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|  | **A black background with red and blue text  AI-generated content may be incorrect.** |  |
|  | **Output 1.2: Safeguards addressed, respected, monitored, and reported** |  |
|  | **UN-REDD Multiyear Programming Document 2026–2030 Illustrative Support Overview** |  |
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|  | **Prepared by UN-REDD Programme****June 2025** |  |
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|  | *This brief has been prepared by the UN-REDD Programme team based on preliminary analysis, internal assessments, and strategic insights from prior engagements and consultations. It is intended to provide illustrative information on potential areas of UN-REDD support for the 2026–2030 period. The content, including indicative budgets and activities, is for donor engagement purposes only and has not yet been discussed or consulted with the respective country authorities. As such, it does not represent an official position or commitment from the country concerned or from the UN-REDD Programme.* |  |

# Output 1.2: Safeguards addressed, respected, monitored, and reported

**This is one of three outputs forming Outcome 1: Demonstrating High-Integrity REDD+ Results:** *Consolidating, institutionalising, and updating forest monitoring and MRV, and safeguards systems, in line with country approaches (e.g. nesting models), supporting countries to demonstrate the integrity of results, results-based finance, and socially inclusive and gender-responsive benefit-sharing mechanisms.*

# The challenge

The implementation of activities under the REDD+ mechanism has the potential to deliver social and environmental benefits that go beyond the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, but it may also entail potential risks to people and the environment. Safeguards in REDD+ were negotiated and agreed under the UNFCCC as way to ensure that actions to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, do not harm to people and nature, but rather enhance social and environmental benefits. Environmental and social risk management, coupled with enhanced benefits, through safeguards and their attendant mechanisms[[1]](#footnote-2), are key to ensuring the legitimacy, validity and integrity of mitigation results from forest-based solutions.

Integrity, in its broadest sense, goes beyond robust carbon accounting dimensions (additionality, baselines, leakage, reversals and uncertainty), and encompasses elements of other environmental and social outcomes. These other environmental (such as biodiversity conservation) and social (such as Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ rights, social inclusion and gender equality) outcomes, be they positive benefits or negative risks, are integral to all forms of results-based finance for forest-based mitigation solutions. Whether the payments are made bi- or multilaterally under Article 5 or the Paris Agreement, through bilateral arrangements or regulated markets under Article 6, or by buyers in the voluntary carbon market, environmental and social benefits and risks remain a paramount consideration.

Over the past decade and a half, safeguards have often taken a back seat to monetized carbon accounting and MRV priorities. As with MRV, money and time saving approaches of outsourcing monitoring of safeguards have faced limitations due to strong desires from national governments to maintain ownership and control of information, particularly on sensitive issues, such as on Indigenous Peoples, local communities’ and women’s rights, land tenure, equitable benefit sharing arrangements, etc. And even more so than quantitative MRV of a single carbon metric, the qualitative and diverse nature of safeguards information has necessitated country context specific solutions. For all these reasons, progress on safeguards has, in general terms, lagged behind that of carbon accounting.

Nonetheless, with extensive technical assistance by the UN-REDD Programme and others, many countries have interpreted the Cancun safeguards in their own national circumstances and contexts, designed and attempted to put into operation a SIS, and submitted summaries of safeguards information to the UNFCCC Lima Hub. Some have also developed second iterations of these approaches to fulfil the requirements of specific funding mechanisms (such as the GCF RBP pilot programme) or standards (such as ART-TREES).
In the absence of predictable volumes of results-based finance, at fair price points, however, institutional capacities are often eroded, SIS platforms become outdated, and attention to general safeguards implementation then becomes often neglected. While much progress has been made in establishing national safeguards information systems in line with WFR requirements, challenges also persist. Given this situation, countries continue to need to 1) strengthen their approaches to address and respect safeguards, especially underlying legal frameworks; 2) develop benefit and risk assessments and equitable benefit sharing mechanisms; and 3) undertake associated socially inclusive and gender-responsive stakeholder engagement processes , to name but a few priorities. These country approaches to safeguards also need to align, internationally, with the standards (such as ART-TREES, FCPF Carbon Fund Methodological Framework, and Verra Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+) associated with emerging results-based finance opportunities, as well as domestically with revisions to national REDD+ strategies, which is now happening across numerous UN-REDD partner countries.

