



REDD+ ACADEMY

Learning Journal

REDD+ Safeguards



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Welcome & introduction

Welcome to the Learning Journal Safeguards for REDD+

Strengthening social and environmental integrity through practical learning

This Learning Journal is part of the revitalized REDD+ Academy and serves as a practical knowledge resource on the role of safeguards in REDD+ implementation. Building on the 2016 edition and enriched with a decade of technical assistance from the UN-REDD Programme across Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Africa, **this updated edition focuses on translating safeguards theory into practice.** It features country-level experiences, lessons learned, and tools for addressing environmental and social (E&S) risks in REDD+ implementation.

In the current landscape of multi-level REDD+ implementation - where results-based finance and market-based approaches are increasingly prevalent - safeguards remain a cornerstone for ensuring the integrity, inclusiveness, and credibility of REDD+ efforts. This Journal revisits the safeguards requirements under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), especially those set out in the Cancun Agreements and the Warsaw Framework. It also expands its scope to reflect safeguard-related expectations linked to emerging funding opportunities and carbon market standards.

Who is it for?

A practical guide for REDD+ safeguards practitioners

This Learning Journal is designed to support a wide range of REDD+ actors involved in the design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of safeguards. Target audiences include national and subnational government officials, safeguards and Safeguards Information Systems (SIS) specialists, project developers, Indigenous Peoples and local community representatives, civil society actors, donors, standard-setting bodies, and other REDD+ technical partners.

Through actionable guidance, tested tools, and real-world examples, the Journal aims to strengthen country approaches to safeguards - particularly at the field level. It pays special attention to the rights, roles, and needs of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, children, the elderly, and others in vulnerable situations.

Whether developing a SIS, preparing a Summary of Information (SoI), or integrating safeguards into nested or project-level REDD+ activities, readers will find relevant insights and practical examples. The Journal also helps build understanding of evolving safeguards requirements and their implications for REDD+ implementation.

Users are encouraged to explore this Journal both as a technical reference and a capacity development tool. It is intended to foster stronger linkages across REDD+ governance, safeguards, and carbon finance, thereby promoting enhanced social and environmental integrity at all implementation scales.

This volume also complements other modules in the revitalized REDD+ Academy, including:

- Nesting Approaches for REDD+ Learning Journal, 2024
- National Strategies/Action Plans (NS/AP) Learning Journal, 2025
- Other upcoming thematic volumes – stay tuned!

Complementary tools to this Learning Journal.

This Learning Journal is accompanied by a series of microlearning modules, safeguards guides, and other practical tools. These resources are designed to provide quick, accessible, and hands-on insights that complement the Journal's content, fostering continuous learning and supporting the implementation of safeguards in REDD+ strategies, action plans, programmes and projects.



COMPLEMENTARY TOOLS



What do you already know about REDD+ safeguards? Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) and answer the preliminary test questions to find out which topics you already are familiar with and which ones you need to learn more about.



LEARNING TOOL

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Acronyms

ART	Architecture for REDD+ Transactions
BCB	Beyond Carbon Benefits
BSP	Benefit-Sharing Plan
BSS	Benefit Sharing System
CAR	Climate Action Reserve
CAS	Country Approaches to Safeguards
CCB	Climate, Community & Biodiversity
CCP	Cope Carbon Principles
CIWP	Continuous Improvement Work Programm
CONAREDD	National REDD+ Commission (Portuguese acronym)
COP	Conference of the Parties
CORSIA	Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation
CSFs	Cross-cutting Safeguards Frameworks
E&S	Environmental and Social
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
ENABLE	Enhancing Access to Benefits while Lowering Emissions
ENAREDD+	National REDD+ Strategy (Spanish acronym)
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERR	Emission Reductions and Removal
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Frameworks
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FGRM	Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism
FORMIS	Forest Management Information System
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FREL	Forest Reference Emission Level
FRL	Forest Reference Level
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCFRP	Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme
GCFTF	Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GP	Guiding Principles
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ICVCM	Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Indigenous Peoples

IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IPP	Indigenous Peoples Policy
ISFL	The BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes
ISS	Integrated Safeguards Systems
JNR	Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+
KBAs	Key Biodiversity Areas
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LC	Local Communities
LEAF	Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance
MGAS	Environmental and Social Management Framework
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification
MRS	Monitoring and Reporting Systems
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions
NCB	Non-carbon Benefit
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NFMS	National Forest Monitoring System
NS/AP	National Strategies or Action Plans
ONG	Non-Governmental Organization
PAM	Policies and Measures
PCI	Principles, Criteria, and Indicators
PFES	Payments for Forest Environmental Services
PGAS	Environmental and Social Management Plan
PLR	Policies, Laws and Regulations
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PS	Performance Standards
RBF	Results-Based Finance
RBP	Results-Based Programme
RBPs	Results-Based Payments
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
REM	REDD+ Early Movers
RENAMI	National Registry of Mitigation Measures (Spanish acronym)
SBTI	Science Based Targets Initiative
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SESA	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
SFP	Safeguards Focal Person
SIS	Safeguards Information System
SoI	Summary of Information
SSI	Safeguards Summary of Information
TREES	The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USLE	Universal Soil Loss Equation
VCM	Voluntary Carbon Market
VCS	Verified Carbon Standard
VCUs	Verified Carbon Units

Module 1



Why Safeguards are important?



This module

Introduces the foundational concepts that underpin the safeguards agenda within REDD+. It provides an entry point to understand the rationale behind safeguards, the role they play in reducing risks and enhancing benefits, and their evolving relevance in light of emerging integrity standards and finance mechanisms.



The module will help you to...

- Be introduced to the *foundations of safeguards* in general, exploring how they have evolved from risk mitigation tools into frameworks that also promote equity, inclusion and sustainable outcomes in the context of REDD+.
- Understand the *specific role of safeguards in REDD+*, including their grounding in the UNFCCC, and how they relate to rights protection, environmental sustainability and social inclusion.
- Examine how *safeguards help identify, assess and manage environmental and social risks* across different types of REDD+ actions, and how they support the design of activities that also generate non-carbon benefits.
- Explore how *REDD+ is being implemented and financed* at national, subnational and project levels, and how safeguards frameworks adapt to these diverse scales and funding sources.
- Learn about the *importance of safeguards in emerging carbon market contexts*, including voluntary and jurisdictional approaches, and how safeguards help uphold integrity, consistency and stakeholder confidence.

1. Safeguards for REDD+

1.1 The concept of safeguards

Policies, programmes, and projects related to land tenure, forest conservation, natural resource governance, and broader land-use planning can entail environmental and social risks. If not properly addressed through effective **environmental and social (E&S) risks management frameworks** that enable the practical implementation of safeguards, such risks may result in unintended adverse impacts

on both ecosystems and local communities. To mitigate these risks, **safeguards** (Box 1) should be incorporated from the earliest stages of planning and implementation and be applied throughout the lifecycle of the REDD+ activities.

In the context of REDD+ implementation,¹ “risks” refers to the potential for unintended negative impacts resulting from REDD+ activities, policies, or measures (hereafter referred to in this Learning Journal as “REDD+ activities”, encompassing all types of REDD+-related interventions).



Box 1

What are safeguards and why do they matter?

Initially developed by international financial institutions, environmental and social (E&S) safeguards emerged to ensure that investments - especially those involving infrastructure or natural resources - do not unintentionally harm people or the environment (the “do no harm” safeguards approach). Even well-intentioned projects can trigger social disruption, environmental degradation or rights violations if risks are not properly managed. Over time, safeguards frameworks have evolved from risk avoidance to impact enhancement. For example, the World Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) embraces a “do better” approach, seeking not only to manage risks but to contribute to positive, sustainable change.

Today, most donors, investors and implementing agencies operate under formal safeguards frameworks, which include dedicated policies, procedures and tools to manage E&S risks in a standardized, transparent and effective manner.

See [module 2](#) for more information on different safeguards frameworks relevant for REDD+.

1.2 Safeguards in REDD+

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 are principles or measures that aim to protect or

to avoid risks (“do no harm”), while promoting benefits (“do good”) (UN-REDD, 2021).

Acknowledging these risks and opportunities, at the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) of the UNFCCC held in Cancun in 2010, seven safeguards - known as the “**Cancun safeguards**” - were adopted (UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix I, Paragraph 2) (UNFCCC, 2011) (see box 2).

¹ Under the UNFCCC, REDD+ activities encompass five specific activities as defined by the Cancun Agreements (UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70) (UNFCCC, 2011): (i) Reducing emissions from deforestation; (ii) Reducing emissions from forest degradation; (iii) Conservation of forest carbon stocks; (iv) Sustainable management of forests and, (v) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.



Box 2

The Cancun safeguards

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

- a. That 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 the actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of this decision;
- e. That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1 27 protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;
- f. Actions to address the risks of reversals;
- g. Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.

Source: UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix 1, paragraph 21.

In addition to preventing or mitigating negative social and environmental impacts, safeguards in REDD+ are key to unlocking its potential to deliver meaningful non-carbon benefits (NCB) - such as biodiversity conservation, community well-being, gender equality and recognition of land tenure rights. Implementing safeguards from a rights-based and socially inclusive perspective goes beyond a “do no harm” logic. It promotes equitable participation and access to benefits for Indigenous Peoples (IP), local communities (LC), women, youth, elders and others in vulnerable situations. Safeguards are not only essential to meet UNFCCC and donor requirements, but also provide an opportunity to strengthen forest governance and advance broader sustainable development goals.

Given the deep and often sensitive relationship between forests, cultures, communities and ecosystem services, safeguards in REDD+ are far

more than compliance instruments. They play a strategic role in reinforcing Environmental and Social Management Systems (ESMS), advancing gender equality and social inclusion, and enhancing the integrity and sustainability of climate and forest interventions. Ultimately, they are foundational for protecting rights, building trust, and ensuring that REDD+ delivers lasting benefits for both people and nature.

1.3 Benefits and risks of REDD+ implementation



In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, REDD+ implementation has the potential to deliver important social and environmental benefits (also called ‘co-benefits’, ‘multiple benefits’ or ‘non-carbon benefits’ of REDD+). There is, however, also the potential for risks to communities and to the environment

(UN-REDD, 2018). The types and magnitude of benefits and risks associated with REDD+ vary depending on the nature of the interventions, the drivers of deforestation being addressed, the stakeholders engaged, the local context and other factors. As a territorial approach embedded in complex social and ecological systems, REDD+ requires careful consideration of the dynamic interactions between governance structures, land use practices, ecosystem functions, and community livelihoods.

When designed and implemented through socially inclusive and gender-responsive

processes, REDD+ activities have greater potential to improve forest governance, strengthen land tenure security, conserve biodiversity, and promote fair and transparent benefit-sharing - particularly for IP, local communities, women and youth. Conversely, weak safeguards or exclusionary processes may exacerbate existing inequalities between and within different stakeholder groups, facilitate elite capture, and increase the risk of land and resource conflicts. Table 1 summarizes some of the potential social and environmental benefits and risks of REDD+.

Table 1. Potential benefits and risks of REDD+ implementation.

	 Benefits	 Risks
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthened livelihoods and improved access to natural resources ■ Improved forest governance and law enforcement ■ Protection of territories and cultures of IPLCs ■ Increased community voice and participation in decision-making ■ Clarified/secured tenure and resource rights ■ Advancement of gender equality and empowerment of women and other marginalized groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Land/resource speculation and land conflicts ■ Conflicts among stakeholders or resource users ■ Exclusion of IPLCs from decision-making ■ Contested land and resource rights ■ Increased exclusion of, and inequalities for, women and other marginalized groups from decision-making processes and accessing opportunities and benefits of REDD+
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintenance and restoration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Biodiversity – forest species and ecosystems of conservation concern > Ecosystem services – e.g. water quality, erosion control, timber and non-timber forest products, pollination, local climate regulation, cultural values ■ Intact and connected forests are more ecologically stable (resilient and resistant) to climate change impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Displacement of deforestation/degradation pressures to areas important for biodiversity or ecosystem services ■ Intensified agriculture impacts on non-forest biodiversity ■ Replacement of natural forest with plantation ■ Planted forests with few tree species, or non-native species

Source: UN-REDD (2018).

E&S Risks Management

To implement safeguards effectively in REDD+, it is essential to first understand the potential environmental and social risks associated with policies, programmes or projects. This involves identifying possible adverse impacts, assessing their likelihood and severity, and defining appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or, in some cases, compensate for them. Equally important is the design of proactive measures to strengthen non-carbon benefits (NCBs). To guide this process, countries and jurisdictions typically rely on structured procedures and risk management frameworks tailored to their policy and implementation contexts.

Such tools - when proportionate to the scale and severity of the risks and designed in a socially inclusive and gender-responsive manner - can facilitate transparent and participatory identification, mitigation and monitoring of E&S risks. They are critical for aligning REDD+ actions with broader goals of social inclusion, environmental integrity, and sustainable development.

- An overview of some commonly used tools and practices is addressed in sections [E&S risks management](#) and [Incorporating non-carbon benefits \(NCBs\) into safeguards systems](#).
- Additionally, further analysis on REDD+ E&S risk management can be found in the 2025 Social Inclusion and Gender Learning Journal (visit the UN-REDD Academy to obtain the latest resources published).

2. Safeguards in the evolving landscape of REDD+ finance and implementation scales

To understand the current complexities surrounding safeguards implementation, it is essential to first consider how REDD+ is being financed and implemented today - particularly the various **scales** and **funding approaches** involved.

While climate commitments under the UNFCCC are defined at the national level, subnational approaches to REDD+ have been recognized as interim measures. In recent years, a diversity of REDD+ initiatives has emerged across different levels - ranging from national and subnational programmes to jurisdictional and project-scale activities.

- **Jurisdictional REDD (JREDD)** has been discussed under the UNFCCC since the early stages of REDD+ in 2005. It refers to initiatives where emission reductions and removals (ERR) are measured at a jurisdictional level - either national or subnational (e.g., states, provinces, or departments) - and implemented through public policies led by governments (Muccillo et al., 2025). Examples include programmes under the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), Germany's REDD+ Early Movers (REM), or the Green Climate Fund's (GCF) Results-Based Programme (RBP). In the carbon market context, this includes jurisdictional carbon programs such as ART-TREES (see Box 3) and Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ (JNR) Framework.

- **Project scale** typically refers to initiatives developed by a broad range of actors - including for-profit and non-profit organizations - covering relatively small areas and addressing local drivers of deforestation. This approach is common in the voluntary carbon market (VCM), especially through

standards such as Verra's VCS, the Gold Standard, or Climate Action Reserve (CAR), among others. Credits are transacted through bilateral deals, over-the-counter transactions, or through emerging carbon exchanges (Golub; Labbate & Cheney, 2023).

Box 3



Introduction to two jurisdictional carbon programmes

Introduction to ART and its TREES standard

The Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART) is a carbon market programme that recognizes high-quality, jurisdictional-scale emission reductions from the forest and land use sector. ART was designed to ensure environmental and social integrity while enabling countries and subnational jurisdictions to access results-based payments (RBPs) for REDD+ activities.

TREES – The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard is ART's standard for the quantification, monitoring, reporting, and verification of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions and removals from REDD+ activities at jurisdictional and national scale. Under TREES, participating countries and eligible subnational jurisdictions can generate verified emission reduction and removal credits by meeting comprehensive requirements on:

- Accounting and crediting
- Monitoring, reporting, and independent verification
- Mitigation of leakage and reversal risks
- Avoidance of double counting
- Assurance of robust environmental and social safeguards
- Transparent issuance of serialized units on a public registry

Together, ART and TREES aim to accelerate progress toward national-scale accounting and implementation to achieve REDD+ results at scale.

The TREES approach to safeguards

TREES safeguards approach builds directly on the UNFCCC Cancun safeguards, translating them into 16 thematic areas with a corresponding set of mandatory indicators. These indicators - categorized as structure, process, and outcome - serve as a standardized mechanism for jurisdictions to demonstrate how safeguards are being addressed and respected. They apply at both validation (registration) and verification (monitoring report) stages, forming an integral part of the broader ART quality assurance framework. In this way, TREES enables a consistent interpretation of safeguards requirements while preserving their alignment with the original UNFCCC provisions.

At the same time, TREES provides flexibility for participating jurisdictions to utilize information generated through their own national Safeguards Information Systems

(SIS) when reporting against these indicators. This interoperability facilitates coherence with country-led approaches and avoids duplicative reporting efforts. Nonetheless, the safeguards-related information submitted must be substantiated through rigorous third-party validation and verification processes. By requiring all participating jurisdictions to apply the same minimum safeguards indicators, TREES enhances transparency and accountability, while supporting the environmental and social integrity of jurisdictional REDD+ credits.

For more information, consult: <https://www.artredd.org/trees/>

The Verra Standard for Jurisdictional REDD+ Programmes (J-REDD)

The VCS JNR Framework, developed by Verra, is the first standardized system for accounting and verifying emission reductions from REDD+ at jurisdictional levels. It enables governments to generate high integrity Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) while integrating nested projects and subnational programs into broader jurisdictional strategies (Verra, 2024). The JNR Requirements are regularly updated through public consultations. The most recent version (v4.1), released in August 2024, aligns with the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market's (ICVCM) Core Carbon Principles, and was approved by ICVCM (Verra, 2024).

The JNR approach to safeguards

The JNR Framework is part of the VCS Program, meaning that the overarching VCS rules also apply to JNR programmes and nested projects. In terms of safeguards, this includes provisions under sections 3.18 *Stakeholder Engagement* and 3.19 *Safeguards of the VCS Standard, v4.7*. Those sections address core social and environmental issues such as "Stakeholder Identification and Consultation", "FPIC", where relevant, "Grievance Redress Mechanisms", "No Net Harm", "Risks to Stakeholders and the Environment", "Respect for Human Rights and Equity", "Property Rights", "Rights of Indigenous Peoples", and "Ecosystem Health".

In addition, jurisdictional programs under the JNR Framework are expected to comply with all relevant UNFCCC decisions on safeguards for REDD+, as well as any applicable national or subnational legal and regulatory safeguards provisions—even those not specifically developed for REDD+. Program proponents are required to ensure effective stakeholder engagement, culturally appropriate consultation processes, and the application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In addition, JNR mandates the establishment of transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms and accessible grievance redress systems as part of the validation process. These requirements must be documented and, when possible, aligned with existing national safeguards systems.

