type of activity being implemented or the source of funding, countries are required to ensure consistency with the Cancun safeguards⁷ throughout REDD+ implementation.

In establishing a SIS, countries should be able to monitor and demonstrate how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected.⁸ This is generally understood as follows:

- **Addressing safeguards** – Having a coherent body of policies, laws and regulations and institutional arrangements in place to ensure that the substantive principles and rights contained in the Cancun safeguards are implemented and enforced.

1 <http://redd.unfccc.int/>

2 <http://redd.unfccc.int/fact-sheets/safeguards.html>

3 <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/carbon-fund-0>

4 <https://www.biocarbonfund-isfl.org/>

5 See GCF, Board Decision B.18/07 and Annex XI of ‘Decisions of the Board – eighteenth meeting of the Board, 30 September – 2 October 2017’. Available at: https://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/820027/GCF_B.18_23_-_Decisions_of_the_Board___eighteenth_meeting_of_the_Board__30_September___2_October_2017.pdf/b55d8183-005c-4518-91dc-152113506766

6 Africa regional South-South knowledge exchange on country approaches to REDD+ safeguards and safeguards information systems, Accra, Ghana, June 2018, hosted by the Ghana Forestry Commission in collaboration with Climate, Law and Policy, the Netherlands Development Organisation – SNV and the UN-REDD Programme. All workshop materials available at: <https://www.unredd.net/documents/un-redd-partner-countries-181/africa-335/south-south-learning-event-accra-ghana-12-13-june.html?limit=20&limitstart=0>

7 UNFCCC, Decision 2/CP.17, para. 63.

8 UNFCCC, Decision 1/CP.16, para. 71.

- **Respecting safeguards** – Implementing this coherent body of policies, laws and regulations through institutional arrangements, in addition to the outcomes of that implementation.⁹

Though the UNFCCC does not provide any details on how to address and respect the Cancun safeguards, developing an approach to ensure that REDD+ implementation is consistent with the safeguards is the key first step towards generating information for the SIS and summaries of information. Without implementing or enforcing safeguard-related policies, laws and regulations no information can be generated for the SIS.

Progress to date

There is no single model for how to address and respect the Cancun safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation, and no two countries in the Africa region have followed the same approach. This is due to a number of factors, including, but not limited to:

- the type and scale of actions being proposed to combat the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in national REDD+ strategies or action plans
- how the implementation of REDD+ actions may impact the natural environment and particular social groups
- how the country has interpreted the Cancun safeguards in accordance with their national circumstances
- the extent to which the country's policy, legal and regulatory framework can address and respect safeguards
- the extent to which existing domestic institutions can address and respect safeguards through REDD+ implementation
- the sources of funding for REDD+ readiness
- the stage of REDD+ readiness and overall progress towards REDD+ implementation.

REDD+ actions, comprising national REDD+ strategies or action plans, are typically a mix of policy and site-based interventions. The types and scale of REDD+ action has implications for how the safeguards can be addressed and respected, in terms of the policies, laws and regulations to be applied, the procedures to follow, and the institutional arrangements necessary to implement, enforce and monitor them.

Many African countries have received REDD+ readiness support from the FCPF and have therefore conducted a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) of

their national REDD+ strategies or action plans, and following this, develop an Environmental and Social Management

Box 1a: The Democratic Republic of the Congo – National Social and Environmental REDD+ Standards informed by the SESA and ESMF processes

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has adopted a special approach to REDD+ safeguards with their National Social and Environmental REDD+ Standards, which are considered a normative framework in line with UNFCCC requirements and national legislation, integrated into the SESA.

As part of the SESA process, a series of national and provincial workshops and various public consultations were held, which identified positive and negative social and environmental impacts of policies and measures included in the country's National REDD+ Strategy. Ministries responsible for sectors identified as contributing directly or indirectly to drivers of deforestation were also included in the process. Once impacts were identified, a risk management framework was then developed to serve as a basis for the ESMF.