Particular attention needs to be paid to making countries approach to safeguards operational, efficient and socially inclusive and gender-responsive, allowing countries to meet growing environmental and social integrity demands from international sources of results-based finance. Equally, countries need to ensure that REDD+ outcomes on the ground are taking into account and meeting expectations of domestic stake- and rightsholders, such as Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth.

Institutionalizing country safeguards approaches and systems, such as providing operational safeguards guidance to REDD+ implementing agencies, updating SIS information management protocols, and producing summaries of information (SOIs), will be essential for sustained, long-term implementation, monitoring and reporting of safeguards performance. Building institutional capacities of national agencies and institutes to support functioning and effective safeguards approaches and systems, financed with revenue starting to come in from results-based finance, is of paramount importance to transition countries from ODA-dependent readiness to sustained nationally owned and funded safeguards operations.

Regionally and globally, sharing best practices, building capacity through peer-to-peer learning, and facilitating learning between countries on key safeguards issues will also be key to accelerating towards nationally owned and operated safeguards implementation, monitoring and reporting. In addition to safeguards fundamentals, such as SIS and SOI, knowledge exchange efforts will need to embrace the growing importance of issues like free, prior and informed consent, GRM, benefit sharing and non-carbon benefits, leveraging the many lessons and case studies now available.

# The value proposition

Since the adoption of the Cancun safeguards in 2010, UN-REDD Programme has been a pioneering vanguard of technical know-how, anchored in the political economies of partner countries, on safeguards, benefit sharing, grievance redress, stakeholder engagement and gender mainstreaming. The Programme has supported 20 countries, through multi-stakeholder platforms and processes, to develop their own national approaches to address and respect safeguards, design and implement SIS, and produce summaries of information. In recent years, the Programme has been instrumental in facilitating results-based finance transactions under market-based mechanisms, notably the LEAF Coalition, by ensuring safeguards conformity with ART-TREES in 13 countries. In 2025 alone, the Programme is supporting 10 countries to improve their SIS operations, 10 countries to submit SOIs to the UNFCCC, and five countries develop their grievance redress mechanisms.

Over 15 years of safeguards technical assistance and policy guidance, the Programme has developed a world-leading safeguards team across the three partner UN agencies, with global, regional and in-country presence. In addition to supporting in-country delivery, the UN-REDD safeguards team supports inter-country knowledge exchange through the development of normative best-practice guidance, annual global/regional learning events and ongoing communities of practice. The team also furthers cutting-edge thought leadership, as well as in-country collaboration, on safeguards through a Practitioners Network in partnership with the World Bank and their climate programmes (EnABLE, FCPF, ISFL, SCALE).

In the 2026 to 2030 period, the Programme will work with partner countries to strengthen safeguards implementation, monitoring and reporting in line with the WFR but also meeting any additional requirements of complementary subnational or national requirements – from GCF RBPs to REDD market standards - that have emerged in recent years. UN-REDD’s technical assistance and knowledge management on safeguards will focus on, *inter alia*: 1) strengthening country approaches to address and respect safeguards; 2) assessing benefits and risks (to inform the development of equitable benefit sharing mechanisms - see Output 1.3); and 3) undertake associated socially inclusive and gender-responsive stakeholder engagement processes. This will continue to be done in close collaboration with member state governments and other technical assistance providers in civil society (e.g. the Jurisdictional REDD+ Technical Assistance Partnership) and the private sector (e.g. the UK Technical Assistance Programme), as has been the case in the example of support to countries on LEAF Coalition/ART-TREES in recent years.

UN-REDD’s unique value to supporting countries to demonstrate integrity of results is based on its in-country presence, specialized technical teams, and ability to work with country partners to adapt safeguard approaches and systems to their national contexts. Working across regions, UN-REDD can leverage substantial prior experience, bringing concrete examples of approaches to safeguards to other countries less advanced in their safeguard efforts. In addition, the UN-REDD Programme maintains a broad set of safeguards knowledge products that are constantly being updated. By having technical experts based in supported countries, the Programme can ensure long-term continuity of support and build strong relationships with country counterparts, which enhances the likelihood of the transformational impact from systems developed under this outcome.