Unlike TREES, the JNR framework grants discretion to the Program Proponent to propose indicators for monitoring and reporting on the Cancun safeguards. These indicators may be based on those already in use within the jurisdiction at the time of program registration or may be newly developed for the purposes of the JNR program. In this context, harmonization with national SIS is encouraged, though not explicitly prescribed, offering jurisdictions the opportunity to align JNR safeguard reporting with their broader country approaches.

For more information, consult: <https://verra.org/programs/jurisdictional-nested-redd-framework/>

Evolving finance modalities and implications for safeguards

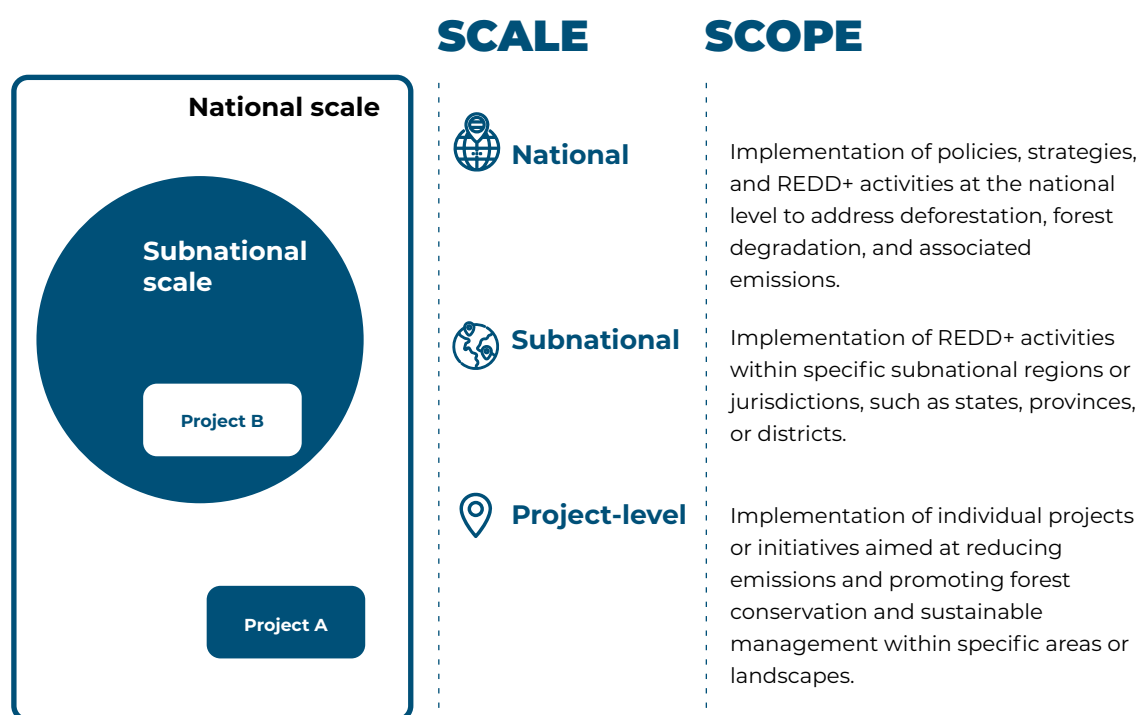
In today's REDD+ finance landscape, implementation is increasingly shaped by a combination of non-market and market-based mechanisms. Public results-based finance from multilateral initiatives such as the GCF-RBP or World Bank facilities generally requires alignment with UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards and national frameworks. In parallel, carbon markets now operate through three principal modalities: nationally regulated compliance systems established by governments; international compliance frameworks such as Article 6 mechanisms or the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA); and the voluntary carbon market, where jurisdictional carbon programmes and project-level standards such as ART-TREES, VCS-JNR, and Gold Standard are widely used.

This diversification of financial channels has led to multiple safeguard requirements and due diligence processes. Regulated markets tend to demand robust assurance of environmental and social integrity, while voluntary standards apply their own safeguard frameworks, which may not fully align or be directly related to national safeguard systems. This creates challenges for governments, developers, and investors in terms of consistency, reporting, and institutional coherence.

Nesting and scale integration

In response to this diversity, several countries have adopted transitional approaches that allow project-scale and subnational initiatives to coexist with national frameworks while progressively moving towards greater integration. Within this context, *nesting* has emerged as a central approach for coordinating REDD+ implementation across different scales. (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The different scales of REDD+.



Source: UN-REDD (2024 e).

Originally conceived as a technical solution to prevent double-counting and ensure consistency in carbon accounting, nesting has evolved into a broader governance mechanism. It enables alignment between project-level initiatives and jurisdictional strategies by defining roles, benefit-sharing rules, safeguard responsibilities, and reporting obligations. When anchored in jurisdictional systems, nesting can help harmonize

the diverse safeguard requirements of different market and non-market finance mechanisms, provide clearer institutional accountability, and reduce risks of safeguard fragmentation or dilution. As such, it supports countries in strengthening environmental and social integrity while enhancing eligibility across multiple sources of REDD+ finance (UN-REDD, 2024 e).

For further information on REDD+ nesting and the different scales of implementation, see [UN-REDD. 2024. REDD+ Academy Learning Journal: Nesting Approaches for REDD+](#)

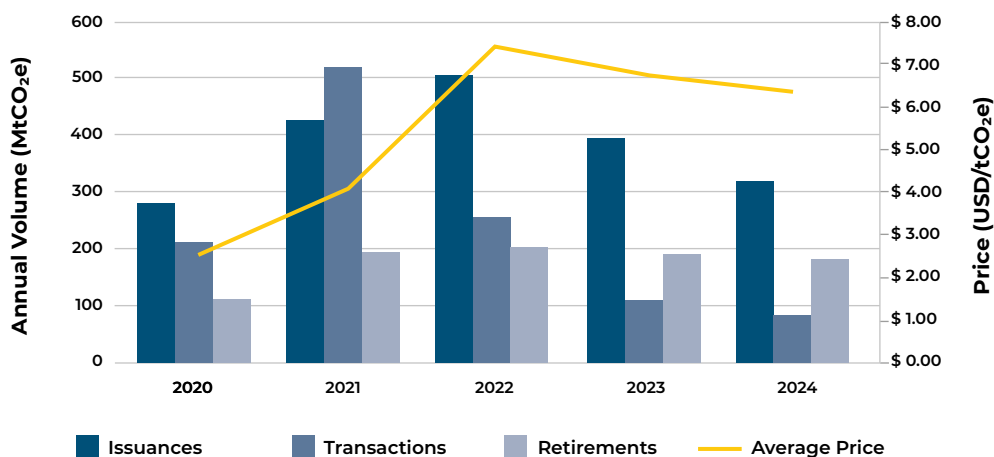


3. The role of safeguards for REDD+ integrity

In recent years, REDD+ implementation, especially at the project-level within the VCM, has faced increasing scrutiny, particularly regarding their actual climate impacts. Concerns have been raised about the robustness of baseline-setting methods, overestimation of carbon benefits, and challenges related to additionality - that is, the extent to which emission reductions would not have occurred without project implementation (West et al., 2020; Greenfield, 2023; West et al., 2023).

Beyond technical carbon accounting concerns, several social issues have also emerged. These include cases of REDD+ projects implemented in Indigenous territories without proper application of FPIC, or lacking adequate benefit-sharing mechanisms (Bermúdez, 2023; Alusiola et al., 2021; Mile et al., 2019), or concerns related to the integration of gender and social inclusion in project design and implementation. Together, these issues have intensified scrutiny over the social integrity of REDD+ projects and the credibility of credits issued under the VCM, contributing to a marked decline in carbon credit prices since 2022 (see Figure 2, below).

Figure 2: Overview of Voluntary Carbon Market Issuances, Transactions, Retirements, and Average Price, 2020-2024.



Source: Forest Trends’ Ecosystem Marketplace (2025).

In the context of the UNFCCC, integrity in REDD+ has traditionally focused on environmental aspects, particularly the robustness of carbon accounting. The Paris Agreement, however, expands this notion to encompass both environmental integrity and sustainable development (Article 6). In this Learning Journal, REDD+ integrity is understood as a holistic concept - one that combines technical rigour in emissions reductions and removals with the effective implementation of environmental and social safeguards.²

In response, some governments have started to take a more active role in regulating this sector - introducing safeguards-related requirements for project developers and, in some cases, invalidating prior agreements (Rumble et al., 2023).

Safeguards as a foundation for REDD+ integrity

While the challenges mentioned above primarily concern private projects in the VCM, they have generated valuable lessons for the broader REDD+ mechanism. These experiences highlight the growing importance of safeguards

in upholding REDD+ integrity - across all implementation scales and funding approaches. This is particularly relevant as funders and donors increasingly expect REDD+ actions to demonstrate not only emission reductions, but also strong environmental and social accountability.

Safeguards can help uphold the integrity of REDD+ by embedding principles, tools and governance conditions that ensure activities - including both project-level and jurisdictional REDD+ programmes - respect rights, contribute to sustainable development and are aligned with the Country Approach to Safeguards (see section 7, Module 3, below).

When safeguards are meaningfully addressed, they reinforce trust in REDD+ outcomes as not only climate-effective, but also socially and environmentally sound. Additionally, given the multi-scale nature of REDD+ - including national, subnational, and project-level actions - it is essential to ensure that safeguards are applied coherently across scales. This topic is further developed in section Safeguards Systems in Nested Approaches.

² Visit the [REDD+ Academy- Nesting Approaches for REDD+](#) and [REDD+ Academy – Social Inclusion and Gender](#) for further information on REDD+ integrity.



Key takeaways

- **Safeguards are more than regulatory requirements** - they are strategic tools that help ensure REDD+ actions are socially inclusive, environmentally sound, and institutionally credible.
- The concept of safeguards has evolved **from a narrow “do no harm” perspective to one that also aims to “do good”**, promoting non-carbon benefits such as improved governance, gender equality, and the recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ rights.
- Effective safeguards implementation requires identifying and **managing environmental and social risks** from the outset, while also designing actions that deliver positive, measurable co-benefits aligned with national forest and climate goals.
- The **diversification of REDD+ financing and implementation scales** - from national to jurisdictional and to project level - has made safeguards more relevant and complex, especially in contexts where public and private initiatives, and at different scales, coexist.
- As REDD+ increasingly engages with voluntary carbon markets and results-based finance, safeguards play a critical role in ensuring the **environmental and social integrity** of carbon credits and emission reductions.
- **Lessons from the voluntary carbon market** highlight the central role of safeguards in ensuring the integrity of REDD+ activities. When safeguards are robustly applied, they help build trust that emission reductions are achieved in ways that are socially equitable and environmentally sound.
- **Embedding safeguards in all stages of REDD+** design and implementation contributes not only to compliance with international standards, but also to more inclusive, rights-based, and sustainable climate action.

Module 2



What frameworks guide REDD+ safeguards?



This module

Examines the main frameworks that guide the implementation of safeguards in REDD+, with the UNFCCC Cancun safeguards as the core reference. It explores how countries can interpret and align these safeguards with national contexts, while navigating complementary safeguard requirements linked to different sources of REDD+ finance.



The module will help you to...

- Learn how the Cancun safeguards provide the foundation for REDD+ safeguards under the UNFCCC, offering broad principles that countries interpret and apply within their own national contexts.
- Explore the main three UNFCCC safeguards requirements, and their role in REDD+ implementation.
- Understand how these three UNFCCC requirements are directly linked to the four REDD+ elements or “pillars” (National Strategy or Action Plan, National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS), Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL), and Safeguards Information System (SIS)) that countries must have in place to access results-based finance (RBF) under the UNFCCC.
- Distinguish the Cancun safeguards’ broad orientation from the more detailed and prescriptive frameworks applied by funding sources and standards such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), World Bank, ART (with its –TREES standard), and VCS-JNR.
- Examine how the interpretation of the Cancun safeguards at national level (“addressing and respecting”) interacts with these additional frameworks.
- Gain awareness of the challenges and costs of complying with multiple frameworks, together with potential strategies that can help to overcome some of the difficulties.

4. The UNFCCC safeguards requirements for REDD+

To ensure the implementation of the seven **Cancun Safeguards (see Figure 3)**, the Cancun Agreement adopted at COP 16 (2010) introduced **three key safeguards requirements** for REDD+:

1. **Safeguards need to be promoted and supported** throughout REDD+ implementation.
2. A national [Safeguards Information System \(SIS\)](#) on how safeguards are addressed and respected needs to be put in place.
 - > Addressing safeguards is understood to mean ensuring that a body of policies, laws and regulations and the associated institutional arrangements are in place on paper to deal with the potential environmental and social benefits and risks – including gender risks – associated with REDD+ policies and measures.
 - > Respecting safeguards is understood to mean that related policies, laws and regulations are implemented and enforced, through the associated institutional arrangements, to effect real and positive outcomes on the ground in line with the REDD+ safeguards (UN-REDD, 2021)

3. **Safeguards Summaries of Information (Sol)**, reporting on how the safeguards are addressed and respected, need to be produced periodically.

These three elements are the core safeguards-related requirements that countries must implement and report on to be eligible for results-based finance under the UNFCCC.

Additionally, Decision 1/CP.16 taken during the same COP 16 in Cancun, also requests countries to have the following elements in place (also called the “REDD+ Pillars or components”), as requirement to access to results-based finance under UNFCCC:

- National Strategy (NS) or Action Plan (AP) ([Learning Journal](#))
- National Forestry Monitoring System (NFMS) ([Learning Journal](#))
- [Safeguard Information System](#) (See Module 3 below)
- Forest Reference Emission Levels (FREL) and/or Forest Reference Levels (FRL) ([Learning Journal](#))

Each of the REDD+ Pillars are discussed in more detail either below or in their own UN-REDD Learning Journal as noted. Visit the [UN-REDD Academy](#) portal to check the latest resources.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the UNFCCC basics safeguards requirement, see:

- [United Nations Environment Programme](#). (2017). *REDD+ Academy learning journal: Edition 2 – REDD+ safeguards under the UNFCCC*. [United Nations Environment Programme](#).
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), & Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2020). [Safeguarding people and nature in REDD+: Meeting the safeguards requirements under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#). UN-REDD Programme.

5. Additional safeguards frameworks relevant for REDD+

Countries with advanced REDD+ implementation typically finance their National Strategies or Action Plans (NS/AP) through different mechanisms like RBP, voluntary carbon markets, and bilateral or multilateral funds - each with distinct safeguards, reporting, and verification requirements.

This variation in safeguards approaches can be partly explained by factors such as the objectives of each programme, the profile and mandate of the implementing entity, the scale of intervention, and the financing modality

that complements REDD+ (e.g. RBF or carbon markets). For instance, while funds such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the GCF provide results-based payments for REDD+, ART operates as a carbon crediting programme (see Box 1 for an introduction to ART and TREES). Consequently, the scope of risks, scales of action, and mitigation measures related to safeguards may differ, requiring the application of distinct tools and approaches, even though the core principles generally remain similar and complementary (see the Case study 1 of Costa Rica, below). This poses significant challenges for national and subnational safeguards teams, ranging from administrative burdens and overlapping standards to legal misalignment and limited institutional capacity.

Case study 1



Costa Rica's finance approach for REDD+ and its impact over their safeguards system

Costa Rica offers a paradigmatic example of how multiple safeguards frameworks can coexist within a single national REDD+ strategy. Its National REDD+ Strategy (ENAREDD+) builds on the country's long-standing Payment for Environmental Services (PES) programme, which serves as the central channel for operationalizing REDD+ through results-based mechanisms.

This diversified financing architecture exemplifies the situation described above, where countries accessing various sources of REDD+ finance - each governed by distinct safeguards frameworks - must align and manage them coherently. Costa Rica has mobilized resources from several mechanisms, including the FCPF Carbon Fund, the GCF RBP project (with UNDP as Accredited Entity), and a registered TREES programme under ART.

From the perspective of safeguards teams, this multi-source financing model presents several challenges since it requires the application of multiple frameworks simultaneously. - those of the World Bank, the GCF (and its accredited entity), and TREES mandatory indicators - while ensuring all relevant information is systematically captured and reported through the national SIS. Additionally, safeguards teams are responsible for monitoring and reporting to each financing source individually, each with its own templates, reporting formats, and timelines. In complex cases such as this, if not efficiently managed, the process may lead to duplicated efforts and disproportionately high transaction costs.

Under this scenario, it is worth considering that the Cancun Agreement emerged from extensive negotiations of 194 UNFCCC country parties, were formulated at the policy level using intentionally broad and non-prescriptive language, acknowledging the sovereign right of each country to interpret and apply them according to its national context.

By contrast, other safeguards frameworks - such as those of the GCF or the World Bank - are designed to identify, prevent, and manage environmental and social risks at the programme or project level. These frameworks are generally more detailed and operational, offering prescriptive guidance, performance standards, and compliance procedures to ensure safeguards are applied consistently throughout the project cycle, including at the field level. Another possible approach is the one for ART's standard, TREES, and VCS-JNR which - although based on the Cancun Safeguards - requires the application of mandatory safeguard indicators that translate into specific requirements for participating jurisdictions. But, at the same time, it facilitates consistency with UNFCCC requirements and allows flexibility for alignment with national safeguard systems (see [Box 3](#) for further information on both safeguards approach).

In practice, the interaction between the UNFCCC safeguards and these additional frameworks depends on several factors, including the financing modality of the REDD+ intervention

and the nature of the implementing entities. Common interactions include:

- **Complementarity among safeguards frameworks.** This arises most often in results-based funding schemes where countries access and implement funding via intermediary or “accredited” entities for a specific initiative, such as the GCF’s RBP programme. For example, under the GCF, when a project seeks REDD+ results-based payments, it must demonstrate for both the period of results and use of proceeds that the UNFCCC Cancun Safeguards were addressed and respected. As such, if a project is awarded GCF funding, it will simultaneously satisfy three distinct frameworks:
 1. GCF’s Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)
 2. The UNFCCC’s Cancun Safeguards
 3. The safeguard policy of the accredited entity (for example, UN agency or multilateral development bank standards)

To address the complexity of multiple safeguards requirements, some GCF RBP projects - such as those in Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay - have adopted a **Cross-cutting Safeguards Framework** (also referred to by countries as “integrated” or “homologated” safeguards framework). This approach seeks to implement unified and coherent processes for safeguards application across different funding sources.



Case study 2

Example of cross-cutting safeguards in Paraguay

Paraguay developed an **integrated safeguards reporting approach** in the context of implementing the **Paraguay+Verde Green Climate Fund (GCF) REDD+ results-based payments (RPBs) project**, which covers results achieved from 2015 to 2017.

