Experiences, challenges and lessons learned about REDD+ safeguards information systems (SIS)

A summary of relevant findings from two exchange and learning workshops for government and civil society actors organized by the REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards Initiative in Merida, Mexico in July 2014.

Introduction

Context for Development of Safeguards Information Systems (SIS)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Durban Outcomes provide guidance on systems for providing information on how the Cancun Safeguards are being addressed and respected (Decision 12/ CP 17). The decision agrees that developing countries undertaking REDD+ activities should provide a summary of information that should:

(a) Be consistent with the guidance identified in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, paragraph 1;
(b) Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis;
(c) Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time;
(d) Provide information on how all of the safeguards referred to in appendix I to decision 1/CP.16 are being addressed and respected;
(e) Be country-driven and implemented at the national level;
(f) Build upon existing systems, as appropriate.

UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) has encouraged countries to build experiences and to identifying challenges and lessons learned on SIS, and to share them via the Web Platform on the UNFCCC website and through submissions to the UNFCCC secretariat by 24 September 2014. This document contributes to the sharing of experiences by capturing some of the lessons learned, best practices and challenges identified by participants in two recent workshops on SIS.

Process for design and implementation of SIS

Over the past four years, several countries planning to implement REDD+ activities have started to develop safeguard information systems (SIS) consistent with the UNFCCC guidance. Experiences from these countries show that the development and implementation of the SIS often has the following elements:

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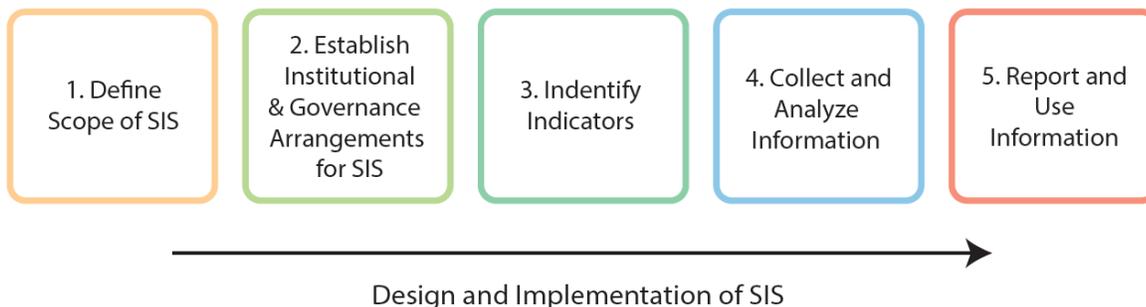
REDD+ SES Initiative

The REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards initiative provides comprehensive support for the development and implementation of a country-led, multi-stakeholder safeguards information system (SIS). The Initiative was developed through a participatory and inclusive process from 2009 and provides technical support, capacity building and opportunities for south-south exchange for government and civil society actors involved in developing their country's approach to safeguards based on a comprehensive framework of principles, criteria and indicators and a ten-step, multi-stakeholder process for development and implementation of SIS. An International Steering Committee representing a balance of interested parties including governments, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, community associations, social and environmental NGOs and the private sector oversees the initiative. The Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) and CARE International serve as the international secretariat with technical support from the Proforest Initiative. Fifteen countries (19 jurisdictions)[1] are currently participating in the REDD+ SES initiative, using the REDD+ SES framework and guidelines as guidance or as the basis for their SIS and engaging in exchange and learning events on SIS.

Workshops sharing country experiences, challenges and lessons learned on SIS

In July 2014, the REDD+ SES Initiative organized two exchange and learning workshops on SIS for government and civil society actors facilitating the development and implementation of SIS in Merida, Mexico.

- 27 participants from 8 countries (12 jurisdictions), of which 9 were from government, 10 from civil society and 8 from support organizations, participated in a *Latin America Exchange Workshop on SIS* on 11-12 July hosted by REDD+ SES Initiative in collaboration with the Global Forests and Climate Change Program of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

- 37 participants from 15 countries (20 jurisdictions), of which 14 were from government, 13 from civil society and 10 from support organizations participated in the *7th REDD+ SES Exchange and Learning workshop on SIS* on 15-17 July. A field trip to San Augustine Ejido was organized by The Nature Conservancy, CONAFOR and Bioasesores under the Mexico REDD Alliance (M-REDD) on 14 July.

