

BRIEF SERIES: VIET NAM

Viet Nam's approach to safeguards



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Introduction

REDD+ has the potential to deliver social and environmental benefits that go beyond mitigating climate change, but REDD+ actions could also entail some potential risks. In order to minimize these risks, and at the same time enhance the potential benefits, seven safeguards, known as the “[Cancun safeguards](#)” (See Box 1) are in place that must be addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ actions.

At the end of 2018, the Government of Viet Nam completed two key United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requirements relating to safeguards: it submitted its first summary of information on safeguards, outlining how the country will address and respect the safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation, and also released an online safeguards information systems (SIS).

Viet Nam became the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to complete the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ after fulfilling these safeguards requirements, which now make the country eligible to receive REDD+ results-based payments.

Box 1 The Cancun Safeguards for REDD+

The following safeguards should be promoted and supported when implementing REDD+ activities:

- a) That [REDD+] actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;
- b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
- c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in [REDD+] actions;
- e) That [REDD+] actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that [REDD+] actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits, taking into account the need for sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities and their interdependence on forests in most countries, reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the International Mother Earth Day.
- f) Actions to address the risks of [greenhouse gas emissions reductions] reversals;
- g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.

Paragraph 71, UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16



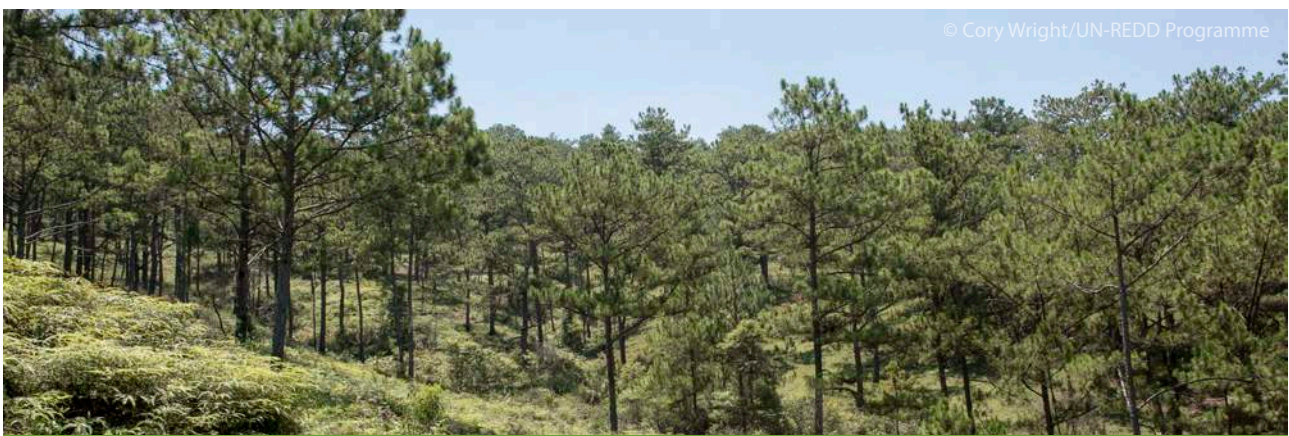
1. Viet Nam's Country Approach to Safeguards

Viet Nam's Country Safeguards Framework aims to address the potential risks and effectively promote the benefits that REDD+ could achieve through the implementation of REDD+ Policies and Measures (PaMs), in order to fulfill both Viet Nam's commitments under the UNFCCC and a key prerequisite for obtaining results-based payments under the REDD+ mechanism.

To date, Viet Nam's country-based approach has primarily focused on the Cancun safeguards and other REDD+ safeguard-related requirements set out in the UNFCCC. In the future, the Country Safeguards Framework will also be expected to meet safeguards requirements for all applicable REDD+ financing channels, including results-based payments under the Green Climate Fund (GCF), parallel multilateral financing mechanisms such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), and other financing for key REDD+ actions, progressively working towards an efficient and effective unified approach to all relevant REDD+ safeguards requirements.