Based on the Cancun safeguards and in accordance with the Operational Policies of the World Bank, the National Social and Environmental REDD+ Standards of the Democratic Republic of the Congo comprise seven principles, 20 criteria and 20 mandatory framework indicators, covering key safeguard topics such as participation, governance, transparency, socioeconomic benefit sharing, gender mainstreaming and the respect and promotion of rights.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has started its investment phase and begun implementing policies and measures identified in the National REDD+ Strategy, through support provided by the National REDD+ Fund. This support, in the form of sectoral and geographical programmes, must address and respect the National Social and Environmental REDD+ Standards. Summaries of information on safeguards must demonstrate that these national standards are being addressed and respected to ensure that generated emission reductions are eligible for results-based payments as stipulated in UNFCCC decisions.

9 UN-REDD Programme, Info Brief 4 – Country Approaches to Safeguards: Initial Experiences and Emerging Lessons (English/Français/Español).

Framework (ESMF). For those countries that have received FCPF support, the SESA and ESMF process has proved beneficial and influenced their approach to addressing and respecting the UNFCCC safeguards (see Box 1a for an example).

Another broad approach to addressing and respecting safeguards is the “country approach”, which aims to build on a country’s existing governance framework, including its relevant policies, laws and regulations, as well as the institutions mandated to enforce them. This approach usually begins by examining the national and legal policy framework in order to understand how the Cancun safeguards can be addressed and respected in accordance with the national context (see Box 1b).

Box 1b: The Republic of the Congo – analysing national policies, laws and regulations to address and respect the Cancun safeguards

Following the preparation of the National REDD+ Strategy, the Republic of Congo has made significant progress in developing its safeguards approach and has undertaken activities that can traditionally be associated with each of the two major safeguarding approaches.

For example, the Republic of the Congo analysed its existing policies, laws and regulations and developed these into a systematic framework of principles and criteria, with each linked to relevant national legislation to make the safeguards applicable at the national level. This is typical of a country approach to safeguards. As part of the FCPF safeguards process, a SESA was conducted and an ESMF developed along with other safeguards instruments, bringing greater clarity to the country’s specific procedures and institutional responsibilities for addressing and respecting safeguards.

In harmonizing these two safeguard approaches, the Republic of Congo has been able to combine their strengths and benefit from financial and technical support provided by various development partners, thus ensuring a comprehensive and operational response to the Cancun safeguards. The process of finalizing the approach to safeguards will be complemented with the development of a SIS and associated non-carbon benefit monitoring, which is being developed using the results of the workshop on safeguards held in Accra in June 2018.

These two approaches are by no means mutually exclusive. Most countries in the region initially focused on one of the two approaches, though there are some countries favouring mixed approaches, which are more comprehensive in substantive content than project-based approaches and provide more operational clarity than a country approach on its own. In both instances, it is important that countries use and apply existing legal and institutional frameworks where possible. Countries that have recently started to develop their REDD+ readiness activities are now able to capitalize on past experiences, leading many to opt for hybrid approaches from the outset.

Key challenges

African countries have faced several common challenges when developing approaches to addressing and respecting the Cancun (and other) safeguards for REDD+.

1. **Financial and technical limitations** on the range of safeguard activities (policy, legal and regulatory assessments versus SESA and ESMF processes) that can be carried out.
2. **Ensuring the appropriate sequencing of safeguard activities**, as well as securing sufficient time to implement these comprehensively, due to the pressure to deliver and limited technical capacity.
3. **Gathering informed feedback from stakeholders** consulted on safeguard approaches due to the technical/legal nature of the activity and for logistical reasons (remoteness of some communities).
4. **Ensuring effective coordination between various government agencies** and entities that have oversight of, and enforcement mandates on, safeguard-relevant areas, such as anti-corruption, environmental assessment and dispute resolution. Coordination also often needs to take place between national and subnational government institutions in larger and/or federal countries, where subnational administrative units have varying degrees of autonomy. Coordination is also required between different international development partners providing financial and technical assistance on safeguards.
5. **Multiple, complex and changing safeguard requirements for REDD+ results-based payments.** All developing countries have to meet the UNFCCC safeguard requirements. Many African countries also participate in the FCPF, which has additional safeguards content and procedures. Countries looking to the GCF as a key source for REDD+ results-based payments will now have to contend with

a third set of safeguard rules. REDD+ results-based payments, if they are received, may be less than the costs spent on addressing and respecting multiple safeguard frameworks.

