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## **An urgent need for social protections in REDD+**

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## An urgent need for social protections in REDD+

REDD+ is a proposed international carbon credit mechanism to finance reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation through conservation, sustainable management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Despite uncertainty beyond 2012, which signals the end of the first period of the global Kyoto Protocol, REDD+ initiatives are moving forward as countries rush to prepare for the potential financial incentives. Yet there are concerns about the potential negative impacts of REDD+ on both the environment and people. Focused on the social aspects of this debate, this brief pro-

vides an overview of available social safeguards instruments and highlights some of the main gaps and points of contention.

### Methods

This brief is based upon a recent review of social safeguards instruments that were selected based upon their direct and specific mention of REDD+ application and usefulness. Specifically, the instruments were identified through a literature review of both recently produced instruments and existing reviews, as well as through suggestions made to the author by colleagues working with REDD+ in varying sectors.



## Policy Recommendations

- Understand and utilize the pre-assessment, policy building and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation instruments that best fit specific country/project needs.
- Ensure free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in advance of REDD+ project initiation, although this principle is absent in some safeguard instruments.
- Give significant attention to the process of stakeholder identification and independent and participatory process monitoring, which are also deficient in many safeguard instruments.

### Why the outcry for social protections?

Market-based carbon offset mechanisms such as REDD+ may be particularly risky for the poor, who are least likely to have a voice in their design. There are also worries with regard to specific applications of REDD+, for example the fear of displacement and impoverishment of poor and/or forest dependent rural people in the wake of expansion and stricter enforcement of conservation regulations without consideration for local livelihoods, to name just one.

### UNFCCC Parties' response

Notions of social safeguards and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities were first formally brought to the official agenda in 2007 at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 13 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali. The COP meetings are the primary space for REDD+ and climate change discussion. The Bali Road Map for the first time stated that REDD can promote 'co-benefits', which imply benefits other than reduced emissions, such as social and environmental improvements. Later, after a series of discussions and developments, a delineation of social (and environmental) principles and safeguards was

finally unveiled at COP 16 in Cancun in 2011 (see Box 1). Countries were requested to develop systems for reporting on how safeguards are being managed and observed.

### Individual efforts to further enhance social protection

The relatively broad safeguards and principles outlined in the Cancun Agreement leave much to be desired with regard to project level REDD+ readiness and implementation (Moss and Nussbaum 2011). There is neither a universal mechanism for monitoring safeguard compliance nor firm consequences of noncompliance; rather, governments are requested to develop their own systems to show how safeguards are being "addressed and respected... while respecting sovereignty" (UNFCCC 2011: Appendix I). According to the text, safeguards should be "promoted and supported", which leaves much scope for interpretation. Also of primary concern is the lack of a specific mention of the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), which is an important emerging norm of customary international law that is recognised in a number of international instruments and decisions. Thus while the REDD+ text refers to indigenous and local peoples' rights, protection of those rights is not ensured.

### Box 1: Selections from the UNFCCC social-focused principles and safeguards found in Appendix 1 of Decision 1/CP.16

Parties are encouraged to respect the following guidance or principles:

- Take into account multiple functions of forests
- Be consistent with national sustainable development needs
- Be implemented in the context of sustainable development and reducing poverty

When undertaking activities, the following safeguards should be promoted and supported:

- Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account international obligations (...) and noting the United Nations General Assembly adoption of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- Full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities
- Actions are used to enhance other social and environmental benefits

Source: UNFCCC 2011.

## Box 2: Instruments for social protections in REDD+ projects include:

### Before REDD+: Instruments to assess REDD+ relevant aspects

- Participatory Governance Assessment Tool (UN-REDD 2011a)
- Framework for assessing and monitoring forest governance (PROFOR and FAO 2011)
- Governance of Forests Toolkit (version 1): A draft framework of indicators for assessing governance of the forest sector (Brito et al. 2009)
- Roots for good forest outcomes: an analytical framework for governance reforms (World Bank 2009)
- Tenure in REDD: Start-point or afterthought? (Cotula and Mayers 2009)

### REDD+ in progress: Instruments to incorporate various social protections while preparing for and implementing REDD+

- Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) (FCPF 2010)
- Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (UN-REDD 2011b)
- Risk identification and mitigation tool (UN-REDD 2011c)
- Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ Readiness With a Focus on the Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest-Dependent Communities (FCPF and UN-REDD 2011)
- REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (REDD+ SES) (CCBA and Care 2010)
- Developing social and environmental safeguards for REDD+: A guide for a bottom-up approach (Bonfante, Voivodic & Meneses Filho 2010)
- Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in REDD+: Principles and Approaches for Policy and Project Development (RECOFTC and GIZ 2011)

### During and after REDD+: Instruments to assess compliance and outcomes

- Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual for REDD+ Projects (Richards and Panfil 2011)
- Guidance for the provision of information on REDD+ governance (UN-REDD and Chatham House 2011)
- Guide to Learning about the livelihood impacts of REDD+ Projects (Jagger et al. 2010)

Thus in addition to (and partially in reaction to perceived weaknesses of) the UNFCCC response, there has been a proliferation of efforts to develop new social safeguards and associated instruments and tools. The two foremost multilateral REDD+ programmes to provide support to developing countries, the Forest Carbon Partnership's (FCPF) supported by the World Bank and the United Nations Collaborative Initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) Programme, are both completing their own (and some joint) social and environmental safeguard instruments. So are many international non-governmental organizations and research institutes.