Addressing safeguards

Viet Nam understands that addressing safeguards relates to the governance arrangements of the country that are relevant to the contents of the Cancun safeguards. Such governance arrangements include policies, laws and regulations (PLRs), institutions, and grievance and redress mechanisms (GRMs) and other procedures. An initial assessment of Viet Nam's PLRs was completed in 2013, with further assessments carried out in 2014 and in 2017. These studies looked at how the Cancun safeguards are addressed within Viet Nam's legal framework and informed the description of each safeguard in accordance with national circumstances, in addition to information on how each of the safeguards will be respected. Based on the PLR analysis, a national clarification of the Cancun safeguards was developed and refined through consultations with the core group of the Sub-Technical Working Group on Safeguards (STWG-SG). The objective of this clarification, in addition to responding to UNFCCC guidance, was to clarify how the broad principles embodied in the Cancun safeguards are translated into rights and obligations anchored to Viet Nam's existing legal framework.



Respecting safeguards

Viet Nam understands that respecting safeguards relates to the provision of information about how the governance arrangements used to address the safeguards are working in practice, in addition to information on the outcomes of that implementation. Viet Nam will respect safeguards through the implementation of the PLRs identified to address the national clarification of Cancun safeguards (a) through to (e). The national clarification of Cancun safeguards (f) and (g) will be respected through the implementation of specific actions identified to reduce the risk of reversals and displacement. Improved implementation of PLRs and REDD+-specific safeguard actions will require strengthened institutional capacities in terms of mandates, procedures, and financial, human, and technological resources. The respecting of safeguards will be demonstrated through the SIS and reported in Viet Nam's summaries of information.

Multi-stakeholder institutional arrangements

Each step of the development of Viet Nam's REDD+ Country Safeguards Framework has included extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, through the groups mentioned below.

The Sub-Technical Working Group on Safeguards (STWG-SG) is established under the National REDD+ Network. It plays a leading role in the facilitation of consultations and stakeholder engagement processes informing the development of national and subnational REDD+ safeguards mechanisms and information reporting systems. The STWG-SG is chaired by Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST) and co-chaired by an international non-government organization (NGO), SNV – The Netherlands Development Organisation. Membership of the STWG is open to all interested parties and stakeholders, and members come from the public sector, the private sector and civil society, including members of the Vietnamese NGO Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) network (VNGO-FLEGT) and representatives from the REDD+ Ethnic Minority Network.

The Safeguards Core Group of the STWG-SG leads the convening of technical discussions on REDD+ safeguards-related issues, providing a forum for consultations and expert advice in the development of key national REDD+ safeguards milestones, including the national SIS. The Safeguards Core Group has 19 standing members with expertise across key thematic areas related to safeguards. The members of this advisory body include the staff of Government agencies, social and professional organisations and NGOs, as well as individual experts.

Finally, the Government Working Group on the SIS and the Summary of Information was established by the Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST) to provide information and feedback on the content of the SIS and the first summary of information during their development, with a particular focus on internal review and approval processes. This working group includes 26 members from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and other relevant line ministries.



2. Safeguards Information System

The development of the SIS for Viet Nam commenced in late 2015. The design process was coordinated by the Standing Office for the State Steering Committee on Sustainable Forest Management and REDD+, with technical assistance from the UN-REDD Programme Phase II, together with the Department for Information Development of VNFOREST, and the Forest Information Management System (FORMIS) Project Phase II. During the development of the SIS, contributions from a wide range of stakeholders were mobilized, including via the three working groups mentioned above.