Central to UN-REDD’s work on safeguards is the country ownership of results. In this outcome, those results are emissions reductions and wider non-carbon benefits but also advances in foundational systems and structures that enable wider transformation and halting and reversing of deforestation to occur.

# Scenarios

This output will support partner countries to develop robust and credible nationally owned systems for safeguarding REDD+ results-based financing arrangements at national and subnational levels in ways that respond to the increasingly diverse and complex requirements being demanded from such schemes.

| **Deliverables** | **Types of Activities** |
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| 1. Integrated approaches to meet multiple safeguards requirements for results-based financing
 | 1. roadmaps/frameworks for integrated approaches to safeguards
2. assessing conformity, and aligning safeguards reporting, with international requirements/standards
3. building institutional capacity on addressing and respecting safeguards at national and sub-national levels
4. legal, policy and regulatory framework alignment and reform as the basis for addressing/respecting safeguards
5. linking safeguards approaches with nesting arrangements at different (national to project) scales
6. socially inclusive and gender -responsive multistakeholder platforms and processes to consult on safeguards
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| 1. Enhanced environmental and social information management and reporting through SIS
 | 1. design and operation of SIS to report quality safeguards information
2. stepwise improvements in countries’ SIS information content, functionality and operations
3. institutional needs assessments and capacity building on safeguards reporting procedures, roles and responsibilities for key information providers
4. institutional needs assessments and capacity for national-level SIS administrators’/coordinators’/managers’ procedures, roles and responsibilities
5. templates and tools for safeguards information collection, assessment, management and dissemination
6. technological improvements for SIS upgrades
7. align climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity approaches to monitoring and reporting
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| 1. Summaries of information and in-country safeguards reporting
 | 1. building national capacities for preparation of summaries of information and other safeguards reporting
2. design and production of in-country safeguards reporting systems and products for multiple stakeholder groups
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| 1. Operational safeguards grievance redress mechanisms (see also Output 1.3 – benefit sharing mechanisms)
 | 1. development of institutional arrangements, procedures, protocols, guidelines, and/or tools for implementing grievance redress mechanisms
2. piloting of GRM implementation and reporting
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| 1. Stakeholder engagement platforms and processes for safeguards (see also Cross-cutting Element A – social inclusion and gender equity)
 | 1. development of socially inclusive and gender responsive platforms, procedures, guidelines, and/or tools for stakeholder engagement, including stakeholder mapping, cross-sectoral engagement in REDD+strengthening application of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), through legal framework, and development of protocols/guidelines
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| 1. Environmental and social co-benefit impacts monitored, demonstrated and rewarded
 | 1. identification and assessment of potential environmental and social (including gender) impacts (benefits and risks) of REDD+ policies and measures
2. mapping and spatial analysis to plan for co-benefits of REDD+ actions and provide a baseline for reporting success
3. prioritization of co-benefits in national REDD+ strategies and action plans through design of REDD+ policies and measures
4. integration of co-benefits into SIS and other environmental and social reporting systems
5. development of approaches/tools for reporting on prioritized co-benefits
6. demonstrating success in accessing price premiums for forest carbon co-benefits
7. application of co-benefit monitoring to aligned climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity agendas
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| 1. Gender and social inclusion integrated into REDD+ safeguards processes and reporting (See also Cross-cutting Element A – social inclusion and gender equity)
 | 1. institutional capacity building for assessing gender and social inclusion related needs and integrating gender and social inclusion considerations into REDD+ programmes and safeguards approaches
2. protocols developed/refined for gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in FPIC processes, benefit sharing and grievance redress mechanisms
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| 1. B.1. Capacity building programmes and trainings on safeguards and non-carbon benefits
 | 1. Continuous learning through updated foundational curriculum and learning platform, delivered in multiple formats: learning journals, policy and technical briefs, learning labs, south-south knowledge exchanges, communities of practice, country/regional case studies, microlearning tools, gamified content, nudge techniques, motivation framing, and foresight and scenario modeling tools.
2. Audience-specific learning track tailored to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, focused on safeguards and non-carbon-benefits
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1. Notably, safeguard information system (SIS), benefit sharing mechanism (BSM), and grievance redress mechanism (GRM). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)