During these two events, government and civil society actors shared their experience facilitating the development and implementation of SIS. Discussion focused on the challenges, lessons learned and best practices that countries have experienced while developing the different elements needed for the SIS, as well as crosscutting issues they encountered.

During a session on 11 July participants in the Latin America Exchange Workshop identified general challenges and potential solutions for the development and implementation of SIS. At the end of the exercise, participants identified the most important challenges through a voting mechanism.

On 15 July, participants in the 7th REDD+ SES Exchange and Learning Workshop presented experiences from their countries related to different aspects of development of SIS, discussed the lessons learned and identified challenges and best practices.

The following summary presents general challenges and potential solutions identified by the workshop participants for each of the different elements of development and implementation of a SIS. Specific country experiences that were presented and discussed at the workshop are provided in boxes, explaining the activities, challenges encountered and solutions developed in each case.

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[1] State of Acre, State of Mato Grosso, State of Amazonas in Brazil; Ecuador; Region of San Martin in Peru; Chile; Costa Rica; El Salvador; Honduras; Guatemala; Dominican Republic; States of the Yucatan Peninsula and State of Jalisco in Mexico; Liberia; Tanzania;, Democratic Republic of Congo; Nepal; Province of Central Kalimantan and Province of East Kalimantan in Indonesia.

Country experiences with SIS - challenges and potential solutions

1. Define Scope of SIS	2. Establish Institutional & Governance Arrangements for SIS	3. Indentify Indicators	4. Collect and Analyze Information	5. Report and Use Information

Design and Implementation of SIS

Challenges and potential solutions in order of priority identified by the workshop participants

Challenge 1.1 Nesting of safeguards information systems at different scales (national, state, province, projects etc.)

↳ *Potential solutions*   Identify existing information systems and gaps to address REDD+ safeguards, and create flexible systems with institutional arrangements that facilitate linkages between the scales

Challenge 1.2 Cancun safeguards are too broad

↳ *Potential solutions*   More guidelines are needed to define the scope, methodology and indicators

Challenge 1.3 Developing SIS to be relevant and useful for sustainable rural development beyond REDD+

↳ *Potential solutions*   Provide a legal mandate to the relevant government authorities to develop and implement a SIS for sustainable rural development supported by appropriate policies, budgeting, planning, monitoring and evaluation

Challenge 1.4   Identifying all relevant stakeholders and the appropriate approach, language and terms that take into account the needs and preferences for each group

↳ *Potential solutions*   Conduct diagnosis and mapping of the stakeholders involved in the process, paying special attention to women, marginalized and vulnerable groups; and consult with them about the appropriate approaches to facilitate their participation and support

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

Saraswati Rodriguez, consultant and member of the team facilitating development of SIS in Ecuador, presented the progress Ecuador has made developing their SIS after piloting the use of REDD+ SES between 2010 and 2012. 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 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

| 1. Define Scope of SIS | 2. Establish Institutional & Governance Arrangements for SIS | 3. Indentify Indicators | 4. Collect and Analyze Information | 5. Report and Use Information |

Design and Implementation of SIS

Challenges and solutions in order of priority identified by the workshop participants

Challenge 2.1   Defining the roles and responsibilities of each institution and establishing coordination among them

Potential solutions   Define the attributions based on a clear legal and institutional framework

Challenge 2.2   Generating decentralized processes for REDD+ activities and safeguards at national/subnational/local level supported by inter-institutional coordination

Potential solutions   Map the institutions related to REDD+ and analyze their role; identify general or existing platforms that can be adequate to engage relevant institutions in REDD+

Challenge 2.3   Ensuring the participation of different sectors of society in the design and implementation of the REDD+ information systems, programs and projects