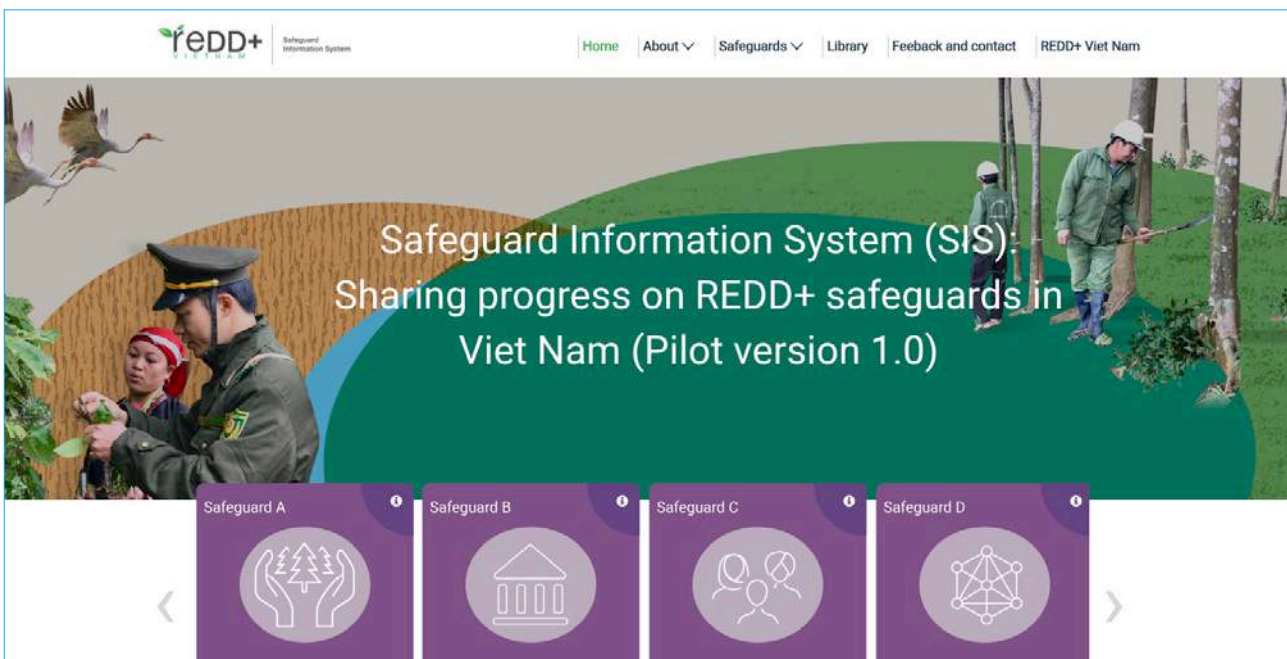
The online SIS is incorporated within FORMIS, along with some elements of the national forest monitoring system (NFMS), and presents information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected nationally, as well as in the World Bank's FCPF [Emission Reductions Program covering six provinces in Viet Nam's North-Central Coast Region](#).

Box 2 Objectives of Vietnam's SIS

2016-2020: To meet UNFCCC safeguards reporting requirements and produce the summaries of information. It is also proposed that the SIS should gather and provide information on safeguards implementation for the proposed FCPF Emissions Reduction Programme, in the North Central Coast Region, during this period.

Post-2020: To support monitoring of priority activities in the forestry sector, such as Payments for Forest Environmental Services (PFES) and contributing to the enhancement of governance in the forestry sector, by supporting the monitoring of policy implementation, and law enforcement in the forestry sector.