Lessons learned

While each safeguards approach is specific to the country developing it, several key lessons have emerged from this regional knowledge exchange:

1. **Country ownership of a single harmonized safeguards approach** to meeting different donor requirements is key. It is important that all relevant safeguard requirements are considered early on in a country's approach to addressing and respecting safeguards. Understanding the safeguard activities for which different donors provide support can improve cost effectiveness, avoid duplication and be harnessed as part of a more coherent, coordinated and country owned safeguards approach.
2. **Identifying the right stakeholders to participate in safeguard processes is a crucial first step.** The wide range of thematic topics covered by safeguards across different sectors and responsible government agencies means that engaging the right institutional stakeholders at the right levels of government, as well as civil society organizations, should be a priority when a country is starting to develop its approach to addressing and respecting safeguards.
3. **Finding a balance between what is desirable and what is feasible.** It is not necessary for a country to attempt to comprehensively address and respect every element of every safeguard at the outset. Relying exclusively on existing institutions for overseeing and enforcing safeguards may also be challenging due to capacity or coordination limitations. Incremental improvements to address and respect safeguards are better than attempting to have high safeguard performance standards straight away.
4. **Efforts to address and respect safeguards are improving the design and implementation of REDD+ actions.** Safeguard exercises, such as environmental and social benefits and risks assessments (e.g. SESA) are helping institutions responsible for REDD+ in national governments, particularly in the forest sector, become more aware of the need to make improvements in the way REDD+ policies and measures are being designed and implemented, as part of national REDD+ strategies or action plans.

5. **Further operational guidance will need to be developed** for authorities tasked with the oversight and enforcement of safeguard-related policies, laws and regulations as part of a country-driven approach to addressing and respecting safeguards. This can be done through the development of operational guidelines and training on how to use them.

SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEMS

UNFCCC requirements and guidance

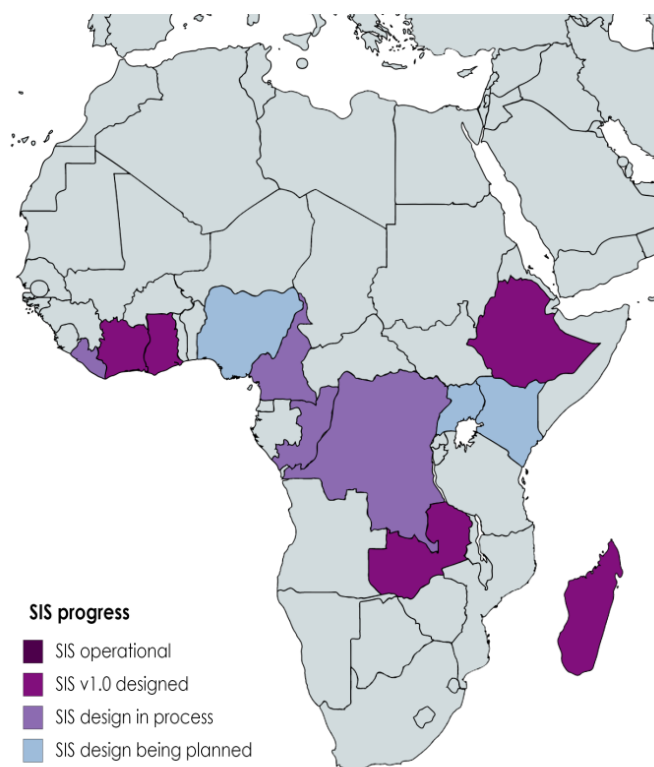


Figure 1. Progress on safeguards information systems in Africa, as of June 2018
Source: UN-REDD Programme