Potential solutions   Create discussion platforms or collaborative institutions to consult, deliberate and strengthen dialogue between different sectors of society

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

Norma Pedroza of the Mexican National Forest Commission (CONAFOR) shared information about national structure and processes for SIS and Leticia Gutierrez of The Nature Conservancy and Claudio Chulin of Bioasesores shared information about the SIS development process in the Yucatán Peninsula. Mexico has developed a national institutional framework for REDD+ and is in the process of finalizing its National Strategy (ENAREDD) and developing their 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 (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
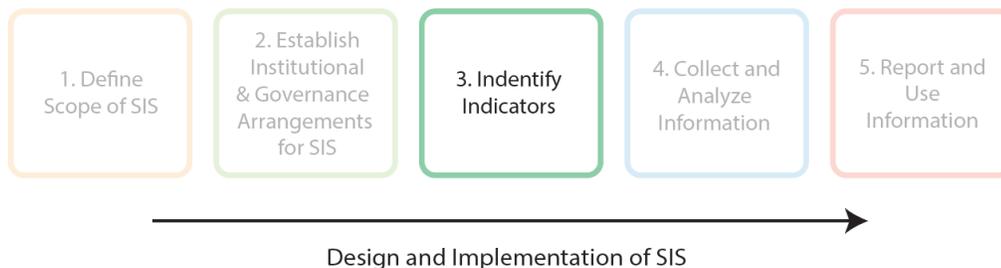
Design and Implementation of SIS

Challenges and potential solutions in order of priority identified by the workshop participants

3.1 Challenge Defining indicators that reflect the circumstances of the country

↳ *Potential solutions* Analyze and revise REDD+ risks and opportunities in relation to the national legislation and the types of activities planned under the REDD+ strategy

Challenge 3.2 Ensuring that indicators are not too broad and reflect local realities

↳ *Potential solutions* Define 'micro' indicators that reflect the "essence" of higher level safeguards principles while reflecting local details. Discuss the proposed indicators, collect comments and suggestions and incorporate the contributions of different stakeholder groups to validate the indicators with relevant local stakeholders

Challenge 3.3 Conceptualizing and prioritizing indicators and ensuring that they are measureable, bearing in mind the methodology for collection of information, analysis and verification

↳ *Potential solutions* Design a methodology for the development of indicators, develop a draft report to test the indicators and establish an inter-institutional platform to review indicators. Compare the different requirements of the indicators with the existing institutional and legal frameworks

Case study 3 - Experience developing a methodology for the interpretation of indicators in San Martin, Peru

Patricia Porras of the Regional Government of San Martin, Milagros Sandoval of Conservation International and Lucas Durojeanni from the Ministry of Environment, the organizations that comprise the facilitation team for the use of REDD+ SES in San Martin, presented the methodology they developed to support stakeholders to participate in the interpretation of indicators. The methodology 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

Design and Implementation of SIS

Challenges and potential solutions in order of priority identified by the workshop participants

Challenge 4.1   Integrating existing information systems into the SIS

> **Potential solutions**   Agree on common concepts and establish institutional arrangements for existing information systems to contribute to REDD+ SES

Challenge 4.2   Defining how will the information be collected? Who will do it?

> **Potential solutions**   Define, with relevant stakeholders, the methods needed to collect and analyze the information, the process to produce and approve the report, and the entities involved and responsible for each aspect.

Challenge 4.3   Gathering reliable quality information for analysis

> **Potential solutions**   Define quality standards for the information collected; strengthen the capacities of the institutions that collect information; integrate social and environmental information; define means of verification and/or tools to validate the information in the field

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

Narendra Chand of the REDD Cell, government department overseeing REDD+ that is collaborating with Nepali NGO FECOFUN to facilitate the development of SIS in Nepal based on REDD+ SES, presented the experience of a recent exercise to select the indicators that would be used for the first assessment of social and environmental performance. Around 65 indicators were prioritized from the complete set of 98 indicators that had been developed for Nepal 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

Two members of the facilitation team from Central Kalimantan, Yusurum Jagau a professor from the local university and Hayu Wibawa of the facilitating NGO (Indonesia Ecolabelling Institute), explained how the team had developed a monitoring plan, and conducted the assessment at provincial level and at two sample sites, and plans for institutionalization of the safeguard information system in Central Kalimantan.