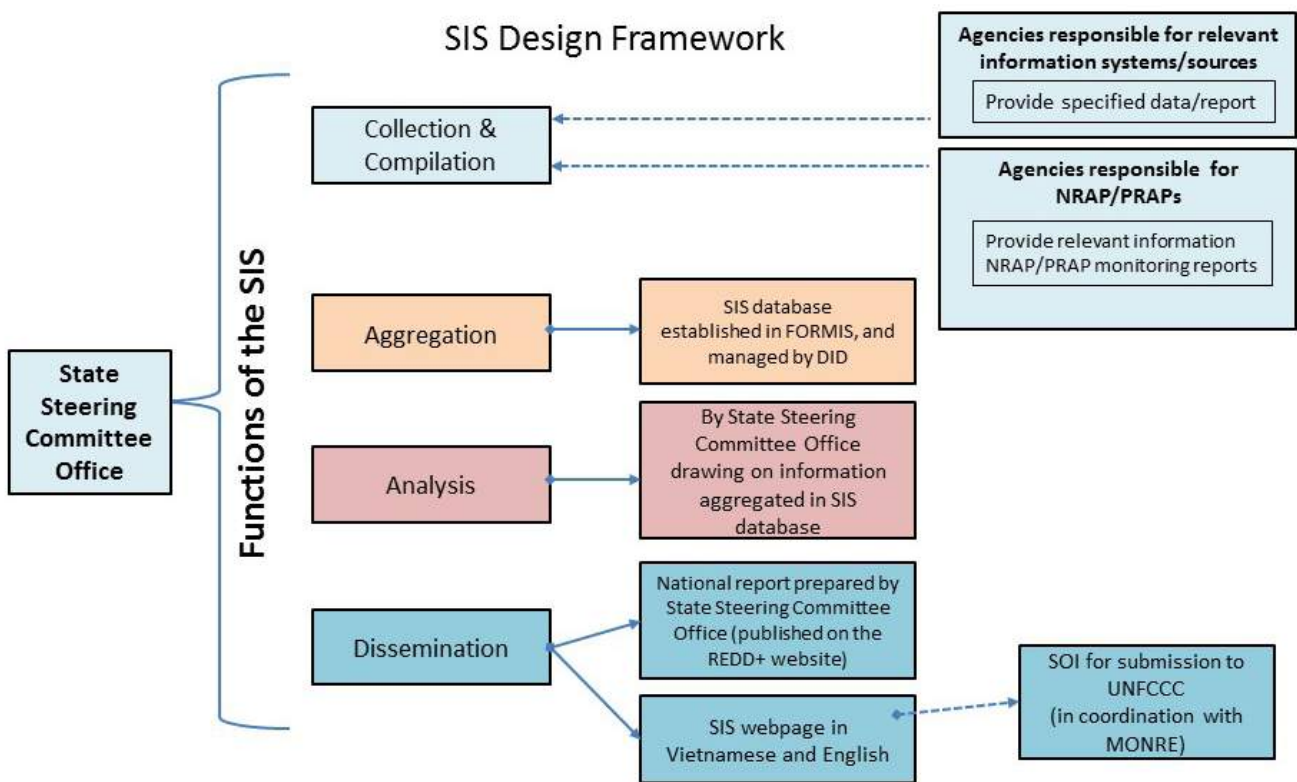
Viet Nam's SIS can be found at <http://sis.vietnam-redd.org/>



Design of the SIS

The information presented in Viet Nam’s SIS is drawn from a range of sources, including Forest Management Information System ([FORMIS](#)), the REDD+ Information Portal, the [General Statistics Office](#), and the [Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs](#) (CEMA). Information on how the safeguards are being addressed – the governance arrangements relevant to the safeguards - includes descriptions of relevant policies, laws and regulations. Information on how the safeguards are being respected includes descriptions and figures on how these policies, laws and regulations are working in practice, along with relevant outcomes of REDD+ implementation.

Figure 2 Institutional arrangements and functional responsibilities for Viet Nam’s Safeguards Information System



Information in Viet Nam’s SIS will be updated regularly – usually on an annual or biannual basis, depending on the source of the information. In the future, information in the SIS will be improved on, with more data being sourced from other relevant databases and sources, such as the National Database on Biodiversity and National Database on Addressing Complaints and Denunciations. (A total of 12 databases, at various stages of development, have been identified as relevant to the SIS).