Challenge and Approach

The Paraguay+Verde project was required to adhere to **three distinct safeguards frameworks**: those mandated by the GCF, the UNFCCC, and the Accredited Entity (UNEP). To effectively integrate, implement, and report on these requirements, an **alignment exercise** of the applicable safeguards and standards was conducted.

This exercise resulted in the identification of **nine environmental and social safeguards** that serve as the integrated safeguards framework for the project:

1. Participation and access to information (S1).
2. Strong employment and labour rights (S2).
3. Sustainability in the use of natural resources and achieved outcomes (S3).
4. Health, safety, and climate change adaptation (S4).
5. Land tenure and resettlement (S5).
6. Biodiversity, ecosystem services, and protected areas (S6).
7. Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and cultural heritage (S7).
8. Equality and vulnerability approach (S8).
9. Sustainability in forest, agricultural, and livestock production (S9).

Tools and Integration

The project's safeguards tools, including **risk screening and categorization forms, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocols, gender assessment guidance, reporting templates, and indicators**, were specifically designed according to these nine integrated safeguards. This unified approach ensures that the information generated through these tools is correctly formatted for reporting to the **national Safeguards Information System (SIS)**.

This method exemplifies how a country can harmonize multiple international safeguards requirements into a coherent national framework, supporting effective environmental and social management in multi-scale REDD+ initiatives.

- **Alignment of different safeguards requirements:** Some carbon programmes - such as Verra's framework or ART's, TREES standard - set out safeguards requirements that are linked to the UNFCCC's Cancun Safeguards (see [Box 3](#) for further information on both safeguards approach).

Considering aspects such as scale, the number of projects and programmes, and their relevance for REDD+ implementation from the public sector perspective, some of the most relevant safeguards frameworks and approaches beyond the UNFCCC can be considered as follows. It is important to note that these mechanisms are not of the same

type: some are funding entities (e.g., GCF, World Bank), others are private sector standards (e.g., IFC, VCS), and others are jurisdictional crediting programs (e.g., ART and JNR).

- **Green Climate Fund** - [Environmental and Social Policy](#) (revised 2021)
- **World Bank** - [GCF](#) (2016) and the previous [Operational Policies](#) (still applicable in some results-based payment projects under the FCPF Carbon Fund)
- **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** [Performance Standards](#) (PS) (2012) that also serves as the GCF's interim Environmental and Social Safeguards
- **ART** - [The safeguards approach for TREES](#) (v.2.0, 2021), with mandatory indicator to report on the Cancun Safeguards
- **Verra** - [Local-level projects ruled by Verra's Verified Carbon Standard](#) (v4.7, 2024)
- **Verra** - [Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ \(JNR\) Framework](#) (v4.1, 2024) ruled by the VCS Standard (v4.7, 2024) and including additional, complementary provisions on safeguards such as the UNFCCC decisions on safeguards for REDD+

5.1 Common ground among multiple safeguards requirements

The comparative review of the aforementioned safeguard's frameworks (see Table 2, below) reveals that, despite institutional differences, these frameworks generally converge around a set of core thematic areas. While the emphasis and operational scope may vary, most frameworks include provisions aligned with the following [thematic areas](#):

1. Environmental and social risk assessment
2. Biodiversity and natural ecosystems
3. Multi-stakeholder participation and access to information

4. Indigenous Peoples and local communities
5. Cultural heritage
6. Land tenure
7. Gender equality and social inclusion
8. Labour conditions and rights
9. Environmental sustainability and pollution prevention
10. Climate vulnerability, security, public health, and disaster risk management
11. Information systems and grievance redress mechanisms

Among these thematic areas, the following present the most variation across safeguards frameworks in terms of treatment, scope, and implementation modalities:

- **Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA):** In some frameworks, E&S risks assessment has a standalone safeguard standard, while in others the same procedural requirement is integrated as a cross-cutting requirement.
- **Multi-stakeholder participation and access to information:** These principles are often mainstreamed across various thematic areas - particularly those relating to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, ESA or gender - rather than presented a standalone safeguard thematic area.
- **Cultural heritage:** Depending on the framework, cultural heritage may be treated as a separate safeguard or incorporated under Indigenous Peoples and local communities standard, due to overlapping rights, actors, and knowledge systems.
- **Gender equality and social inclusion:** While some safeguards frameworks define gender as a dedicated thematic area, others integrate it transversally by requiring gender-sensitive risk assessment, mitigation measures, and inclusive design of participation and benefit-sharing mechanisms. Some frameworks - such as that of the GCF - have reinforced this area

through updated or standalone gender policies.

also appear under safeguards for Indigenous Peoples, labour, and gender, with distinct procedural expectations.

- **Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM):** Most safeguards frameworks require some form of grievance redress function, although this is often embedded within other thematic areas - particularly those on participation or ESA. In some cases, specific GRM requirements

Table 2 below provides a comparative (and illustrative) overview of how selected safeguards approaches and frameworks (GCF, World Bank, ART’s TREES, and Verra’s JNR) address some of the main thematic areas.

Table 2. Comparative overview of selected safeguards frameworks and approaches.

Thematic Area	GCF Environmental and Social Policy (revised 2021) // IFC Performance Standards (PS)	World Bank -Environmental & Social Framework)	TREES indicators for the Cancun Safeguards	VCS - JNR
E&S Risks Assessment	Guiding principles (GP) (a) Integration of environmental and social sustainability; (b) Transboundary risk and impact approach; (c) Scaled risk-based approach // PS1: Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	ESS1 requires Environmental and Social Assessment	No direct reference	VCS Individual Projects - VCS Standard (v4.7) JNR Section 3.8 Social and Environmental Safeguards and Benefit-Sharing
Indigenous Peoples (IP) & Local Communities (LC)	GP (q) on IP & LC and the Indigenous Peoples policy // PS 8: Indigenous Peoples	ESS7 Indigenous Peoples standard	Cancun Safeguard C on IP & LC, Themes 3.1–3.3	VCS Sections on “No Net Harm” (3.19.1-3.19.3); “Risks to Stakeholders and the Environment” (3.19.4-3.19.10), and “Ecosystem Health” (3.19.25-3.19.29) JNR Sections 3.6 Authority and Rights to GHG Emission Reductions and 3.8.3 on Social and Environmental Safeguards and Benefit-Sharing

Thematic Area	GCF Environmental and Social Policy (revised 2021) // IFC Performance Standards (PS)	World Bank -Environmental & Social Framework)	TREES indicators for the Cancun Safeguards	VCS - JNR
Gender Equality & Social Inclusion	GP (j) Gender-sensitive approach and the dedicated Gender Policy // Cross-cutting topic of PS 1: E&S risks assessment	Cross-cutting in ESS1, ESS10	No reference	Sections 3.18.1 – 3.18.6 on Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation; 3.18.7-3.18.8 on FPIC, 3.19.12, 3.19.17-3.19.18 on “Respect for Human Rights and Equity”; and 3.19.19-3.19.24 on “Property Rights”
Cultural Heritage	Expressly included in GP (q) on IP & LC // PS 8: Cultural Heritage	ESS8 Cultural Heritage standard	Cancun Safeguard C, indicators for Theme 3.2 Respect and protect traditional knowledge.	Sections 3.18.1–3.18.6 on Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation; and 3.19.11-3.19.14 on “Respect for Human Rights and Equity”
Participation & Access to Information	GP (i) Stakeholder engagement and disclosure // Integrated in PS 1: E&S risks assessment	ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement	Cancun Safeguard D on stakeholders’ participation, indicators for Themes 4.1-4.2	VCS Safeguard section on “Respect for Human Rights and Equity” (3.19.17-3.19.18) Stakeholder Engagement (3.18.4) JNR 3.8 Social and Environmental Safeguards and Benefit-Sharing
Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM)	Required at project/ program level) (section 12) // Integrated in PS 1: E&S risks assessment	Required under ESS10	Cancun Safeguard B on Transparent and effective national forest governance, outcome indicator for Theme 2.4; GRM required for ownership rights (section 6)	VCS Stakeholder Engagement (3.18) JNR Section 3.8 Social and Environmental Safeguards and Benefit-Sharing

5.2 Some challenges of approaching multiple safeguards frameworks

While REDD+ safeguards frameworks - as illustrated in Table 2, above - share common principles, notably those of the Cancun Safeguards, their application can be complex. In theory, fulfilling one framework's requirements should support compliance with others. In practice, however, countries often face overlapping or inconsistent demands from different donors and implementation scales. This creates administrative burdens, duplication, and coordination challenges, particularly where systems are not yet fully integrated or institutional capacities are limited. Some of the most pressing challenges observed in practice include:

- **Safeguards capacities and approaches:** Initial safeguards systems and tools were generally designed exclusively around UNFCCC safeguards orientations, which are policy-level and broadly framed. In contrast, most programme and project-level frameworks require more detailed provisions, especially for managing E&S risks linked to field-level activities.
- **Complexity and overlapping requirements:** As countries increasingly finance their NS/AP through diverse funding streams (as illustrated in the Case Study of Costa Rica), safeguards teams are often required to comply with multiple safeguards frameworks simultaneously. In line with this trend, many countries are beginning to design REDD+ finance strategies that assess, prioritize, and facilitate access to multiple sources of results-based finance, considering safeguards requirements among their selection criteria.

As a result, Integrated Safeguards Systems (see [section 9](#)) - including the SIS, GRM, benefit-sharing and related components - may benefit from being designed in a way that can respond to the safeguards requirements of multiple applicable

frameworks. In this context, adopting flexible and adaptive architecture could offer strategic advantages, particularly in view of the evolving nature of REDD+ finance and safeguard expectations.

This scenario, once theoretical, is now a tangible reality for countries and jurisdictions advancing in REDD+ implementation. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution given the diversity of legal, institutional, and environmental contexts, emerging experiences and approaches offer useful insights.

- **Conflicting standards and interpretations:** Safeguards frameworks and/or approaches occasionally prioritize different environmental or social objectives, which may lead to divergent approaches to specific safeguards components and pose challenges during implementation. These differences may generate significant challenges for safeguards teams, especially when the safeguards framework to be implemented is stricter than the domestic regulations.

In some cases - such as within project management units implementing GCF RBP programmes - this has required safeguards teams to develop FPIC protocols and tools aligned with higher international standards for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights. This process has also involved strengthening institutional capacity and providing technical support to ensure full compliance with these safeguards at the field level.

Given these considerations, it may be helpful for countries and jurisdictions to assess potential gaps between national safeguards systems and the safeguards requirements of prospective financing mechanisms, carbon programme, donor or others for their NS/AP. For example, in the case of jurisdiction working with the World Bank, such assessments are conducted through overview analyses that identify gaps between the Environmental and Social

Framework (ESF) requirements and national legislation, serving as a model for aligning and strengthening country systems.

■ **Administrative and financial burden:**

Complying with multiple safeguards frameworks - for example, GCF ESS criteria, TREES safeguards indicators, and the World Bank requirements on comprehensive ESMF - can represent a significant administrative and financial burden, particularly for subnational jurisdictions with limited resources. Many frameworks require sustained efforts in areas such as third-party verification, legal review, participatory processes, and ongoing monitoring - all of which can pose substantial cost and capacity challenges for REDD+ implementation.

Such requirements may result in overlapping processes - covering risk assessments, consultations, GRM, benefit-sharing plans, and periodic safeguards reporting - which should be harmonized to minimize duplication, reduce transaction costs, and ensure consistency across parallel safeguards processes.

Furthermore, safeguards frameworks are periodically updated, which may require countries and implementing entities to continuously adapt their systems, protocols, and training efforts - creating an additional level of uncertainty, particularly for long-term REDD+ programmes.

Considering these challenges, it may be useful to consider safeguards implementation costs - financial, institutional, and procedural - as an integral part of the design of REDD+ activities at all levels (policy, programme, and project). This includes identifying potential gaps in meeting specific safeguard requirements, addressing related capacity-building needs, and allocating resources for establishing or upgrading the safeguard systems themselves (e.g., SIS, GRM, benefit-sharing).

Framing safeguards as core implementation components - rather than as an add-on or external condition - can help improve their integration, sustainability, and cost-efficiency. This perspective aligns with current good practices in safeguards financing and may enhance the overall quality and coherence of REDD+ interventions.



Key takeaways

- The **Cancun Safeguards** remain as the foundational safeguards reference for REDD+ under the UNFCCC, providing high-level principles that aim not only to prevent harm but also to promote positive environmental and social outcomes, while respecting national sovereignty in their interpretation and application.
- **UNFCCC safeguards requirements** include three core obligations: addressing and respecting safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation, establishing a SIS and submitting Sol to the UNFCCC.
- **National Safeguards Interpretations** are essential for translating the broad Cancun principles into context-specific practice, linking them with domestic policies, laws, and institutions, and ensuring alignment with national REDD+ strategies through participatory processes. A growing number of countries are aligning their national approaches to safeguards with both UNFCCC guidance and selected external safeguards frameworks, in ways that maintain national ownership.
- **Additional safeguards frameworks:** multiple frameworks beyond the UNFCCC are increasingly relevant - particularly for countries seeking results-based finance. These often add depth or specificity to safeguard expectations - such as those of the GCF, World Bank and Verra - introduce more prescriptive, operational requirements at programme and project levels, particularly on FPIC, risk management, and grievance redress, complementing the UNFCCC's policy-level orientation. By contrast, other safeguards approach, such as, VCS-JNR and the one from the ART's standard, TREES, are not an additional framework but an unpacking of the Cancun safeguards into indicators, providing more specific reporting requirements for jurisdictions while remaining fully within the UNFCCC framework.
 - Convergence and divergence: While most frameworks converge on core themes (E&S risk assessment, stakeholder participation, IPand LC rights, biodiversity, gender, transparency, and GRM), differences in scope, emphasis, and procedural detail can create inconsistencies and challenges for implementers.
 - Complexity and costs: Managing multiple safeguards frameworks simultaneously - especially under diverse REDD+ finance sources - can impose significant administrative and financial burdens. Harmonization efforts, such as cross-cutting safeguards frameworks, are emerging as useful strategies to reduce duplication and transaction costs.
- **Safeguards implementation costs** - including those related to institutional capacity, participatory processes, monitoring, and reporting - should be recognized as integral components of REDD+ programme design and financing.



Module 3



How do we apply safeguards?

("the basics")



This module

Focuses on the practical aspects of implementing safeguards throughout the REDD+ lifecycle. It begins with the core requirements under the UNFCCC, setting the foundation to explore more complex implementation scenarios involving multiple scales and funding modalities.



The module will help you to...

- Identify the new challenges that arise when countries transition from REDD+ readiness to implementation, including the costs, burdens, and inconsistencies of managing multiple safeguards requirements.
- Understand Country Approaches to Safeguards (CAS) as a flexible methodology that translates UNFCCC requirements into nationally tailored systems, while also helping harmonize obligations from diverse donors and standards.
- Learn about Safeguards Information Systems (SIS) as the main safeguards element mandated by the UNFCCC, and how they function not only as reporting tools but also as platforms to communicate performance and strengthen access to climate finance.
- Examine how Summaries of Information (SoI) are evolving from compliance reports into multipurpose instruments that enable access to results-based finance and enhance transparency at national and international levels.
- Understand how effective stakeholder engagement, gender-responsive and social inclusion approaches, strengthens safeguards implementation - particularly by enabling meaningful participation, fulfilling Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)-related criteria, and fostering legitimacy and equity in REDD+ actions.

6. REDD+ Safeguards into practice

6.1 Safeguards in the phases of REDD+: from readiness to implementation

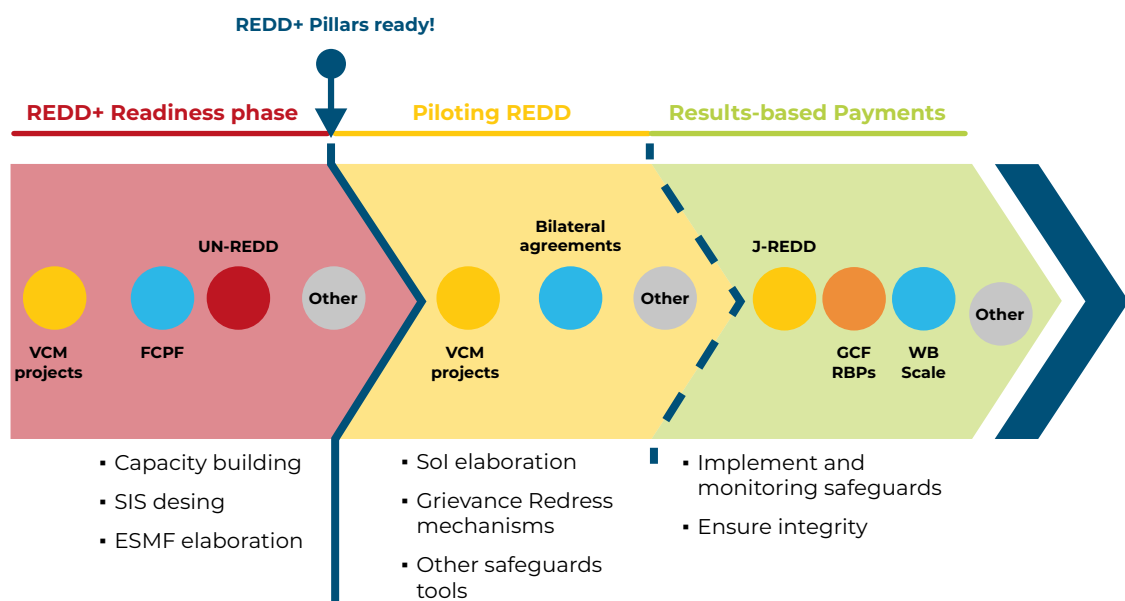
Parties agreed that REDD+ should be implemented in three phases (Figure 3), which may occur sequentially or in parallel:

- 1. Readiness phase:** focused on the development of national strategies or action plans (NS/AP), policies and measures, and related capacity-building efforts.
- 2. Demonstration or pilot phase:** involving the implementation of NS/APs and policies and measures, which may include further capacity-building, technology transfer, and results-based demonstration activities.
- 3. Results-based payment (RBP) phase:** in which REDD+ actions must be fully monitored, reported, and verified (MRV), enabling countries to access RBP under the UNFCCC.