Developing a system for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected – known as a safeguards information system or SIS – throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities is a key requirement and a prerequisite for results-based payments from REDD+ (under the UNFCCC¹⁰ and GCF). Although there is little in the way of official guidelines on how countries are supposed to set up and run a SIS, Parties to the UNFCCC have agreed on some broad guidance on the overall characteristics, outlining that a SIS should:

¹⁰ UNFCCC, Decision 1/CP.16, para. 71d. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>

- provide information on how all the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected
- ensure that information is:
 - transparent
 - consistent
 - accessible by all relevant stakeholders
 - updated on a regular basis
- be country-driven and implemented at the national level
- be transparent and flexible in allowing for improvements over time
- build upon existing systems, as appropriate.

Progress to date

As increasingly more African countries progress in their readiness processes and move towards REDD+ implementation, attention is turning towards designing and operating a SIS. More than half the participants at the Accra workshop were seeking step-by-step guidance on SIS development; from design issues, such as how to structure information content (e.g. indicators), to operational challenges, such as how to collect information in a structured manner, as well as how to finance the day-to-day running of the system.

Although no African country has developed a fully operational SIS yet, many have made significant progress in designing their system (see Figure 1). Boxes 2a and 2b summarize the SIS design processes of two countries in the region currently in advanced stages – Ghana and Madagascar – both of which already have a publicly accessible web portal for safeguards information management and dissemination.

Key challenges

African countries have faced a number of common SIS design challenges. Those that resonate across most countries in the region include:

- 1. Institutional collaboration, information-sharing and availability.** Engaging government institutions, with a role to play in SIS design and operations, outside the forestry sector requires the appropriate incentives, mandates and capacities to be in place. Expectations of payments for government information jeopardize cost-effective SIS development in some African countries. In others, information does not exist for certain safeguard aspects or existing information systems prove not to be operational in practice.
- 2. Cost of SIS operations,** particularly information collection is perceived to be high and funding sources remain elusive. Relatively ample funding has been made available for the initial capital SIS design

processes (through REDD+ readiness technical assistance initiatives such as the FCPF and the UN-REDD Programme), but many countries have yet to identify the costs of, and funding sources for, running their SIS once built.

- 3. Multiple safeguard frameworks applied at different scales** need to be accommodated in the national SIS, creating two different, but related issues:

- different donors have their own safeguards requirements for the REDD+ actions they are financing or for which they are making results-based payments
- information needs to be aggregated from the subnational to the national level –

Box 2a: Ghana – process to develop a safeguards information system

Ghana has been pursuing a REDD+ readiness process for 10 years, driven largely by World Bank-administered support, namely the FCPF and Forest Investment Programme. Within this broader readiness process, Ghana carried out a SESA of the proposed REDD+ actions comprising its draft National REDD+ Strategy in 2014. A multi-stakeholder working group was established to coordinate the SESA process, and following this, the ESMF development process. In 2015, the working group was renamed the Safeguards Sub-Working Group and its scope was expanded to include the wider REDD+ safeguard requirements, including SIS design. Ghana developed a roadmap for its approach to safeguards in 2016, which led to a series of technical assessments in 2017 on:

- the country's existing legal framework
- clarifying the Cancun safeguards in accordance with national circumstances
- information needs and sources for the SIS.

These analytical steps informed the development of an institutional structure for the SIS, based on existing reporting structures of the Forest Commission from national down to community level actors. A SIS web platform has been launched – www.reddsis.fcghana.org – and a design document is currently being developed that will detail how the SIS will function and how information will flow within the institutional structure. The SIS will include indicators to monitor compliance with the ESMF, Cancun safeguards and feedback and grievance redress mechanism, among others.

national-level institutions running the SIS will need to aggregate information from multiple subnational sources in different formats.