The SIS database is hosted through FORMIS, which is operated by the Department of Information Development under VNFOREST. The SIS website is administered by the Standing Office for the State Steering Committee on Sustainable Forest Management and REDD+. Information in the SIS is compiled and managed by these agencies, and analysed and reviewed by multiple stakeholders through the process of developing summaries of information on safeguards.

Towards a Phase 2 safeguards information system

The SIS will be operationalised, institutionalised and improved over time in two stages: short-term (2017-2020) and longer-term (post-2020), meeting the system's stated objectives (See Box 2). A document titled "SIS v1.0 System Specification" was compiled to describe the system requirements for the current version of the SIS, as well as a list of recommendations for SIS v2.0. These recommendations include: further integration with other national data sources, subnational data sources and REDD+ implementation information; improvements to the website and SIS server; and ways to strengthen institutional capacity to operate the SIS.





3. Summary of Information

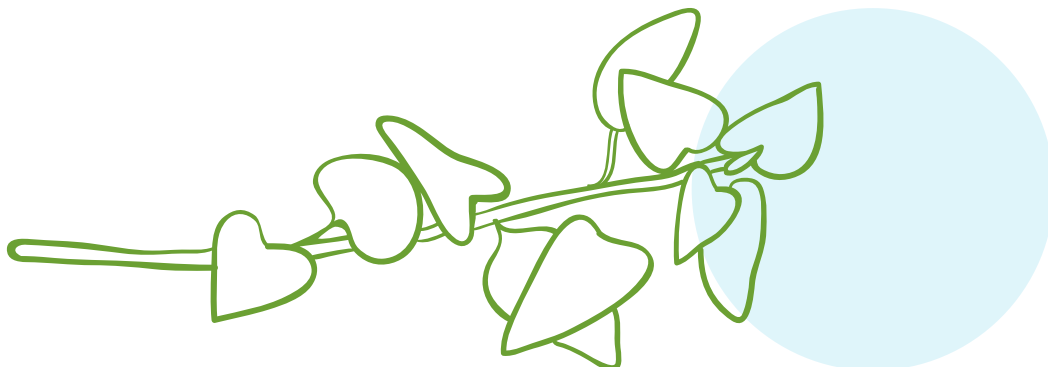
Viet Nam submitted [its first Summary of Information](#) to the UNFCCC in January 2019. It provides an overview of Viet Nam's country approach to REDD+ safeguards, including up-to-date information on: a) the status of designing and implementing the national SIS; b) the national clarification of the Cancun safeguards; c) how these safeguards are addressed within Viet Nam's PLRs; and d) how Viet Nam will ensure that these safeguards are respected during REDD+ implementation. The summary of information also outlines key initiatives, mechanisms and approaches related to REDD+ safeguards in Viet Nam, including the safeguards policies related to Viet Nam's proposed FCPF Emissions Reduction Programme in the North-Central Region.

The submission and public dissemination of the summary of information provides an opportunity for Viet Nam to receive feedback and recommendations from key stakeholders both within and outside of the country. The summary of information also provides insight on remaining gaps and identifies key measures related to addressing the Cancun safeguards. It is anticipated that subsequent summaries of information will provide information on how these measures have been implemented, as well as information on how REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and respected in Viet Nam as a basis for accessing results-based payments.



Conclusion: Next steps

A considerable amount of work has been carried out over the past few years and Viet Nam is among the few countries in the world to have fulfilled the key UNFCCC requirements on REDD+ safeguards, namely a SIS in place and a first summary of information submitted to the Convention. Moving towards REDD+ implementation and result-based payments, however, will require further work on improving and strengthening Viet Nam's Country Framework on Safeguards. The National REDD+ Action Programme's Mid-term Implementation Plan contains a list of actions that need to be undertaken in that respect (*See heading "Finalize and operate the Safeguards Information System and share a Summary of Information periodically to the UNFCCC"*).





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