Tools on social aspects of REDD+ processes cover the entire policy process from pre-assessment to design, implementation and evaluation, and focus on identifying and mitigating risks, promoting various co-benefits, and securing the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders (see Box 2 for a list of some of the most widespread tools). Differences exist with regard to the point of departure, the level of detail, and the intended outcomes.

### Contentious issues: free, prior and informed consent and "process"

Several aspects remain debated and poorly addressed in most instruments. One such aspect is the inclusion of the principle of free prior and informed consent (FPIC). The UN-REDD Programme and the REDD+ SES, to name two leading initiatives, include and emphasize FPIC, whereas the FCPF adheres only

to the World Bank's policy of free, prior and informed consultation, which has been criticized (e.g. Dooley et al. 2011).

The process of stakeholder identification and independent and participatory process monitoring are two additional areas that appear to be lacking (although the Participatory Governance Assessment Tool that is under development by the UN-REDD constitutes a notable exception to the latter). With regard to the former, the tools with particular focus on process related issues of inclusion and participation in implementation are the joint FCPF and UN-REDD's Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement, the UN-REDD Participatory Governance Assessment Tool, and parts of the REDD+ SES. The Principles and Approaches for Policy and Project Development by the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit is an example of an effort to develop elaborate guidance on process, including identification of stakeholders mainly at the project level.

### Other focal areas and efforts for social protections

Restricted not just to the larger processes (and not included in Box 2), a broad range of other actors are also calling for improved social protections in REDD+. Some are generating new instruments and adapting old ones. Others outline approaches to evaluate the process and projects. For example at the project level, CIFOR is looking at effects of the REDD+ interventions on meeting their 3E+ criteria:

- Effectiveness: Can the mechanism bring significant emission reductions?



- Efficiency: Are these reductions achieved at the minimum cost?
- Equity: Are benefits and costs distributed fairly among and within countries?
- +: Are co-benefits achieved?

Many point to good governance as an essential pre-condition for effective REDD+ implementation. Several governance assessment tools are listed above. Others are focusing on the long-term opportunities of REDD+ for improving local democracy and local representation (e.g. Brown, Seymour and Peskett 2008; Ribot 2011). Ribot (2011) suggests that CIFOR's 3Es+ criteria be expanded to include a 4th and 5th 'E', namely enfranchisement and emancipation.

The International Institute for Environment and Development has produced a substantial amount of pro-poor, governance and tenure focused REDD+ related materials particularly from their Forest Governance Learning Group. Indeed tenure of forests, land and carbon are widely discussed, and some tools are mentioned in Box 2. Further, the Forest Peoples Programme has contributed influential reports calling for forest people's rights and criticizing some ongoing processes (e.g. Griffiths 2008; Dooley et al. 2008, 2011).

### Concluding remarks

The review reveals that the international REDD+ discourse and national processes increasingly focus on social protections for the poor. Accordingly, REDD+ specific tools to protect and empower the most vulnerable are being generated. Ranging from the broad REDD+ social and environmental safeguards and principles laid out at COP 16 in Cancun in 2010 to the more narrowly focused efforts targeting particular vulnerable groups such as women or indigenous people, some are exclusively *process* focused whereas others centre on *substantive* standards, principles, criteria, and indicators. There is substantial overlap and yet major distinctions remain (some of which are contentious). For example, the principle of FPIC is emphasized in only some instruments, although it is increasingly included in international agreements. However, the sum of efforts represents an evolving focus beyond simply preserving and regenerating forests for carbon storage, and provides a wide and elaborate coverage of social and environmental issues. Greater *alignment* amongst the efforts based on an agreement on minimum standards would counter the problem identified in previous analyses of the existing social safeguards: that no one standard provides comprehensive coverage of the criteria set out in the Cancun decision safeguards (Murphy 2011; Merger, Dutschke and Verchot 2011). Alignment of criteria and procedures would not only guar-

antee a common minimum standard for social and environmental safeguards, it could also contribute towards efficiency in REDD+ processes through opportunities for replication of processes.

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References to the specific instruments have not been included in this brief. To find the original study including a full list of references for the social instruments mentioned please see: [Rutt, R., 2012: "Social protection in REDD+ initiatives: A Review", a Working Paper of the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative \(RFGI\), Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa \(CODESRIA\).](#)

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