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

Design and Implementation of SIS

Challenges and potential solutions identified by the workshop participants

Challenge 5.1   Organizing the large amount of information for SIS

↳ *Potential solutions*   Establish a technological platform

Challenge 5.2   Ensuring information supports decision-making and feedback to improve implementation of REDD+ activities and the SIS

↳ *Potential solutions*   Link SIS information with existing information systems and ensure it is widely disseminated including to entities overseeing and implementing REDD+ and SIS

Challenge 5.3   Lack of clarity on the type information expected by UNFCCC and donors

↳ *Potential solutions*   Guidelines to define the type of information that needs to be reported to the UNFCCC and the donors

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

Camila Oliveira of ASSIMANEJO (Association of Timber and Forest Management Industries of Acre) and member of the Commission for Monitoring and Validation (CEVA) of the State of Acre's System for Incentives for Environmental Services (SISA) presented the progress the State of Acre has made using REDD+ SES. 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 inidcatorthat 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 anaction 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

Summary of general lessons learned from developing and implementing SIS

1. Importance of a country-led SIS that reflects country context and addresses a range of information needs

i.   Interpret safeguards based on risks and opportunities of the national REDD+ strategy for a comprehensive country-led SIS (Ecuador, Mexico)
ii.   Ensure that SIS will provide information to improve the REDD+ program and enhance political support for REDD+ safeguards (from all types of stakeholders) as well as reporting to UNFCCC and donors (Peru, Ecuador)

2. Importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to SIS

i.   Implement a multi-stakeholder process to ensure political support for the effective implementation of safeguards (Mexico, Acre, Central and East Kalimantan)
ii.   Start the process with a comprehensive stakeholder mapping (San Martin)
iii.   Provide capacity building for stakeholders to enable them to engage effectively in implementing and assessing safeguards (San Martin)

iv.   Include local stakeholders to ensure that SIS indicators reflect local realities (Mexico, San Martin)

v.   Develop a methodology for stakeholder participation in the definition of indicators and discuss and approve the methodology with a multi-stakeholder group (San Martin)

vi.   Discuss and publish plans for the design and implementation of SIS so that stakeholders to know when and how they can participate (Peru, Mexico, Central and East Kalimantan)

vii.   Establish a facilitation team that includes government and civil society to ensure that the agreed process and methodology are followed (Acre, Mexico)

viii.   Establish a multi-stakeholder committee to review and approve indicators and the assessment of progress with respect to indicators (Acre)

ix.   Build on and link with existing multi-stakeholder platforms (Acre, Mexico), but develop new ones if needed to ensure participation of key stakeholder groups (Acre)

3. Importance of tailoring the indicator set to local context whilst maintaining SIS effectiveness and credibility

i.   Assess existing sources of information, and build on and link with existing information systems (Ecuador, Peru)

ii.   Design the interpretation process to focus on indicators that are feasible and match assessment capacity (San Martin, Central and East Kalimantan)

iii.   Review and simplify the full set of indicators (Ecuador)

iv.   Prioritize a sub-set of indicators for each assessment cycle (Nepal)

v.   Develop a draft report to test the indicators and (Acre, Ecuador, Central and East Kalimantan)

4. Importance of ensuring the integration of safeguards information from sub-national jurisdictions (Province, State) in national SIS

i.   Information systems at sub-national level can ensure that safeguards information reflects local realities and that local stakeholders are engaged for the effective implementation of REDD+ activities (Mexico, Peru, Central and East Kalimantan)

ii.   Ensure the articulation between sub-national and national levels through appropriate institutional arrangements (Peru, Mexico)

iii.   Interpretation of indicators at local level can help with creating 'micro' indicators that reflect local realities, while the coherence with safeguards principles is maintained at a higher level (Mexico)