During the **REDD+ readiness phase**, countries' efforts are generally directed toward establishing the foundational elements of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, the four (4) REDD+ Pillars. Especially on safeguards, during this initial stage many countries and jurisdictions also invest in building and strengthening safeguards teams and institutional arrangements for the design of core safeguards components - particularly those required under the UNFCCC, such as the SIS and the first Sol.

Where targeted technical or financial support was available, readiness efforts often included the development of Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMF) and other foundational instruments that contribute to a national approach to safeguards. This phase was significantly supported by various international initiatives, including the UN-REDD Programme, the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF-TF) at the subnational level, and several international Non-government organizations (NGOs).

Figure 3: REDD+ Readiness and implementation phases.



Source: Own elaboration.

During the **piloting or demonstration phase of REDD+**, safeguards effort generally shifts attention toward ensuring that on-the-ground activities are environmentally and socially sound. At this stage, countries begin demonstrating and testing their national strategies, policies and measures, and developing Summaries of Information (Sol) that consolidate evidence of how safeguards are being applied in practice. In many cases, this requires adjustments and further strengthening of the SIS established during the readiness phase.

A key challenge in this stage is the establishment and operation of Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) that are accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the needs of IP, LC, and other stakeholders.

With growing engagement in the **RBP phase**, countries are increasingly complementing their CAS - rooted in the UNFCCC framework - with additional safeguard frameworks relevant to REDD+ finance, such as those of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) or other applicable mechanisms or programmes.

These developments create new demands for monitoring, data collection, analysis, and reporting systems that can document how safeguards are being addressed and respected in practice. Strengthening these capacities not only enhances the integrity of REDD+ implementation but also improves countries' readiness to access RBP under the UNFCCC and other climate finance opportunities.

Evolving challenges in the implementation of REDD+ safeguards

As countries transition from REDD+ readiness to RBP, many are encountering new layers of complexity in managing E&S risks. This is particularly evident when REDD+ activities are financed through diverse mechanisms - such as results-based finance, VCM or bilateral and multilateral support - each involving distinct safeguards frameworks, reporting modalities, and monitoring and verification requirements. In practice, this diversity can increase institutional

demands and transaction costs at both national and subnational levels.

In response, and drawing on lessons from early implementers, several **CAS** are gradually evolving toward real **Integrated Safeguards Systems**. These efforts reflect the understanding that while the foundational safeguards requirements of the UNFCCC - Cancun Safeguards, SIS and Sol - remain central to transparency and accountability, additional priorities often emerge during implementation, including the operational management of E&S risks and the realization of Non-Carbon Benefits (NCBs).

7. Country Approaches to Safeguards (CAS)

A **Country Approach to Safeguards (CAS)** refers to the existing governance arrangements and processes – such as policies, laws, regulations and institutions – that countries can draw upon to respond to safeguards requirements for REDD+ aligning with national goals. This approach has the potential to provide a single, unified approach through which a country can accommodate the safeguards obligations of different initiatives, donors and investors (UN-REDD, 2020).

Each country will have its own approach to safeguards, reflecting its unique needs and circumstances and considering the range of socio-economic issues and environmental concerns, including gender issues. This approach evolves over time, building on or strengthening existing governance arrangements.


Considering that the Cancun Safeguards were deliberately designed as high-level and universally applicable principles, not as prescriptive or one-size-fits-all rules. Their broad nature means that each country must interpret and operationalize them according to its specific legal, institutional, environmental, and cultural context. This process - known as a **national safeguards interpretation** - is essential for translating the global principles into practical,


nationally relevant approaches that can be implemented and monitored effectively.

To support countries in developing and operationalizing their CAS, it may be useful to draw on existing guidance for clarifying the Cancun Safeguards. Table 3 below provides an

illustrative framework of possible key issues that countries may consider when unpacking each of the seven Cancun Safeguards. This type of framework can help national safeguards teams to identify relevant national policies, laws, and institutions, and to describe how each safeguard is being “addressed” in practice.

Table 3. Illustrative framework for clarifying the Cancun Safeguards (adapted from UN-REDD Programme 2016).

Safeguard	Possible key issue
<p>Safeguard (a) - [REDD+] actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistency and complementarities with the objectives of the national forest programme. Safeguard (a) - [REDD+] actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements ■ Consistency with international commitments on climate; contribution to national climate policy objectives, including those of mitigation and adaptation strategies. ■ Coordination among agencies and implementing bodies for REDD+, national forest programmes and national policy(ies) that enact the relevant international conventions and agreements. ■ Consistency with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; contribution to national poverty reduction strategies. ■ Consistency with international commitments on the environment; contribution to national biodiversity conservation policies (including National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans), other environmental and natural resource management policy objectives. ■ Consistency with the State’s human rights obligations under international law, including the core international human rights treaties and International Labour Organization (ILO) 169, where applicable. ■ Consistency with other relevant international conventions and agreements.

Safeguard	Possible key issue
<p>Safeguard (b) - Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to information ■ Accountability ■ Land tenure ■ Enforcement of the rule of law ■ Adequate access to justice, including procedures that can provide effective remedy for infringement of rights, and to resolve disputes (i.e., grievance mechanisms) (NB: overlaps with Safeguard (c)) ■ Gender equality ■ Coherency of national/subnational legal, policy and regulatory framework for transparent and effective forest governance ■ Corruption risks ■ Resource allocation/capacity to meet institutional mandate ■ Institutional capacity to conduct appropriate data collection and planning for forest management ■ Participation in decision-making processes (overlaps with Safeguards (c) and (d))

Typically, this interpretation is developed through participatory, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder processes, ensuring that it aligns with national REDD+ strategies and remains

consistent with safeguards requirements from donors, international finance institutions, and carbon market standards.

Case Study 3



The National Safeguards Interpretation of Kenya

Kenya provides a practical example of how a country can interpret and operationalize the Cancun Safeguards within its national legal and institutional context. As part of its national REDD+ readiness process, Kenya undertook a participatory approach to interpret the safeguards in a way that aligns with domestic priorities, including constitutional rights, sectoral policies, and international obligations. This process resulted in Kenya's "REDD+ Safeguards Approach", which provides a safeguard-by-safeguard analysis linking the Cancun principles to national laws, institutions, and implementation mechanisms (Government of Kenya, 2018).

To achieve this, Kenya mapped each of the seven Cancun Safeguards against its national legal and policy framework, identifying relevant provisions in the Constitution (2010), environmental laws, forest governance frameworks, and community land and rights legislation. The interpretation also considered Kenya's Vision 2030 and commitments under multilateral environmental agreements. This exercise helped the country define what respecting and addressing each safeguard means in practice and guided the development of its SIS (Government of Kenya, 2018).

Through this national interpretation, Kenya aimed to ensure that REDD+ implementation not only avoids harm but also contributes to national development priorities and the protection of human rights. This process provided the basis for developing indicators for the SIS and for the monitoring and reporting of safeguards, ensuring alignment with Kenya's decentralized governance system and stakeholder participation principles (Government of Kenya, 2018).

Furthermore, CAS should be integrated across all REDD+ instruments, starting with the **National Strategy or Action Plan (NS/AP)** itself (see Box 4). This integration is key to ensuring

that REDD+ activities are designed with social and environmental integrity from the outset - making their subsequent implementation and monitoring more feasible and effective.

Box 4



Applying REDD+ safeguards from the inception of NS/AP

Safeguards play a critical role in ensuring the environmental and social integrity of REDD+. For this reason, National Strategies or Action Plans (NS/AP) should integrate safeguards across all stages of REDD+ planning and implementation. This means not only aligning with the Cancun Safeguards but also treating them as cross-cutting elements in the identification, design, and execution of REDD+ activities.

When safeguards are used as proactive tools for governance, and environmental and social management across scales and financing sources - rather than limited to reporting requirements - they can help identify and address risks early on, improve outcomes for people and nature, and generate broader NCB³. Embedding safeguards from the beginning strengthens transparency, builds stakeholder trust, and enhances the credibility and inclusiveness of REDD+ efforts.

Safeguards should not sit in a separate chapter - they should be embedded across the NS/AP, including:

- In the vision and principles of the strategy: framing REDD+ around the Cancun Safeguards' rights and associated cultural, environmental and social aspects criteria.
- As a lens for REDD+ policies and measures (PAMs) prioritization and risk screening: safeguards guide the selection and refinement of PAMs by identifying potential risks and enhancing co-benefits early in the planning process.
- Through safeguards-relevant performance indicators: including indicators linked to social inclusion, participation, and biodiversity that allow systematic monitoring of safeguard outcomes.
- Linked to grievance redress systems and institutional accountability.
- Reflected in subnational strategies and nested frameworks: safeguards must be operationalized consistently across scales to ensure coherence between national and subnational implementation.
- Included in financial risk assessments and investment proposals: to ensure that the costs of environmental and social risk management are adequately considered, and that appropriate mitigation measures and institutional arrangements are planned and budgeted for from the outset.

For further information on the role of safeguards in NS/APs, see the NS/AP Learning Journal (UN-REDD, 2026, forthcoming).

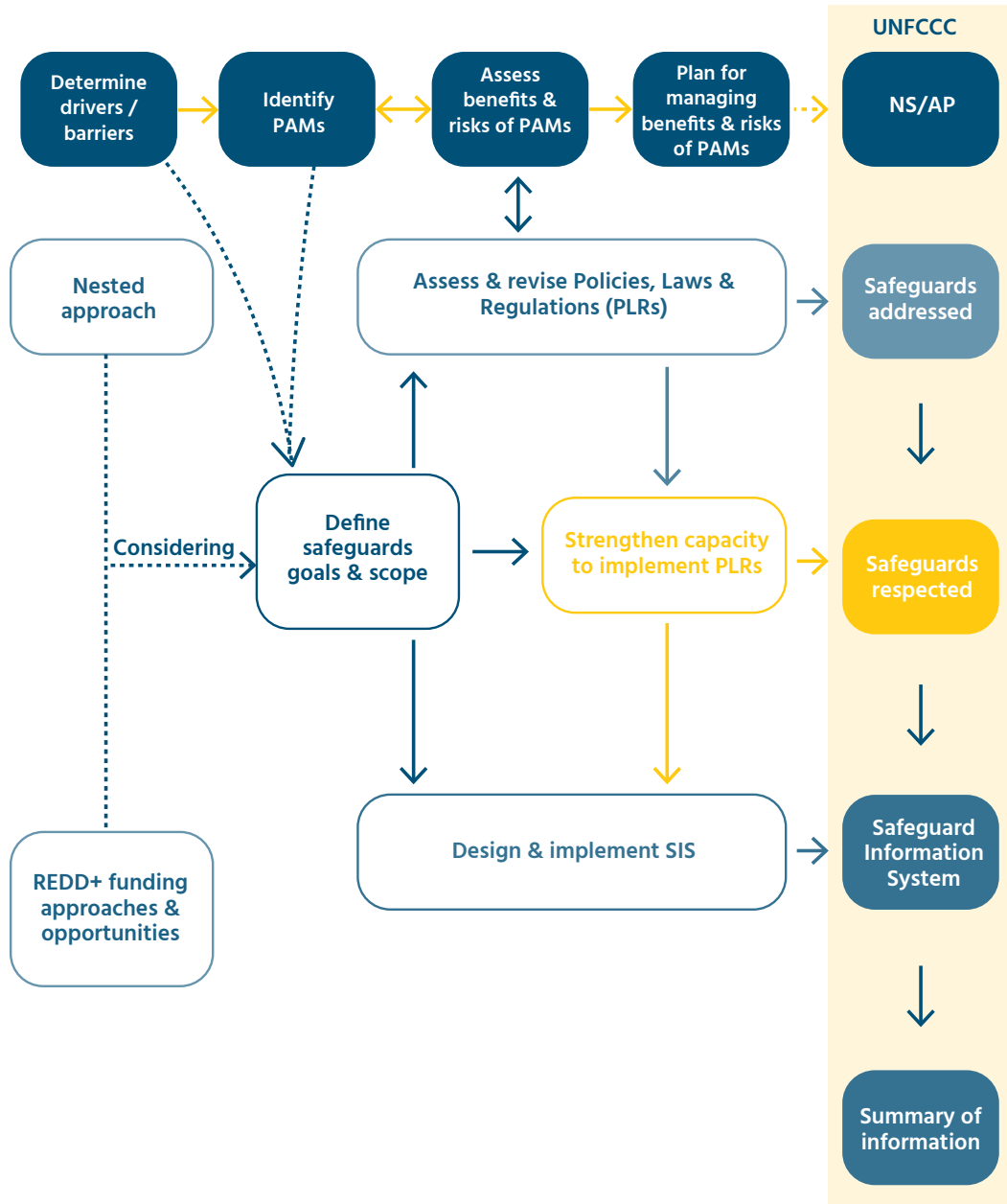
³ NCBs are the social, environmental, and governance outcomes that REDD+ actions generate beyond greenhouse gas emission reductions. Further information on section [Incorporating NCBs in Safeguards Systems](#), below.

The process to design and update a CAS

designing and strengthening CAS, as well as for assessing the associated benefits and risks.

The figure 4 below outlines the main components and step-by-step process for

Figure 4: Conceptual framework for country approaches to safeguards (updated version 2025).



Source: UNEP, 2021.

This updated version of the diagram introduces an important addition: when defining the goals and scope of safeguards - essentially deciding *which safeguards to apply, for what purpose, and at what stages* - it may be strategic to look beyond the Cancun Safeguards alone, as indicated in section [Additional safeguards frameworks relevant for REDD+](#). Countries and jurisdictions are encouraged to consider the broader landscape in which their REDD+ strategies are situated. This could include, for instance:

- The potential implementation of jurisdictional REDD+ (J-REDD) strategies, including at the subnational level, and whether there is a need to promote a consistent safeguards approach for related initiatives, including private and/or carbon market (voluntary or compliance) projects.
- Strategic financing sources or modalities being considered to support the implementation of the NS/AP. These may come with specific safeguards requirements

that warrant aligning the country approach accordingly.

By exploring these broader dimensions early in the process, countries can design more robust and adaptable safeguards systems that align with national REDD+ objectives and evolving global practices. By helping countries link their existing policies, laws and regulations, and institutional arrangements to each of the Cancun Safeguards, the development of a CAS can serve as a useful strategy to approach the safeguards “address”, as mandated by the Cancun Agreement. In addition, the CAS facilitates the identification and closure of gaps, while strengthening systems to progressively enhance the “respect” of safeguards, as understood under the UNFCCC.

Ultimately, the CAS helps embed safeguards within the overall REDD+ architecture - not as stand-alone requirements, but as part of an integrated system connecting governance, implementation, and reporting through the SIS and Sol.

For further information on how to develop a CAS, see: section “How to develop a country approach to safeguards”, at the [UN-REDD. 2018. Safeguards Learning Journal](#).



**FURTHER
INFORMATION**



LEARNING TOOL

8. Safeguards Information Systems (SIS)

Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) to download the practical guide to better explain how to show information on a Safeguards Information Systems.



The SIS is the only safeguards component explicitly mandated under the UNFCCC. This is one of the four REDD+ pillars that countries are required to establish to move from the readiness phase to implementation, making them eligible for access to results-based finance (RBF) under the Convention.

Under the UNFCCC, a SIS is defined as a mechanism for providing information on how the Cancun Safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities. In practice, it functions as a structured set of institutional arrangements, processes, and tools that enables countries or jurisdictions to generate, manage, and disseminate information on safeguards performance. While its primary focus is on the Cancun Safeguards, depending on the national context, a SIS may also encompass additional safeguards requirements.

The SIS as introduced by the UNFCCC text, can be understood as the reporting-focused component of a broader Integrated Safeguards System (see section 9, below), typically situated toward the end of the safeguards implementation sequence. Beyond facilitating access to information for diverse stakeholders, the SIS serves as a visible expression of a country's safeguards performance - effectively functioning as the "tip of the iceberg" that communicates how effectively safeguards are being applied in REDD+ activities. For this reason, SIS are of strategic importance for donors and investors seeking to support REDD+ strategies and programmes aligned with high standards of environmental and social integrity.

8.1 UNFCCC's design orientations

UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17 outlines five core orientations that SIS are expected to reflect. Below is a summary of each, with examples of how these are operationalized in practice:

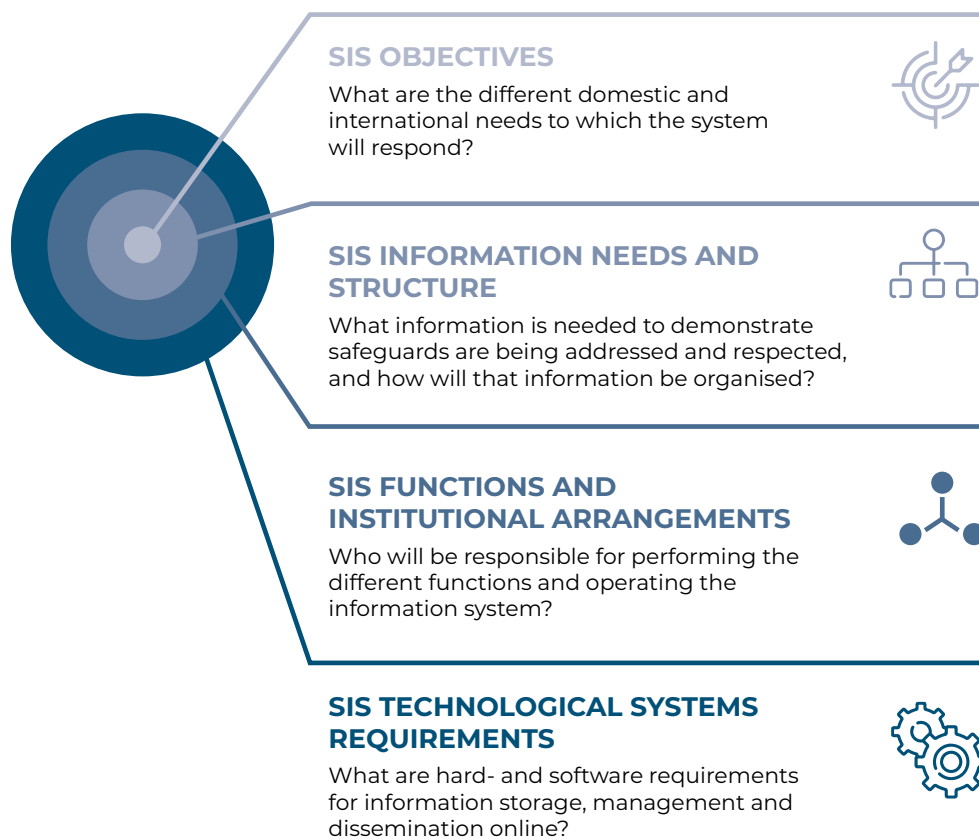
- 1. Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis:** SIS formats vary from static PDF reports to dynamic web-based platforms. Regardless of format, ensuring public accessibility is fundamental. The SIS also serves as a central repository of information used to develop the Sol (see [section on Sol](#), below).
- 2. Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time**
Most countries adopt a stepwise approach to SIS development - starting with foundational functions and gradually integrating automation tools, thematic modules, and other improvements as technical capacities and funding increase. As REDD+ strategies, safeguards priorities, and national contexts evolve, so too does the SIS. Initially designed to meet the core UNFCCC requirements, many SIS are later expanded to align with national policy goals, accommodate donors' or funding schemes' expectations, such as those from the GCF or carbon markets.
- 3. Provide information on how all the safeguards are being addressed and respected:** this entails reporting comprehensively on all seven Cancun safeguards - not selectively.
- 4. Be country-driven and implemented at the national level:** SIS should be anchored in national legal and institutional frameworks and reflect the country's REDD+ strategy and safeguards approach. Country ownership also implies inclusive, participatory processes rooted in national priorities and sovereignty.
- 5. Build upon existing systems, as appropriate:** to ensure sustainability and cost-effectiveness, countries are encouraged to leverage existing national or subnational systems and data sources, rather than building new structures from scratch.