- 4. Parallel SIS design and national REDD+ strategy processes.** As with countries in Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, several African countries highlighted that it is very challenging to determine SIS information needs and its structure without clarity on the specific REDD+ actions the country is expecting to undertake under its national REDD+ strategy. As such, preliminarily SIS designs are likely to need multiple revisions as national REDD+ strategy processes come to a conclusion.

Box 2b: Madagascar – process to develop a safeguards information system

Madagascar has also invested in a 10-year readiness process, benefiting from the technical and financial support of the FCPF, and is now transitioning into the implementation phase of REDD+. Development of its SIS began in 2017 through a process comprising five key steps:

1. adapting the Cancun safeguards to the national context through a framework of principles, criteria and indicators
2. establishing a baseline of information available in existing government systems/sources and REDD+ projects in the country
3. developing a monitoring protocol using a questionnaire validated by stakeholders
4. developing software to manage information within a database for the system
5. building capacity of users.

Institutional functional responsibilities – who will do what – within the system have been clearly identified, and national government actors, REDD+ project developers and civil society all have roles to play in operating the SIS. The Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Forests will host and operate the SIS, assisted by the National REDD+ Coordination Office with data-collection, processing and analysis. The SIS is available online – <http://sis-redd-madagascar.webou.net/scripts/> – and operational running costs are factored into the budget of the National REDD+ Strategy.

- 5. Identifying cost-effective monitoring methods,** demonstrating outcomes on the ground, is difficult for some of the more advanced African countries. Two key technical challenges, in particular, include:

- demonstrating that environmental and social outcomes can be attributed to REDD+ implementation and that safeguards are being respected
- identifying what methods and level of sampling intensity is appropriate to capture these outcomes at a reasonable cost.

Lessons learned

Although SIS design features are country-specific, a number of key lessons for SIS design have been identified for Africa based on experiences shared at this knowledge exchange and previous regional knowledge exchanges:

- 1. Follow a step-by-step SIS design process,** based on the collective experiences of African countries (Figure 2). This African SIS design process is consistent with good practices in other regions and is acknowledged as being highly iterative, with SIS design and functionality progressively evolving as new versions of the system are developed. Many African SIS design processes have been informed by FCPF safeguard procedures (SESA and ESMF).
- 2. Multi-stakeholder task forces or technical working groups are essential** to coordinate and guide consultative, if not participatory, SIS design processes. Such working groups should be as inclusive as needs dictate and funds permit, including state and non-state representatives. Working groups can strengthen the ownership of technical solutions, but dedicated resources are still required to strengthen institutional capacities to operate the SIS.
- 3. Build on existing systems, and use existing information, as much as possible.** There is a great deal of existing information that can be used to demonstrate safeguards are being addressed and respected. Assessing existing systems and sources of information in order to populate the SIS with readily available information is a crucial step in the design process. Identifying which existing systems can contribute what information to the SIS can inform the institutional arrangements for operating the system.
- 4. Budget for SIS design and operations.** Evaluating the costs of SIS design and continued operations should not be overlooked during the development phase. While the overall costs of operating a SIS may