As outlined in the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (COP 19), an operational SIS is a prerequisite for accessing results-based finance under the UNFCCC. Beyond this formal role, SIS also serve broader strategic functions - enhancing the transparency and accountability of REDD+ implementation, supporting national policy coherence, and addressing and respecting safeguards.

8.2 Additional design considerations

In addition to the UNFCCC orientations mentioned above, the UN-REDD Programme has identified four key SIS design considerations, based on country experiences and consultations with key stakeholder constituencies (UN-REDD, 2020) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Key design considerations for REDD+ SIS, including objectives, information needs and structures, institutional arrangements, and technological system requirements.



Source: UN-REDD, 2020.

SIS design choices and processes are likely to change and improve over time – with a view to expanding or refining system objectives, structure, functions, institutional arrangements and technological requirements – and in line with the progress of REDD+ implementation.

There is not always a clear differentiation between SIS design and SIS operationalization stages. Countries can choose to go ahead with some elements of their SIS, such as setting up institutional mandates, data sharing agreements or IT infrastructure, while they are still working on the design of other elements” (UN-REDD. 2020a. REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems – moving from design to operation).

The four key SIS design considerations represented in the graph above, could be briefly explained as follows:

1. SIS objectives

The objective of the SIS is a foundational element that defines key aspects of the system - such as which safeguards will be monitored and reported, how information will be presented to the public, and what data collection needs will be required. Additionally, other aspects such as territorial and public policy scope might be relevant to define, especially when it comes to subnational SIS.

A clear articulation of this objective is essential for guiding the three key design considerations of a SIS. The default SIS objective, as set out under the UNFCCC, is to demonstrate that the Cancun Safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation (Swan, S. & Walcott, J., (2017).

However, considering the current landscape of REDD+ implementation - characterized by a diversity of funding sources and policy instruments - a SIS may benefit from adopting broader objectives that reflect both domestic policy priorities and additional safeguards requirements. For example, countries participating in GCF RBP projects or jurisdictional programs, such as ART (with its TREES standard), the World Bank's or other initiatives; may wish to expand their SIS objectives to respond to these frameworks. Integrating multiple safeguards expectations into a unified SIS objective may contribute to a more flexible and adaptable system, better aligned with the strategic decisions of the national or subnational REDD+ strategy.

2. Information needs and structures

This component addresses three key aspects relevant to all SIS: (a) Information needs, (b) SIS Structure; and (c) Information Sources.

a. What information is reported? ("Information needs")

This refers to the type of information required to demonstrate that a country or jurisdiction is addressing and respecting⁴ its nationally interpreted safeguards. These information needs are directly tied to the SIS objectives and depend largely on the safeguard's framework adopted - whether limited to the UNFCCC's Cancun safeguards or also encompassing additional requirements from donors, international standards, or carbon market instruments.

b. How is information reported? ("SIS structure")

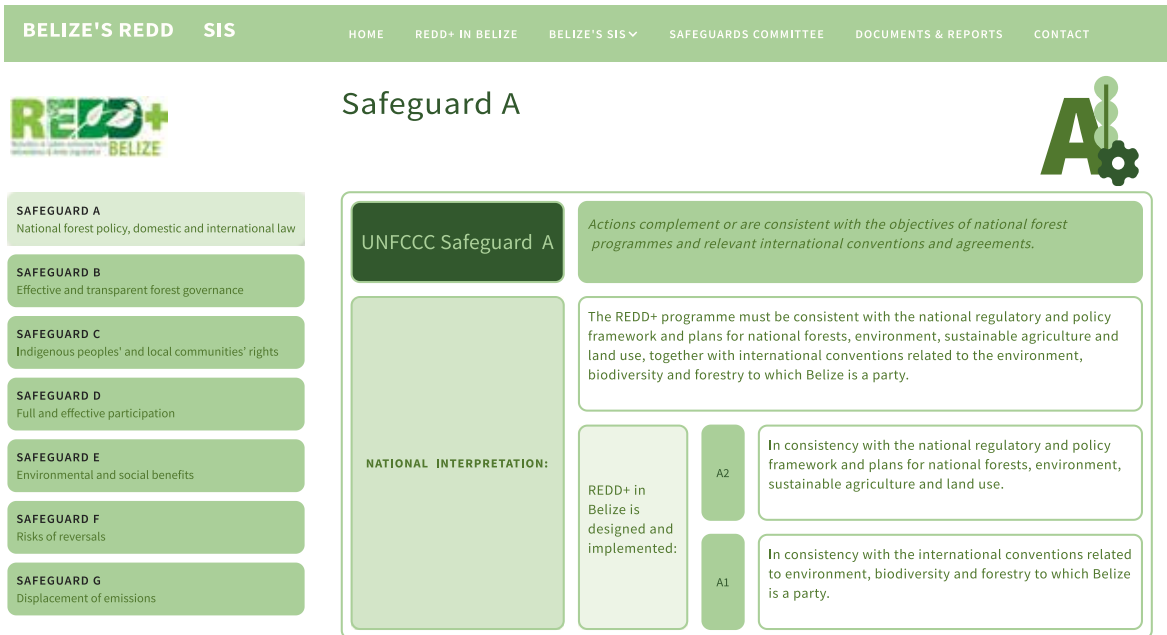
The information structure refers to how the information will be organized within the SIS. Many countries base their SIS information structure on two key documents or set of information: 1) the national safeguards interpretation; and (2) an assessment of the specific information needs tied to those safeguards.

In practice, SIS structures are commonly organized by safeguards "themes" or "aspects", which vary slightly depending on national contexts but typically cover similar content areas. See the example below of how [Belize's REDD+ SIS](#) structure information based on their national safeguards interpretation (Figure 6).

In other cases, safeguards reporting structures are organized by **implementation scale**, for example, at both the national and project levels. A good example of this approach is Suriname's REDD+ Safeguards Information System (see Figure 7).

4 According to the UN-REDD Programme, "addressing" refers to putting safeguards into practice during the implementation of REDD+ actions (e.g. through policies, laws, regulations, and institutional measures), while "respecting" refers to ensuring that the implementation of those actions does not result in adverse impacts on people and the environment, and contributes positively to the objectives of the safeguards (UN-REDD, 2016. *Technical Brief 02: Safeguards Information Systems and REDD+ Safeguards Reporting under the UNFCCC*).

Figure 6: Belize’s REDD+ SIS structure organized by safeguard themes.



Source: Forest Department of Belize (n.d).
 For more information: <https://redd-sis.edata.bz/safeguards.html>

Figure 7: Suriname’s REDD+ SIS structure organized by national and project level.



Source: <https://sis.surinameredd.org/#>

Alongside defining these themes, it is also important to decide on the type of data to be presented - narrative text, statistical tables, graphs, or maps - especially when reporting on how safeguards are being respected. Using a consistent format over time enhances transparency and facilitates progress tracking, in line with UNFCCC guidance.

An increasingly common practice is the use of indicators to monitor and report safeguards. Indicators - defined as metrics that reflect the status or trends in a given area - help translate safeguards requirements into measurable elements. For more detail, see "[Indicators](#)" in the SIS into practice section below for additional insights.

Finally, SIS structures tend to evolve. As REDD+ implementation progresses and contexts change - due to donor requirements, programme needs, or societal expectations - the SIS may incorporate new thematic areas or formats. Therefore, flexibility and adaptability are key design principles, while ensuring continuity in reporting.

c. What are the reporting sources? ("Information Sources"):

Once safeguards information needs have been identified, the next step in SIS design is to determine where the necessary data will be sourced - referred to as "information sources." These typically include existing systems - REDD+-specific or from broader environmental and social policy frameworks - managed by institutions at national, subnational, or international levels.

Information on safeguards approaches - as well as structural and procedural indicators - is typically more static, often tied to legal frameworks and managed by a limited number of lead agencies. By contrast, information related to safeguards respect tends to be more dynamic and dispersed, produced by a wider range of entities working on biodiversity, protected areas, IP rights, forestry, agriculture, and other sectors.

A common practice observed across jurisdictions is to conduct a mapping of these relevant and operational information sources. This involves assessing the type of data available, its accessibility, and its relevance for demonstrating how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected. See Table 4 below for an illustrative template to guide this type of mapping exercise.

Table 4. Sample matrix of SIS Information Sources.

Safeguards C. Indigenous Peoples' rights					
Theme C.3. Respect IP's land rights (According to the National Safeguards Interpretation)					
Source	Provider	Type of Data	Relevance for SIS	Indicator relevant	Annotations
Indigenous Peoples's Land Registry	Ministry of Indigenous' Affaire	Quantitative Periodic update Public access	Public database with updated IP's lands titled, pending and in conflict	Indicator 4.1: IP's land tenure rights are recognized and respected REDD+ implementation	The Ministry of Indigenous' Affaire has appointed a focal point for the SIS (see Memo 45/25)
...

Examples of information sources may include national environmental systems, land tenure databases, grievance redress mechanisms, FPIC protocols, forest monitoring platforms, gender equality initiatives, or academic and research institutions. In line with Decision 12/CP.17, SIS should build upon existing systems, where appropriate. Mapping and assessing available sources - both from REDD+ initiatives and related policy frameworks (e.g., other UN conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity) - can enhance the SIS's cost-efficiency and long-term sustainability. As REDD+ implementation advances, new data needs may emerge, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a

SIS structure that is flexible and capable of integrating additional sources over time.

3. SIS functions and institutional arrangements

For a SIS to operate effectively and efficiently, a set of clearly defined institutional arrangements and standardized processes is essential. Drawing on country experiences, four core operational functions have emerged as foundational pillars for SIS functionality, as illustrated in **Figure 8** below:

Figure 8: Key operational considerations for REDD+ safeguards information systems.

INFORMATION COMPILATION AND MANAGEMENT

Getting all the information on safeguards in one place

INFORMATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Reviewing how safeguards are addressed and respected

INFORMATION QUALITY ASSURANCE AND VALIDATION

Getting key stakeholder's inputs and buy-in for the results of the analysis



INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND US

Accessing and applying safeguards information

Source: UN-REDD, 2021 a.

- **Information compilation and management:** this involves collecting and organizing all relevant safeguards data in one place. Mapping of information sources (as shown in the previous section) serves as a critical input here. Information should be drawn from functioning, periodically updated, and transparent sources.
- **Information analysis and interpretation:** once compiled, safeguards information must be analyzed in relation to each Cancun Safeguard (and other applicable safeguards frameworks – see Module 2), taking into account the national safeguards interpretation, legal mandates, and institutional frameworks. This analytical task is typically led by the SIS technical team or designated coordination body.
- **Information dissemination and use:** safeguards information should be presented in a format that is accessible, usable, and relevant to a wide range of stakeholders, including policy makers, donors, civil society, and IPs. This function emphasizes the role of the SIS not just as a reporting mechanism but as a tool for informed decision-making and accountability.
- **Information quality assurance and validation:** engaging key stakeholders in validating safeguards information enhances the quality and legitimacy of SIS outputs. This includes mechanisms for feedback, consultation, and consensus-building around safeguards reporting.

4. Technological systems requirements:

While the UNFCCC does not explicitly require an online platform for the SIS, public websites can greatly support key expectations of transparency and accessibility. Experience from countries that have developed online SIS platforms suggests that publicly available information helps meet stakeholder expectations - particularly those of government agencies, civil society, and

international donors. In fact, the GCF's REDD+ RBPs payment - originally launched as a pilot and extended beyond the pilot phase in 2024 (GCF Decision B.40/16) - requires applicants to provide a link to an operational SIS (UN-REDD, 2020a).

SIS platforms may take different forms: standalone websites, modules within broader environmental information systems, or components linked to national REDD+ registries (such as Peru's integration with the National Registry for Mitigation Actions – RENAMI, by its Spanish acronym). Regardless of format, several strategic considerations are critical to ensure functionality and sustainability over time.

When developing or maintaining a SIS platform - whether as a standalone website, as part of a broader environmental information system, or linked to a national REDD+ registry - several practical and strategic considerations must be taken into account to ensure long-term sustainability.

- **Accessibility is key:** SIS platforms should be publicly available without requiring user registration, in line with UNFCCC principles of transparency and inclusiveness.
- **Plan beyond development:** Costs extend beyond design and launch. Maintenance, content updates, and hosting require ongoing investment. Several countries have faced setbacks when SIS platforms became inactive after project-based funding ended.
- **Leverage existing infrastructure - strategically:** Embedding the SIS within an existing national platform may reduce costs but could also limit content control. Complex administrative procedures in larger systems may restrict the SIS team's ability to update content in a timely manner.
- **Ensure update autonomy:** The SIS team should have the tools and authority to manage and refresh platform content regularly, especially to reflect evolving safeguards information aligned with REDD+ implementation and reporting cycles.

- **Design for financial sustainability:** From the outset, a financing strategy should be in place - not only for the SIS itself but for the broader safeguards architecture. It should anticipate transitions beyond external funding and outline clear mechanisms to sustain core SIS functions over time.

Box 5 illustrates ongoing efforts to explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could enhance the implementation and monitoring of safeguards in

For more information on Technological options and platforms, see UN-REDD. 2020a. [UN-REDD \(2020a\). REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems: Moving from Design to Operation.](#)



**FURTHER
INFORMATION**

REDD+ systems, with a focus on responsible and context-appropriate integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Box 5



Unlocking the Potential of AI for Smarter Safeguards Systems

Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a promising tool to improve the efficiency, consistency, and traceability of safeguards systems in REDD+, particularly for tasks such as document analysis, risk pattern detection, and support for safeguards reporting - especially in contexts where multiple on-the-ground activities require reporting to diverse audiences, including donors, the UNFCCC, and domestic policy processes.

Some jurisdictions are beginning to explore and pilot AI applications within their SIS and other safeguards tools. However, challenges remain, including licensing costs, institutional capacity, and the secure handling of sensitive information. In the coming years, more practical applications are expected, potentially easing workloads through enhanced information management and process automation, thereby supporting already overburdened safeguards teams at national, programme, and project levels.

Recognizing this potential, Safeguards and Integrity Working Group of the UN-REDD Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean has agreed to continue exploring this line of work through a thematic subgroup. For more information about the initial session on this topic see: <https://www.un-redd.org/multi-media-stories/summary-tenth-session-safeguards-and-integrity-working-group-un-redd-programme>

8.3 Institutional arrangements for SIS operations

Given the breadth of the Cancun safeguards - which encompass at least environmental, social, legal and governance dimensions - SIS must manage a wide array of information types: qualitative and quantitative, narrative and spatial, and statistical or indicator-based. These data often originate from different institutions, sectors, and governance levels (national, subnational, or local), and may vary in geographic scope and temporal frequency (UN-REDD, 2020a).

To ensure functionality, institutional roles must be clearly defined and aligned with existing mandates and legal frameworks. While some countries benefit from pre-existing regulations that mandate inter-institutional data sharing, others may need to develop new protocols or agreements. These can include formal coordination agreements, technical cooperation frameworks, or informal collaboration platforms. Coordination mechanisms are particularly important when REDD+ implementation and safeguards monitoring are decentralized or involve nested approaches (UN-REDD, 2024c).

Subnational actors - such as provincial governments, IP's governance bodies, producer associations and others - can add significant value in both data generation and validation.

Their involvement has been shown to enhance not only the quality but also the legitimacy and contextual relevance of SIS data, particularly in jurisdictions where REDD+ implementation is locally driven or community-led (UN-REDD, 2024). Some illustrative cases include:

- **Multisectoral Monitoring Forum for REDD+ ECO2, Province of Misiones, Argentina:** A civil society forum that oversees both the REDD+ ECO2 Programme and the operation of its SIS and Benefit-Sharing Mechanism. During the Programme's design phase, the Forum functioned as a virtual consultation platform. Once the Programme is registered under Verra, the SIS Technical Team began submitting draft safeguards reports and related documents to the Forum for review and feedback, helping to ensure accuracy, transparency, and stakeholder confidence.

More information: [Misiones REDD+ ECO2 Programme](#)

- **REDD+ Safeguards Advisory Committee, Belize:** This multi-stakeholder platform coordinates inputs from diverse actors, including Indigenous Peoples, the private sector, and academia. It plays a key role in validating and advising on REDD+ safeguards processes.