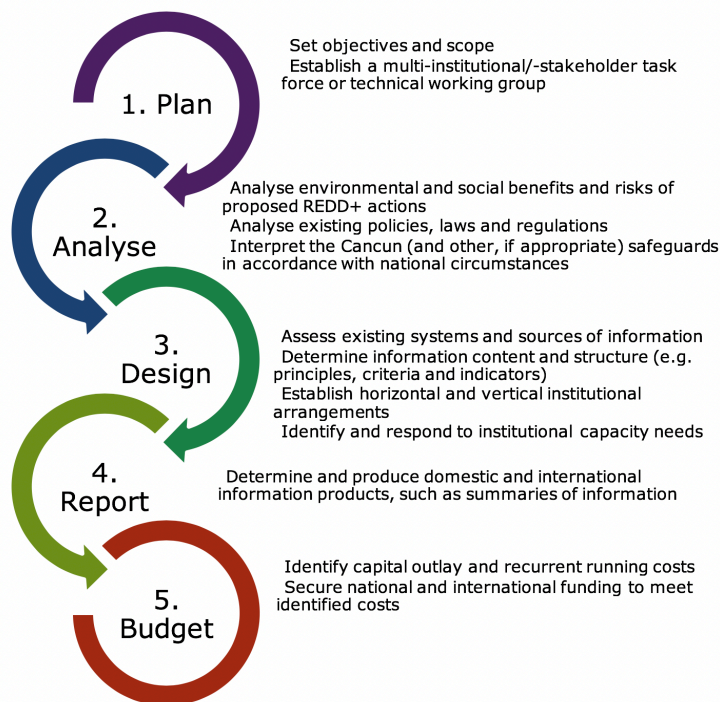


Figure 2. Africa's idealized step-by-step process to develop a safeguards information system, based on collective country experiences to date

not be high compared with other aspects of REDD+ implementation, there is a need to include these costs and identify potential funding sources in the budgets of national REDD+ strategies or investment plans.¹¹

5. Country ownership of the SIS development process and subsequent product is paramount.

Ongoing capacity-building of domestic institutions and experts, comprising technical working groups, leads to greater ownership. Development partners and consultants have an important role to play in providing technical assistance to a government-led SIS development process, which allows for the system's long-term, nationally run sustainability, in terms of capacity and completeness.

Conclusion

Building on previous UN-REDD Programme safeguards workshops for the African region held in 2015 and 2017, the South-South knowledge exchange event convened in Accra, Ghana, in June 2018, identified various common challenges countries face in meeting REDD+ safeguard requirements. Participants discussed and shared several pathways for navigating these challenges and advancing country approaches to safeguards. It is hoped that sharing

such experiences will lead to more efficient and effective safeguard approaches across the region and, more importantly, help increase African countries' confidence in their own institutions and leadership to achieve improvements in forest and land governance, to which they have committed through the REDD+ safeguards.

African countries have progressed significantly in recent months towards meeting all three UNFCCC safeguard requirements. Several countries have made advancements in addressing and respecting the safeguards and many are now in the process of designing a national SIS. Over the past year, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Zambia have begun outlining their first summaries of information. While this is still not as advanced as progress being made by countries in the Asia-Pacific Latin America and the Caribbean regions, it is a step towards full compliance with the UNFCCC safeguard requirements.

It is hoped that further South-South knowledge exchange within the region and with other regions will serve to enhance such advancements. Through knowledge exchange events, resources are better utilized and learning is accelerated. This allows dedicated financial and technical assistance to be used more efficiently, paving the way for more African countries to be eligible for result-based payments sooner than later.

¹¹ SIS operational costs for Madagascar are 5 per cent of the country's total costs for implementing REDD+ over the next five years; for Zambia the figure is 0.5 per cent of the country's total costs.

More information

REDD+ safeguards

UN-REDD Programme, Safeguards web page:

<http://www.unredd.net/knowledge/redd-plus-technical-issues/safeguards.html>

UN-REDD Programme, Safeguards Country Resources Hub:

<http://www.unredd.net/announcements-and-news/2592-safeguards-country-resource-hub.html>

Safeguards information systems

UN-REDD Programme, Technical Brief 1 (v2.0): REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems: practical design considerations:

https://www.unclearn.org/sites/default/files/inventory/un-redd_technical_brief_01_sis_v2.0_en.pdf

CLP and SNV, Strategic and Design Considerations for Designing a Safeguards Information System: A Self-assessment Tool:

https://www.climatelawandpolicy.com/files/Publication_SIS_Self_Assessment_Tool.pdf



UN-REDD Programme, Technical Brief 2 – Conceptual framework for country approaches to safeguards
([English](#) - [Français](#) - [Español](#))



Summaries of information UN-REDD Programme, Info Brief 5 – Summaries of information: How to demonstrate REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected
([English](#) - [Français](#) - [Español](#))

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