More information: [Belize SIS Committee](#)



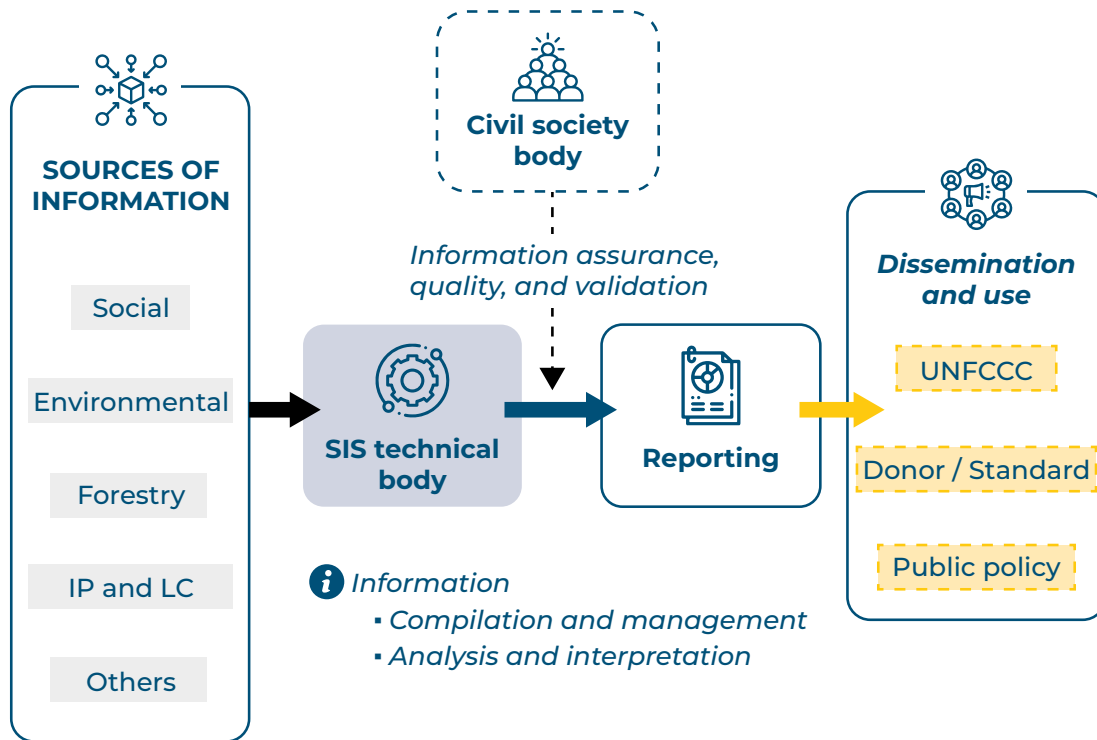
LEARNING TOOL

For practical tools and guidance on operationalizing these four SIS functions, see [UN-REDD \(2020a\). REDD+ Safeguards Information Systems: Moving from Design to Operation.](#)

See the flowchart below (Figure 9) which illustrates how various components, functions,

and institutional arrangements may interact in the operationalization of a hypothetical SIS.

Figure 9: Example of SIS functions and components flowchart.



Source: own elaboration.

However, limitations in technical capacity, data management infrastructure, and cross-sectoral coordination remain common challenges.

Addressing these may require long-term investment in institutional strengthening, training, and stakeholder engagement.

8.4 SIS into practice: from paper to implementation

The Cancun Safeguards have been in effect for over 15 years, during which several countries have made substantial progress in developing their safeguards approaches and establishing SIS and other components of integrated safeguards systems. These milestones were instrumental during the REDD+ readiness phase. However, as countries transition into implementation and results-based finance phases, their safeguards systems face new pressures. Emerging technologies, dynamic drivers of deforestation, and diverse REDD+ financing mechanisms - including market-based and command-and-control approaches - are introducing new risks

and requirements that challenge pre-existing SIS designs.

This shifting landscape has exposed limitations in earlier SIS - particularly those designed during readiness phases without significant field experience and little relevance granted to carbon market approaches. When countries engage in medium- or long-term REDD+ programmes (e.g. GCF RBP, World Bank, TREES or others), they often find it necessary to revise or even redesign their systems to meet evolving donor requirements, financing conditions, or operational realities on the ground. In several cases, new online platforms have been created with automated processes, geospatial tools, and indicator-based reporting (Cirone, M., 2024).



Case study 4

Viet Nam's SIS: a pioneering example of SIS integrated into a broader platform

Viet Nam was the first country in Asia-Pacific to meet all four pillars of the Warsaw Framework, including the development of a fully operational SIS.

Viet Nam's SIS, operational since 2018, was initially embedded within the national Forest Management Information System (FORMIS) - a digital platform designed to centralize and manage forestry data from across line government institutions. This integration enables aggregation of safeguards-related information from various sources, including various ministers. Additionally, it allows for both national reporting and alignment with requirements from programmes such as the World Bank's Emission Reductions Programme in the North-Central Coast region.

The SIS was developed in two phases. The first (2017–2020) focused on fulfilling UNFCCC and FCPF safeguards reporting. The second phase, underway since 2020, expands its functionality to support broader forest governance needs, such as monitoring Payments for Forest Environmental Services (PFES), while adapting to new REDD+ initiatives - like a second jurisdictional programme and a national proposal to the GCF. The system is also being updated with streamlined indicators and subnational guidance, beginning with LEAF provinces (UN-REDD Programme, 2019).

The efforts for integration different safeguards reporting needs has improved efficiency and consistency, though cross-ministerial coordination remains a challenge (UN-REDD Programme, 2023).

Based on global experiences from the UN-REDD Programme, several **common challenges** have emerged that continue to concern safeguards teams of some jurisdictions advancing REDD+ implementation and SIS operation. Among the most prominent are the following:

- **Integration of voluntary carbon market (VCM) projects in SIS:** a growing concern among REDD+ safeguard teams - especially in jurisdictions advancing toward implementation - is how to approach safeguards data generated by VCM projects at the project level (distinct from jurisdictional programs or standards such as ART's TREES or VCS-JNR). The key question is whether and how this privately held information, generated under VCM standards (e.g. VCS, Plan Vivo, Gold Standard), should be integrated into national or subnational SIS frameworks.

All VCM standards require project developers to assess and manage E&S risks - often under a dedicated safeguards framework or by reference to the Cancun Safeguards. This process may generate valuable safeguards information through project validation, periodic monitoring, and credit issuance. However, in the absence of specific legal or regulatory mandates, such information typically remains within the registry of the

standard and is not incorporated into national SIS or the Sol required under the UNFCCC (addressed in the [following section](#)). Peru is one of the few countries to establish such regulatory links (see Case Study 8 on SIS indicators).

This issue is becoming more relevant as the VCM plays an increasingly prominent role in global climate and forest governance. Understanding the role of VCM within the national or jurisdictional REDD+ strategy is crucial. If the NS/AP explicitly includes VCM as a financing source for selected REDD+ actions (e.g. ARR on private lands, forest conservation by Indigenous Peoples under specific safeguards conditions), it may be reasonable to establish reporting obligations to the SIS. This could include the application of selected safeguards instruments such as GRM considerations, FPIC protocols, or gender action plans, for mention some examples aimed at ensuring E&S integrity of VCM and the entire REDD+ policy (see the case study 5 of Colombia, as an illustrative example on this regards).

In all cases, considerations such as added transaction costs for VCM projects, SIS capacity to receive and manage safeguards data, and regulatory feasibility must be carefully assessed.

Case study 5



Safeguards regulation in VCM projects - the experience of Colombia through the Pirá Paraná case

In 2024, the Constitutional Court of Colombia issued a landmark ruling (T-248/24) concerning the Pirá Indigenous community case, which had been implemented in the collective territories of Indigenous Peoples in the department of Vaupés. The Court found that IP's essential rights - such as the right to prior consultation and FPIC, a fair access to benefits of VCM projects in their territories, and others - had been infringed. This case, brought by the Association of Traditional Indigenous Authorities (AATI), highlighted significant shortcomings in the oversight and regulation of REDD+ activities, particularly within the VCM.

The Court's decision affirmed that the protection of fundamental rights must be a cornerstone of environmental projects, including VCM private projects, and that compliance with safeguards is not optional, but a legal and ethical imperative. The ruling also underscores the urgency of regulating how safeguards shall be applied in private REDD+ projects, especially in contexts where VCM operate with limited state oversight.

Importantly, the T-248/24 decision paves the way for the development of a stronger legal and institutional framework for safeguards in Colombia. The ruling requires the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development to create a comprehensive strategy for safeguards implementation and monitor in VCM projects related to collective territories of IP.

Finally, this case illustrates the importance of integrating public and private efforts in the governance of environmental initiatives. While many REDD+ VCM projects are privately driven, the state retains the duty to guarantee rights and uphold constitutional protections. Moving forward, Colombia's anticipated regulatory framework can become a model of how governments and private actors can collaborate under a rights-based approach to climate action, ensuring that the goals of carbon mitigation go hand in hand with social and environmental justice.

In this context, it is also relevant to note the role of the **Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM)** in developing its Core Carbon Principles (CCP), which promote a consistent approach across carbon standards to ensure alignment with UNFCCC guidance and

international safeguards. Many leading standards - such as Verra's VCS and JNR, ART's TREES, and Gold Standard - have demonstrated or are pursuing alignment with these principles (for further information on the ICVCM see box 6).

Box 6



The safeguards approach of the ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles

The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) has established the CCPs to ensure that carbon-crediting programmes and methodologies meet high standards of environmental and social integrity. CCP 9 – Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards require programmes (such as TREES or specific methodologies from Verra – REDD, afforestation and reforestation -ARR and others) to implement clear guidance, tools, and compliance procedures to ensure that mitigation activities conform with or exceed widely accepted best practices. These safeguards are designed not only to minimize environmental and social risks but also to deliver tangible, positive contributions to sustainable development.

The CCP Assessment Framework reinforces these principles through detailed programme-level criteria. Under Criterion 7, carbon-crediting programmes must meet the safeguards criteria from a specific sectoral carbon scheme - the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA); the national safeguard requirements and to address risks across key thematic areas such as:

- Labour rights and working conditions
- Resource efficiency and pollution prevention
- Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement
- Biodiversity and natural resource management
- Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, (IPLCs), local communities, and cultural heritage
- Respect for Human Rights, Stakeholder engagement
- Gender equality
- Robust benefit-sharing
- Alignment with the Cancun Safeguards as outlined in paragraph 71 of decision 1/CP.16 of the UNFCCC

At the Category-level, mitigation activities must meet CORSIA's "do no net harm" and Sustainable Development requirements. Where applicable, additional third-party or program-specific safeguards must be disclosed.

The ICVCM's safeguards framework is highly relevant to REDD+ integrity. It aligns with REDD+ principles by recognizing the importance of early-stage safeguard integration, risk mitigation, and inclusive governance. By requiring consistency with the Cancun Safeguards and emphasizing transparency, equity, and environmental soundness, the ICVCM helps ensure that REDD+ activities are not only effective in reducing emissions but also credible, inclusive, and sustainable. This alignment strengthens trust among stakeholders and supports the long-term success of REDD+ interventions.

The ICVCM acknowledges that approaches to safeguards and sustainable development are evolving, and is engaging stakeholders to strengthen requirements and practices. A multi-stakeholder Continuous Improvement Work Programme (CIWP) on Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards (including Benefit Sharing), working throughout 2024, has developed recommendations for further refinement of the Assessment Framework to strengthen safeguarding requirements based on best practice. The report from the CIWP is planned to be available in 2025.

For further information visit: <https://icvcm.org/core-carbon-principles/>

- **Inclusion of indicators in SIS:** In recent years, there has been a growing trend toward using indicators within SIS to support the monitoring and reporting of safeguards. While not required or explicitly recommended by the UNFCCC, their adoption - understood as metrics that convey information on the status or trends in a specific area (UN-REDD, 2020a) - has been driven by several factors. Initially, SIS platforms often placed greater emphasis on how safeguards were being “addressed” rather than “respected.” This shifted in many jurisdictions as REDD+ implementation on the ground expanded, particularly under results-based finance programmes and jurisdictional initiatives, creating the need for more robust monitoring. In parallel, many RBP programmes for REDD+ have begun to establish, or require the establishment of, safeguards indicators.

Although disaggregating safeguards into measurable elements is not new, three recurrent challenges emerge:

- i. **Proliferation of indicators:** in some cases, well-intentioned multi-stakeholder processes have produced an excessively large number of indicators. While comprehensive, such lists can be impractical, requiring more human resources than available and potentially diluting the clarity of communication to the public.
- ii. **Process versus outcome indicators:** Influenced in part by jurisdictional standards such as TREES and JNR, some SIS now combine process and outcome indicators to track safeguards performance. Outcome indicators may offer a more objective measure of how safeguards are respected, but complex social dimensions cannot always be reduced to percentages or numbers. Process indicators, by contrast, are easier to track but may reinforce a focus on “addressing” safeguards rather than “respecting” them - potentially weakening SIS transparency and the broader REDD+ strategy. Striking a balance between the two types is challenging but essential for credible safeguards reporting.
- iii. **Alignment with international results-based finance requirements:** Mechanisms for REDD+ financing - such as the LEAF Coalition or bilateral agreements between countries (e.g., the Peru–Norway–Germany–UK Joint Declaration of Intent) - require participating jurisdictions to generate and verify results under ART, using the TREES standard.

Programmes like TREES establish a set of safeguards indicators to be monitored and reported, along with specific requirements related to emission reductions, carbon rights, benefit-sharing, and other safeguards-related aspects. All these elements are designed to be validated and verified through a rigorous third-party process to ensure overall environmental and social integrity.

Adjusting monitoring and reporting processes to meet these requirements can be resource-intensive and increase the workload of safeguards teams. It may also require updating and strengthening existing safeguards systems, as well as assessing and addressing the associated costs.

See Case Study 6 for an illustration of how safeguards indicators are being developed and applied in practice.



Case study 6

Brazil's experience in developing safeguards indicators within its SIS

The development of [Brazil's National SISREDD+](#) is being coordinated by the National REDD+ Commission (CONAREDD+), which is a cross-government body (led by the Ministry for Environment and Climate Change) responsible for coordinating, articulating, and monitoring the implementation of [Brazil's National REDD+ Strategy](#), fostering dialogue across government, civil society, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The Brazilian SISREDD+ being developed aims to create a robust, participatory framework for tracking how the Cancun safeguards are addressed in REDD+ nationally. After defining 19 priority indicators for the 2021 pilot phase ([resolution 04/2021](#)), Brazil's National REDD+ Commission expanded and refined the pool of indicators through stakeholder workshops that transformed 236 received proposal into 48 indicators, by 2025. These 48 indicators, selected for technical viability, multi-safeguard relevance, SISREDD+ coherence, and data availability, are organized across the seven Cancun safeguards and will be embedded in a digital monitoring tool (not yet operational) to support Brazil's periodic Sol to be submitted to UNFCCC. Moreover, when it comes to subnational reporting into the national indicators, states operating JREDD+ programmes are required to submit every two years a safeguards summary in line with CONAREDD+ indicators to the Brazilian Ministry for Environment and Climate Change.

- **Information generated on the ground:** how to collect and manage safeguards information from the field in a way that is robust yet cost-effective remains a common challenge. Issues often include limited capacity of local actors, lack of standardized tools, weak data flows to national systems, and the need to respect traditional knowledge. Ensuring data quality and consistency while promoting inclusive participation continues to be a key institutional and technical hurdle. This challenge is directly linked to the trend towards using safeguards indicators and should be strategically connected to the effective implementation of the corresponding benefit-sharing system, as well as to specific tools for E&S risks management (see sections on [benefit-sharing](#) and on [E&S risk management](#), below).
- **Long-term sustainability of SIS:** a recurrent challenge is ensuring that SIS remain functional, updated, and institutionally owned beyond the lifespan of specific REDD+ programmes or projects. This involves both

securing financial sustainability and fostering long-term ownership by national and subnational safeguards teams.

From an institutional perspective, frequent staff turnover - within SIS teams as well as in other government units that serve as data providers - can disrupt system continuity. Developing operational manuals and clear handover protocols has proven to be a cost-effective way to mitigate institutional memory loss, particularly where responsibilities are distributed across multiple agencies. Simple, low-cost tools such as recorded video guides have also been used effectively in this regard.

Financially, it is important to anticipate and plan for the full operational costs of the safeguards system - well beyond the project cycle that initially funds it. This includes not only SIS reporting but also the implementation of safeguards on the ground, the functioning of benefit-sharing mechanisms, and the operation of GRMs. Each of these elements requires dedicated

technical, human, and financial resources, which are often underestimated during early planning. Some jurisdictions reserve a set percentage of RBF income specifically for safeguards and E&S risks management.

Integrating SIS requirements into national budgets and broader policy frameworks can help secure long-term sustainability. Aligning SIS reporting with domestic E&S policy priorities may also strengthen political

support. In practice, jurisdictions with well-established safeguards systems are often better positioned to access new RBF opportunities and face lower transaction costs, as they do not need to design and implement safeguards systems from scratch for each new programme or project.

Some lessons learned on SIS into practice are summarised in Box 7.



Box 7

Lessons learned on SIS design and operation

- Most SIS developed during the REDD+ Readiness phase have required revision when transitioning to implementation - particularly under results-based finance, ART-TREES, or other long-term REDD+ initiatives. Adjustments often focus on better demonstrating how safeguards are being respected in practice.
- A review of existing SIS platforms shows that many systems - especially those recently updated - are still in the process of launching their websites, or only provide partial content online.
- A recurring technical challenge lies in designing or adapting databases and online platforms to manage and disseminate safeguards information. These tools must be aligned with both the type of data available and the institutional capacities in place.
- Digitalization brings clear opportunities for automation and operational efficiency. However, a phased approach is recommended, with careful planning of long-term costs to avoid systems becoming inactive once project-based funding ends.
- Defining the core components and functions of a functional SIS - and estimating their economic and technical costs realistically - can help identify funding needs and support the integration of safeguards and risk management costs into REDD+ programme budgets.
- SIS sustainability is often constrained by limited inter-institutional coordination, capacity gaps, and staff turnover. Developing clear operational manuals and handover protocols can help preserve institutional memory and ensure continuity over time.

9. Safeguards Summary of Information



LEARNING TOOL

Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) to download the practical guide to better identify key considerations to outline a Sol.



Summaries of Information (Sol), are one of the three [UNFCCC safeguards requirements for REDD+](#) agreed at the Cancun Agreements. Sol are essentially summaries of information on how all the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ actions,⁵ within the context of a National REDD+ Strategy or Action Plans (NS/AP).

5 UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 3; Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 4; Decision 12/CP.19, paragraphs 1-5; Decision 17/CP.21, paragraphs 4-7

Summaries should be provided periodically: initially, upon commencing the implementation of REDD+ activities and; subsequently, at least every four years throughout the implementation of REDD+, “consistent with the provisions for submissions of national communications” (Decision 12/CP.19). Additionally, countries are encouraged to improve the information contained in their summaries over time using a stepwise approach.

Sol can be submitted to the UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform at any time, with no further procedure than the login information assigned to country’s focal points. Consult the Sol submitted by countries at the [UN-REDD REDD+ Web Platform](#).

According to the UNFCCC guidance (Decision 12/CP.17) provided on the content of Sol, they should include information on the following:

1. REDD+ activity or activities included;
2. National circumstances relevant to addressing and respecting the safeguards;
3. A description of each Cancun safeguard in accordance with national circumstances;
4. Existing systems and processes;
5. How each safeguard has been addressed and respected;
6. Other relevant information.

Elements of country approaches to safeguards CAS, including for example a country-specific clarification of the Cancun Safeguards, PLR assessment and SIS, can complement the UNFCCC guidance and help countries meet requirements for the Sol. Similarly to a SIS, a summary of information might take the form of a simple narrative summary, of information summarized according to indicators, or of a detailed Principles, Criteria, and Indicators (PCI) framework, or any combination of these structures (UN-REDD, 2018).

Initial Sols submitted around 2018 were often limited in depth, with vague language, minimal use of indicators, and little evidence of how safeguards were being respected in practice - especially at the subnational level (UN-REDD, 2020). Nonetheless, they typically presented thorough legal analyses and reflected countries’ commitment to progressively improve their safeguards monitoring and reporting systems. Over time, Sol development has supported national dialogue, clarified institutional roles, and fostered cross-sectoral coordination. Participatory processes in drafting Sols have also enhanced trust and legitimacy among IP and ILC.

More recently, Sols have taken on a broader function. In addition to meeting UNFCCC requirements, they are now a prerequisite for accessing results-based finance from schemes such as the GCF and ART (with its TREES standard). Some countries are also using Sols to meet reporting obligations under specific donor agreements or REDD+ programmes, such as [Colombia](#).⁶

- [Epple, C., Hicks, C., Suárez, V., Swan, S., & Walcott, J. \(2020\). Summaries of information: Initial experiences and recommendations on international REDD+ safeguards reporting \(Info Brief\). UN-REDD Programme.](#)
- [UN-REDD. \(2018\). Safeguards Learning Journal](#) (section on Summaries of safeguards Information, p. 20)
- [UN-REDD. \(2015\). Summaries of Safeguard Information: Internal Information Note—Relating Draft UNFCCC Guidance to Country Approaches to Safeguards. UN-REDD Programme.](#)



**SUGGESTED
READINGS
AND
RESOURCES
FOR INITIAL
SOIS**

6 Colombia reports to its REM projects via Sol, which explains why the country has already submitted its sixth Sol to the UNFCCC. The REM Programme—supported by the German and Norwegian governments—provides results-based payments for verified emission reductions and requires participating jurisdictions to report on how safeguards are being addressed and respected.

Evolving practices in Sol: Insights for countries in advanced REDD+ implementation stages

As countries progress in REDD+ implementation, their Sol are also evolving - shifting from compliance-driven reports to strategic instruments that enhance transparency, support monitoring, and engage national and international stakeholders. Based on lessons emerging from technical reviews and country experiences, the following practices may be considered to strengthen Sol over time:

- **Sol can evolve from compliance documents** into strategic tools that reinforce REDD+ transparency, communication, and credibility - both domestically and internationally.
- While meeting reporting obligations, Sol also serve as communication tools. A **reader-friendly length, clear narrative, and engaging content** - avoiding overly legalistic or highly technical language - can broaden their reach.
- **Referencing previous Sol can help reduce repetition.** For example, unchanged legal frameworks may be briefly summarized or cited, focusing instead on updates, new instruments, or institutional improvements.
- Successive Sol can build upon previous versions by highlighting how **safeguards are being respected in practice during the reporting period**, outlining concrete outcomes, gaps addressed, and lessons learned over time.
- Clearly **distinguishing between structural elements** (e.g. legal, policy, institutional frameworks) **and procedural aspects** (e.g. FPIC, grievance mechanisms, gender actions) helps organize information logically - especially when using indicators.
- Combining **qualitative narrative with verifiable indicators**, summary tables, or structured annexes can improve clarity and facilitate cross-comparability between reporting cycles.
- Including **visual elements** such as maps, charts, and flow diagrams, and using simplified, inclusive language, can make Sols more accessible to diverse audiences, including non-experts.
- **Aligning Sol with national SIS structures**, indicator frameworks, and safeguards-related tools (e.g. FPIC protocols, grievance mechanisms, gender action plans) increases their technical utility and credibility.
- Integration of **information from various REDD+ initiatives** - whether national, subnational, donor-funded, or market-based - can enhance coherence and reduce fragmentation, though this requires early planning and inter-institutional coordination.
- Focusing on the **reporting period's relevant developments** - while referencing earlier Sols for context - helps keep documents concise and targeted.
- Stating **next steps and follow-up actions** in each Sol, and reporting progress against those in subsequent submissions, demonstrates adaptive learning and strengthens institutional memory.
- Maintaining **consistent terminology** and structure across Sol, particularly when aligning with multiple frameworks (e.g. UNFCCC, World Bank, GCF, ART-TREES), reduces duplication and facilitates comparison.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information for drafting Sol in **advanced REDD+ implementation stages**, please read: [UN-REDD. \(2024\). Safeguards Summaries of Information: challenges and recommendations for LAC \(4th Session of the Working Group on Safeguards and Integrity for UN-REDD Programme in LAC\)](#)

10. Stakeholder engagement, gender and social inclusion in REDD+ safeguards

In the context of REDD+, **stakeholders**⁷ are individuals or groups with a stake, interest or right in the forest land that could be negatively or positively affected by REDD+ activities. Effective stakeholder engagement is fundamental to the legitimacy, equity, and sustainability of REDD+ implementation. It ensures that the voices, rights, and needs of all actors - particularly Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and other groups in vulnerable situations - are recognized and incorporated into REDD+ decision-making.

Considering the above, under the UNFCCC, multi-stakeholder participation is required across the four REDD+ elements or “pillars”:

- **National Strategies or Action Plans (NS/AP):** require full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in identifying deforestation drivers, tenure issues, and governance challenges.
- **Forest Reference Emission Levels (FREL/FRL)**
- **Monitoring and Reporting Systems (MRS):** benefit from the inclusion of traditional and

community-based monitoring knowledge, and

- **Safeguard Information Systems (SIS):** SIS must also provide transparent and consistent information accessible to all relevant stakeholders (Decision 12/CP.17).

In this sense, the Cancun Safeguards embed stakeholder engagement across their framework, with a dedicated safeguard (d) on the “full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular Indigenous Peoples and local communities”, and as a cross-cutting topic in other provisions, such as:

- Safeguard (b): Recognizes the importance of “transparent and effective national forest governance structures”.
- Safeguard (c): Calls for respect for the knowledge and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, taking into account relevant international obligations - directly linked to engagement processes.
- Safeguard (e): Promotes the enhancement of “other social ... benefits”, what could involve stakeholder engagement via strengthened social governance structures and processes, gender and social inclusion-related aspects, among others.

⁷ Some examples of stakeholder groups may include government agencies; private sector entities; civil society organizations (CSOs); IPs; local communities or forest-dependent communities; smallholders (UN-REDD, 2018). While this list is illustrative, defining stakeholder groups is a sensitive and context-specific task, influenced by geographic, social, and even temporal factors. This technical exercise must be complemented by inclusive participatory processes to capture local dynamics and perspectives. Stakeholder identification is generally undertaken in the early design stages of REDD+ actions and in the assessment of associated E&S risks.

10.1 Degrees of participation in different REDD+ safeguards frameworks

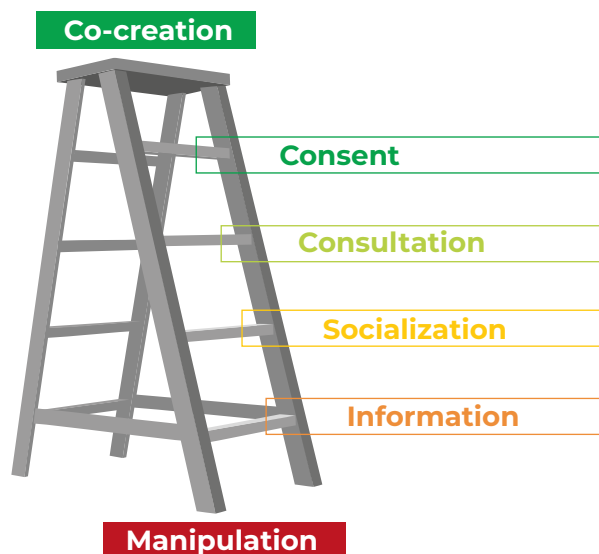
The terms *participation*, *consultation*, *socialization*, and *co-creation* carry different meanings depending on the framework applied - whether a national safeguards framework, an international standard, or broader legal and policy instruments. In practice, they represent a continuum of engagement, ranging from passive information sharing to active and empowered decision-making. A classic reference is Arnstein's (1969) "ladder of participation," which illustrates this progression from tokenism to genuine stakeholder empowerment (see Figure 10).

For REDD+ safeguards teams, this diversity of meanings is particularly relevant, as different international and domestic regulations - as well as various safeguards frameworks - may require distinct forms of engagement at different stages. For example, participation might be appropriate when defining the SIS, while consultation could be required for establishing a Benefit Sharing System (BSS). This variability can pose operational challenges in determining the appropriate level and type of engagement for each activity.

Following Cancun Safeguard D, stakeholder engagement in REDD+ should go beyond one-time consultations to become a sustained, two-way process of dialogue, collaboration, and capacity building. In practice, this may include:

- Developing broad-scope **GRM** that serve not only for grievance resolution but also as entry points for information and participation (see [section on GRMs](#), below);
- Integrating participatory processes into **E&S risks management tools**, as participation helps identify community perceptions of risk, interests, aspirations, and traditional knowledge - key to designing effective ESMFs and mitigation measures (see [section on E&S risks management](#)) (see [section E&S risks management](#), below)
- Ensuring inclusive and meaningful participation in the design and implementation of **BSS**, since these systems can only be equitable, effective, and efficient if stakeholders are involved in identifying benefits, defining eligibility, and co-developing transparent operational mechanisms (see [section Safeguards in BSS](#), below).

Figure 10: Degrees of participation in REDD+, adapted from Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Participation."



Inspired on Shery R. Arnstein, 1969



SUGGESTED READINGS AND RESOURCES ON GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Engaging stakeholders - and facilitation of their informed participation in REDD+ processes – is essential for REDD+ implementation in general. The success of a CAS and of REDD+ activities will, to a large extent, depend on stakeholder engagement and ownership across a wide range of constituencies, particularly national and subnational government, private sector, civil society, and women, men and youth of IP and LC. Consulting with a diverse range of stakeholders in this process, ensuring all relevant groups are represented and free to express their ideas and opinions, can also contribute to respecting Cancun safeguards (d) (UN-REDD, 2018).

Furthermore, a **social inclusion and gender-responsive approach**⁸ in the involvement of stakeholders at different stages of REDD+, such as during the review of technical assessments, presents opportunities for ongoing improvement.

The Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) criteria according to different safeguards framework relevant for REDD+

While “there is no universally accepted definition of free, prior and informed consent” (GCF, Indigenous People Policy, p. 14), FPIC is generally understood as the collective right (also referred as a “principle”) of Indigenous Peoples (under certain legal and/or safeguards frameworks local communities, as well) to give or withhold their consent for actions that may affect them - particularly in relation to their lands, territories, cultures, and natural resources. It is a core element of the right to self-determination and a safeguard to protect other essential rights that sustain their ways of life.

In the context of REDD+, FPIC ensures that Indigenous Peoples and local communities have the right to approve or reject proposed REDD+

- UNDP. (2024). [Gender, Front & Centre: Best Practices from the Governors’ Climate & Forests Task Force](#)”.
- UNDP. (2022). [The End of Business-as-Usual: Mainstreaming Gender in Jurisdictional REDD+ Approaches](#)
- World Bank. (2021). [Gender Equity in Land and Forest Tenure in REDD+ Programming: Synthesis Report](#).
- UN-REDD Programme. (2021). [Gender And REDD+: Promoting Transformational Change and Innovation In REDD+ Action](#)
- Thuy, P. T. et al. (2021). [Mainstreaming gender in REDD+ policies and projects in 17 countries](#). *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 23(6), 701–715.
- [UN-REDD \(2021\) Gender Info Brief](#).

project, policy, measure, or action that may affect their rights, territories, or resources - before any action is taken (FCPF & UN-REDD, 2015).

When is FPIC required in REDD+ might depend mostly on the confluence of three main factors:

- I) **The potential impact of the REDD+ policies, action or plans on IPs’ rights and livelihoods.**
- II) **The applicable law:** National or subnational legislation may establish specific FPIC requirements. In some countries, these are grounded in international instruments, such as the *ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*⁹ (adopted in 1989, in force since 1991); *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007); and other regional instruments, such as the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and others.
- III) **The relevant safeguards framework:** Beyond domestic and international law, it

8 **Gender** refers to the socially constructed behaviours, expectations, cultural attributes, and norms associated with women, men, boys, girls, and gender-diverse people. **Social inclusion** refers to the process of removing institutional barriers and improving incentives to increase access to development opportunities for a range of individuals and groups; it is essentially making the “rules of the game” fairer (Pascual & Biswas, 2025).

9 The ILO Convention 1969 is especially relevant in LAC r, since from 24 ratification, 15 are from this region



Key takeaways

- The transition **from REDD+ readiness to implementation** brings new challenges, including increased complexity, institutional coordination needs, and the burden of complying with multiple safeguards requirements - particularly when countries engage with diverse donors and carbon market standards.
- **CAS** offer a nationally driven pathway to operationalize the Cancun Safeguards. By linking international requirements with domestic legal and institutional frameworks, CAS enhance coherence, national ownership, and long-term sustainability of safeguards systems.
- **SIS** are central to safeguards architecture under the UNFCCC. Beyond their role in enabling transparency and reporting, well-functioning SIS can support cross-sectoral coordination, inform policy decisions, and facilitate access to results-based finance.
- **SoI**, as the primary reporting channel to the UNFCCC, are evolving in content and format. When grounded in robust institutional processes and participatory inputs, they can serve as credible instruments to demonstrate how safeguards are being addressed and respected in practice.
- **Stakeholder engagement** - including gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches - is not only a normative commitment but also a practical enabler of effective safeguards implementation. Meaningful participation and respect for FPIC related requirements might change, according to the legal context and the safeguards framework applied.

Module 4



How do we integrate safeguards into other aspects of REDD+

(“advanced level”)



This module

Explores advanced dimensions of safeguards systems design and implementation in REDD+ beyond the foundational requirements of the UNFCCC. It focuses on elements that are becoming increasingly relevant in countries and jurisdictions with more consolidated REDD+ programmes under implementation.



The module will help you to...

- Discover how Integrated Safeguards Systems (ISS) can align multiple frameworks and tools - bringing together SIS, E&S risks management, benefit-sharing, and grievance mechanisms - to support safeguards implementation across REDD+ scales and funding streams.
- Understand how Cross-cutting Safeguards Frameworks (CSF) can help countries integrate different safeguards requirements into a single, coherent system that reduces duplication and increases efficiency.
- Explore how E&S risks management tools - from frameworks to site-specific plans - support countries in anticipating, preventing, and addressing potential impacts of REDD+ activities.
- Learn how safeguards principles should be embedded in benefit-sharing systems (BSS) design processes to ensure equity, transparency, and legitimacy in the distribution of REDD+ benefits.
- Gain insights into the design and operation of Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) as tools for resolving conflicts, promoting accountability, and fostering stakeholder trust.
- Examine the role and trend of Non-Carbon Benefits (NCB) in REDD+ implementation, how they are measured and reported through safeguards systems, and their strategic importance for accessing forest finance.
- Discover the particular challenges of applying safeguards in nested REDD+ approaches, where activities at national, subnational, and project levels must align under diverse funding and reporting frameworks.

11. Integrated Safeguards Systems

In contexts where countries or jurisdictions engage with multiple REDD+ approaches and/or operate at different scales (projects, programmes, subnational, national), it may be advisable to explore how safeguards approaches and tools can be aligned through an **Integrated Safeguards System**. This advanced stage of implementation of Country Approach to Safeguards (CAS), aims to create a more comprehensive system for E&S risks and NCB management, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and potentially, benefit-sharing systems (BSS). In doing so, it can support more consistent safeguards implementation across various REDD+ funding streams and scales of action.

From a practical perspective, an **Integrated Safeguards System** may comprise several key components. While there is no single model for these systems and there are no explicit UNFCCC orientations on this regard, in practice they may include different safeguards tools or components (see Figure 11), such as:

- **Safeguards Information System (SIS):** collects and reports information on how

safeguards are being addressed and respected, according to UNFCCC orientations (as introduced in section the [section on SIS](#), above).

- **Benefit-sharing systems (BSS):** establish transparent and equitable mechanisms and arrangements for distributing benefits and incentives resulting from REDD+ activities among stakeholders.
- **Grievances redress mechanism (GRM):** designed to receive, channel and respond to stakeholder requests or grievances regarding REDD+ projects or programmes.
- **Environmental and Social (E&S) risks management tools:** help identify, assess, and mitigate potential environmental and social risks during REDD+ implementation. These could include tools like:
 - > Gender Action Plans
 - > Indigenous Peoples Plan
 - > Stakeholder consultation plans
 - > FPIC protocols
 - > Others

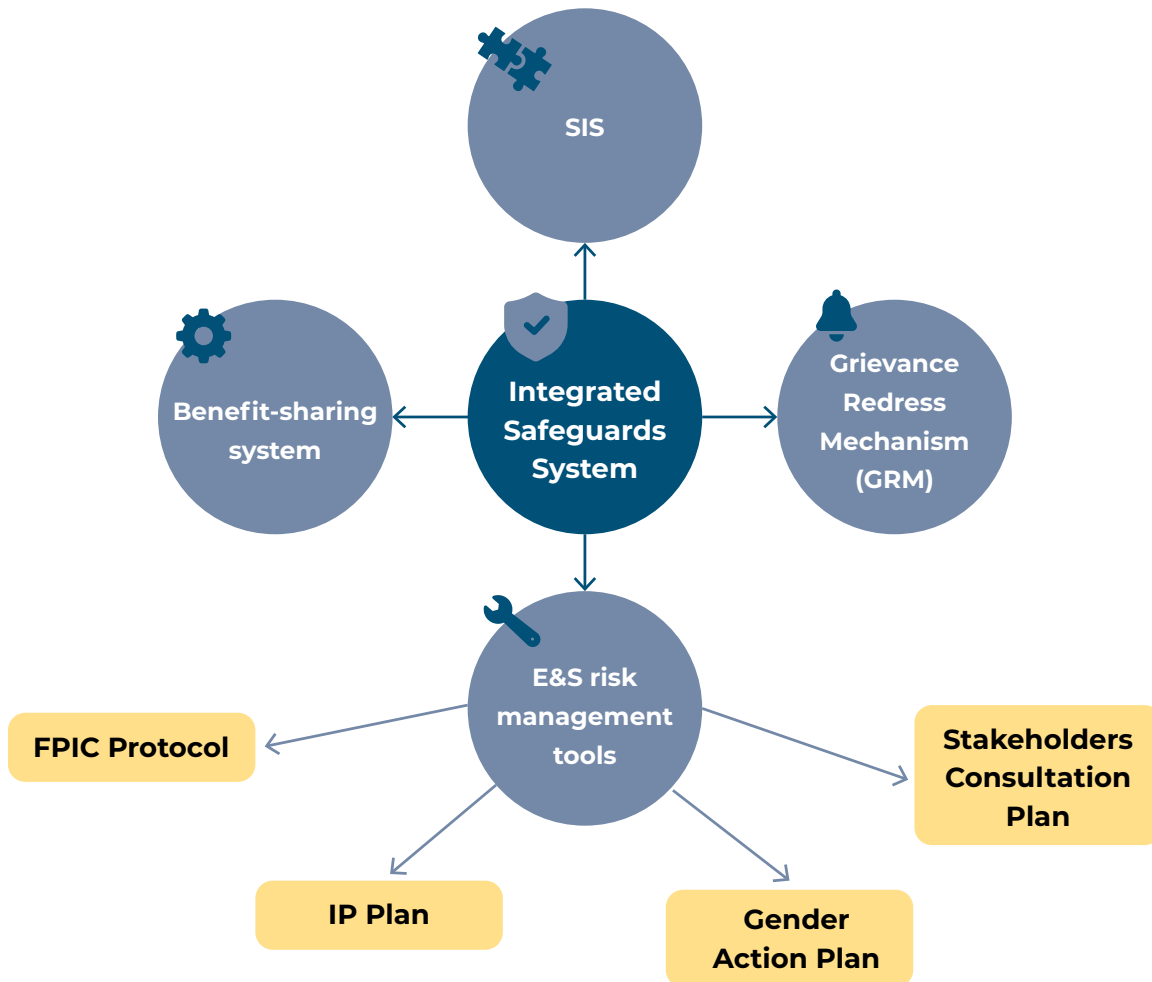


LEARNING TOOL

Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) to explore the interactive presentation to better explain what are integrated safeguards systems and why they matter.



Figure 11: Key components of an Integrated Safeguards System, illustrating its links with SIS, GRM, benefit-sharing, and environmental and social risk management tools, including FPIC protocols, stakeholder engagement frameworks, and gender action plans.



Source: own elaboration.

Additionally, an Integrated Safeguards System is generally supported by a legal and institutional framework that embodies the country's "safeguards approach", as referenced in the Cancun Agreement. This framework defines the responsibilities of different actors regarding the respect and implementation of safeguards (including rights and obligations), establishes coordination mechanisms and institutional arrangements, and provides the legal foundation for effective safeguards implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

However, not all countries or jurisdictions have each component of their Integrated Safeguards System formally regulated through legal instruments. Nonetheless, recent trends indicate a gradual movement toward stronger legal codification of safeguards-related processes. This evolution establishes clearer obligations and binding procedures, which in many contexts can enhance accountability, consistency, and the overall effectiveness of safeguards implementation.

Case study 7



Complementary Instruments of the Environmental and Social Management Framework in Chile's ENCCRV

Within the framework of the National Strategy on Climate Change and Vegetation Resources (ENCCRV), Chile has recognized that the mere existence of national legislation and its regulations is not sufficient to guarantee a robust socio-environmental management system consistent with international commitments and local needs. For this reason, **complementary normative instruments** have been developed under the **Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)**, conceived as strategic tools to strengthen risk prevention, mitigate socio-environmental impacts, and promote benefits associated with emission reduction activities and programmes.

These instruments are developed in strict compliance with Chile's current legal and regulatory framework, reinforcing the institutional capacities of the National Forestry Corporation (CONAF) and responding to the specific requirements defined by the different schemes and funding sources of programmes implemented under the ENCCRV. In addition, they are **organized and structured hierarchically** in order to facilitate their understanding and operational application. An example of these instruments includes the specific plans designed to address key safeguards within ENCCRV programmes, such as the **Gender Action Plan (GAP)** and the **Indigenous Peoples' Action Plan**. Likewise, guidelines, manuals, forms, and operational guides are included, providing clear directives for the standardized application of safeguards at all levels of management.

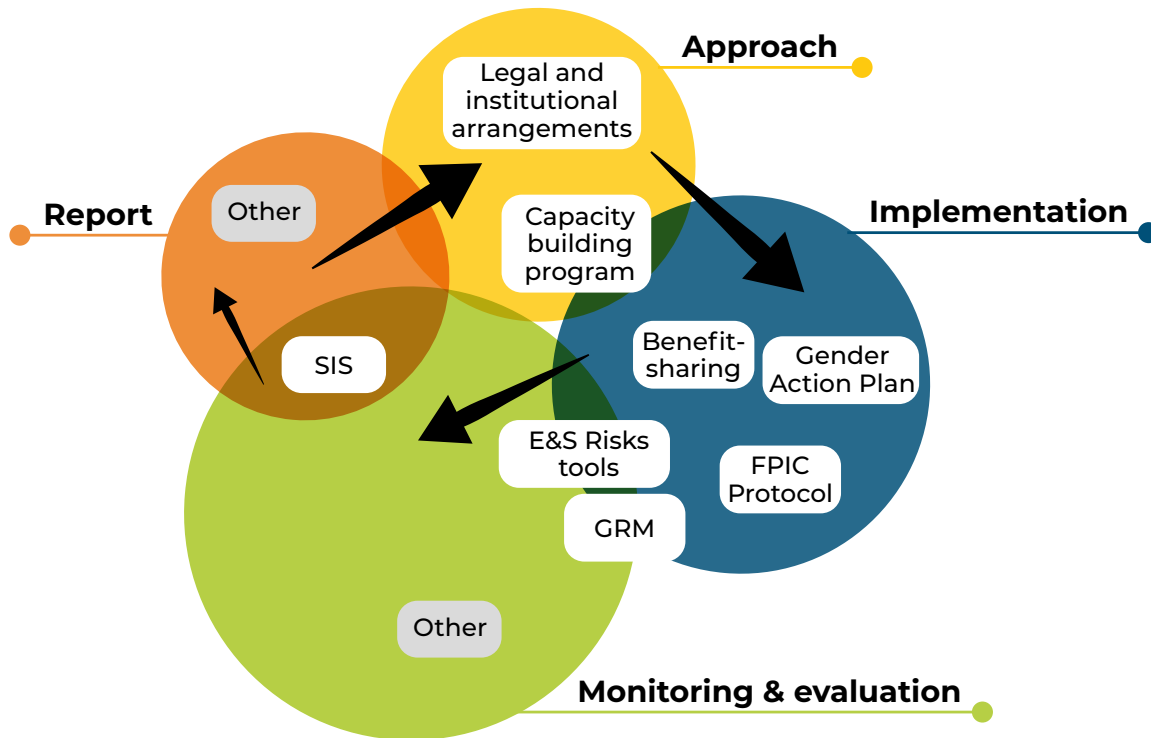
In summary, this articulated set of instruments constitutes a **regulatory and operational framework** that enables the ENCCRV to comply with national and international standards, strengthen public institutions, and ensure a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable implementation of its actions.

The specific configuration of such safeguards systems will vary depending on each CAS, as well as contextual factors such as existing programmes or projects, available resources, and institutional arrangements. This is because, an Integrated Safeguards System refers to a flexible and evolving architecture intended to support the effective application of safeguards throughout the different phases of REDD+ implementation (see the "Safeguards Cycle" in Figure 12). Its aim is to provide a coherent and context-responsive mechanism for meeting the diverse safeguards requirements arising from national policies and regulations, donor

expectations, and the specific financing pathways adopted for REDD+ - including RBP and carbon market certification schemes.

This approach is typically anchored in a national or jurisdictional vision of safeguards and related policies, laws and regulations (PLR), as articulated in the respective CAS. It seeks to reduce transaction costs, improve system efficiency, and optimize the use of safeguards structures - legal, institutional, and procedural - that have already been developed, implemented, and internalized.

Figure 12: Safeguards Cycle. The REDD+ Safeguards Cycle, illustrating the interconnected phases of approach, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting, with continuous improvement. Key elements include legal arrangements, SIS, E&S risks tools, GRM, benefit-sharing, FPIC protocols, and gender action plans.



Source: own elaboration.

The “Safeguards Cycle” illustrates the four core functions that an Integrated Safeguards System may be expected to fulfil during advanced stages of REDD+ implementation:

- Approach/interpretation;
- Implementation;
- Monitoring & evaluation;
- Report.

Experiences across regions show that each country or jurisdiction tends to shape its safeguards system according to its own context, priorities, and institutional maturity, but in general, the safeguards systems cover the core functions outlined above. In some cases, the SIS

itself is designed to address all four functions - beyond its original role as an information system under the UNFCCC. In others, tools such as Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMFs) are integrated with benefit-sharing mechanisms and emphasize safeguards monitoring. Ultimately, the concept of an Integrated Safeguards System remains flexible by design and can be adapted to meet the operational and governance realities of each REDD+ jurisdiction.

Additionally, such systems may be established either at the national level or by subnational governments. In the latter case, it may be advisable for national authorities to define clear requirements that facilitate a coherent and fluid dialogue between levels of governance. This

aspect is further explored in Section [Safeguards Systems in Nested REDD+ Approaches](#), below.

Experience across regions suggests that countries with access to additional and medium- to long-term financing for their REDD+ NS/AP tend to show more mature Integrated Safeguards Systems. In some cases, this has translated into the development of digital platforms for benefit distribution, systems to

monitor and report on NCBs, national safeguards frameworks, and other innovations. This trend is particularly visible in countries implementing GCF RBP projects and/or jurisdictional REDD+ programmes.

Ultimately, the concept of an Integrated Safeguards System remains flexible by design and can be adapted to meet the operational and governance realities of each REDD+ jurisdiction.



Case study 8

Ghana's Safeguards System into operation

Ghana has emerged as a regional frontrunner in REDD+ safeguards, becoming one of the first countries to operationalize a publicly accessible SIS (www.reddsis.fcghana.org) that reports on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation. Its SIS enables compliance monitoring not only with the UNFCCC safeguards, but also with those of the World Bank, the GCF, and other donors - covering elements such as the Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM), benefit-sharing arrangements, and co-benefits (Forestry Commission of Ghana, n.d.).

The system uses a structured approach based on principles, criteria, and indicators for each of the seven Cancun safeguards. The official SIS webpage also integrates additional criteria and indicators required by the World Bank and GCF. The SIS is embedded within Ghana's national REDD+ strategy and the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP), supported by a comprehensive Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) developed under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). The ESMF defines institutional roles, reporting mechanisms, and risk management protocols. Complementing this, a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) was undertaken, involving over 300 stakeholders and a legal gap analysis comparing national frameworks with Cancun safeguard requirements (Ghana SIS, 2017).

Ghana's online SIS platform presents indicators to track safeguard implementation and compliance. A network of Safeguards Focal Person (SFP), drawn from forestry and protected area staff across regions and districts, lead monitoring, verification, and reporting. These SFP also spearhead capacity-building at the landscape level, engaging local authorities, traditional leaders, NGO, and private sector actors.

The reporting process begins with data collection and validation by SFP and regional safeguards teams. This information is then transmitted to the Programme Management Unit (PMU), which reviews and forwards it to the National Safeguards Specialist for final validation before submission to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the World Bank, and public dissemination via the SIS.

The following sections present some of the key components of an Integrated Safeguards System, as introduced in figure 12. (Key components of an Integrated Safeguards System) above. These include:

- [Cross-cutting Safeguards Frameworks](#)
- [Environmental and Social \(E&S\) Risk Management](#)
- [Safeguards in Benefit-Sharing arrangements](#)
- [Grievance Redress Mechanisms \(GRMs\)](#).

11.1 Cross-cutting Safeguards Frameworks

Given the complexity of responding to multiple safeguards frameworks, aiming to access diverse sources of REDD+ finance, one possible strategy is the development of a *Cross-cutting Safeguards Framework*. Rather than constituting a standalone standard, this type of framework functions as a coordinated structure that connects safeguards principles, instruments, and procedures within a unified national or subnational approach. Its purpose is to reduce redundancies, enhance institutional efficiency, and promote consistency in the application, monitoring, and reporting of safeguards across different REDD+ programmes and funding modalities (UN-REDD, 2024e)

By embedding safeguards into a national or subnational framework, a cross-cutting safeguards framework could enable countries to respond more effectively to diverse funding sources expectations, including to report on the Cancun Safeguards “respect”, while promoting greater transparency, accountability, and policy coherence. Furthermore, they favour long-term institutionalization of safeguards beyond

individual projects, reinforcing REDD+ as a mechanism aligned with broader sustainable development objectives (UN-REDD, 2020; 2024e). As a result, the general safeguards “address” (including the UNFCCC’s) should be strengthened due to the institutionalization and national appropriation.

This type of framework does not originate from any UNFCCC requirement or recommendation. Rather, it represents a voluntary option that some jurisdictions have explored - as part of their country approach to safeguards - to address the complexity of multiple safeguards frameworks required by diverse REDD+ financing pathways. While the design and application of cross-cutting safeguards framework vary across contexts, several practical experiences have emerged at the national and project level (Table 5):

- **Argentina:** The GCF RBP project adopted a cross-cutting safeguards framework composed of five safeguards, structured to enable integrated compliance with FAO, GCF, and Cancun safeguards frameworks (See [brochure](#) in Spanish).
- **Paraguay:** Developed a nine-safeguard “Integrated Safeguards Framework” to align GCF, national, and UNFCCC safeguards requirements. This approach is outlined in Case Study 4 of Module 3.
- **Chile:** Defined 12 cross-cutting safeguards within the Environmental and Social Management Framework (MGAS) of its national REDD+ strategy (ENCCRV). These safeguards inform both internal management indicators and public indicators available through the national SIS platform (<https://plataforma.enccrv.cl/sis>), supporting the GCF RBP project and broader safeguards reporting.

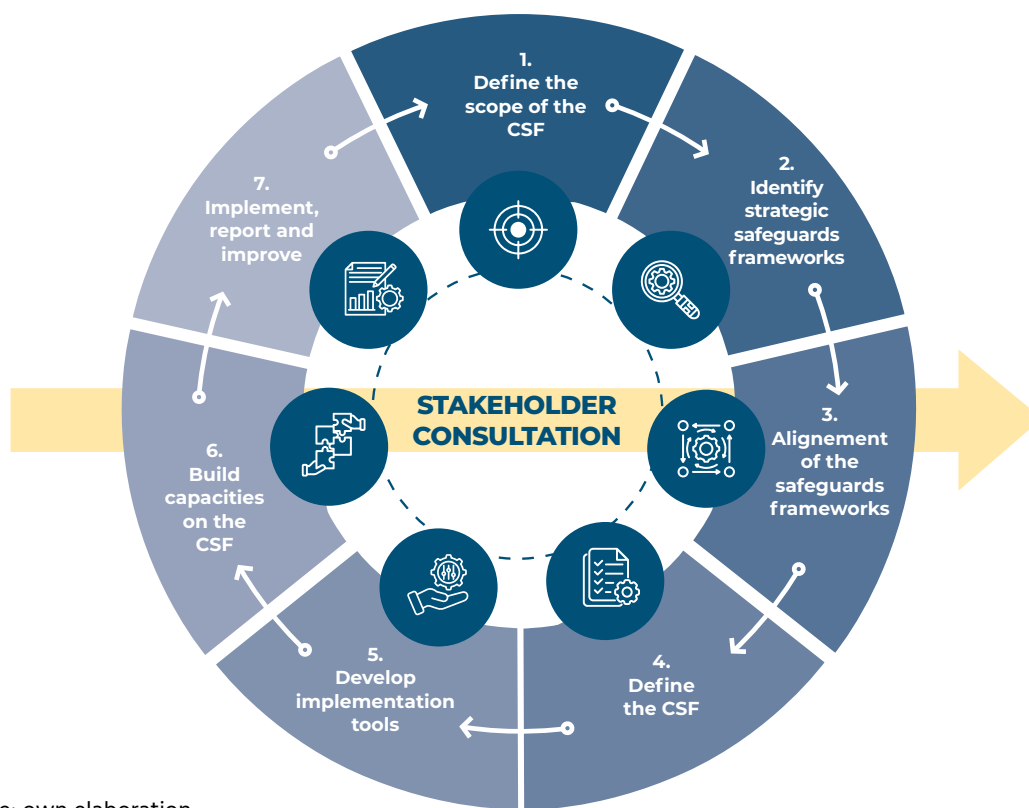
Table 5. Examples of cross-cutting safeguards framework (CSFs).

 Argentina	 Paraguay	 Chile
S1: Participation, transparency, and access to information	S1. Participation and access to information	SG1. Complementarity
S2: Decent work	S2. Decent employment and labor rights	SG2. Governance and Transparency
S3: Gender equality	S3. Sustainability in the use of natural resources and in the results obtained	SG3. Consultation and Participation
S4: Biodiversity, natural habitats, and ecosystem services	S4. Health, safety, and climate change adaptation	SG4. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
S5: Rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and cultural heritage	S5. Land tenure and resettlement	SG5. Gender Equity
	S6. Biodiversity, ecosystem services, and Protected Areas	SG6. Cultural Heritage
	S7. Indigenous Peoples and cultural heritage	SG7. Risk and Impact Assessment
	S8. Equality and inclusion approach	SG8. Conservation of Natural Habitats and Biodiversity
		SG9. Sustainable Management of Vegetation Formations and Natural Resources
		SG10. Pollution Prevention and Integrated Pest Management
		SG11. Involuntary Resettlement
		SG12. Health, Safety, and Decent Rural Work

Developing a cross-cutting safeguards framework may involve the steps described in the next page (see Figure 13), outline a

generalizable roadmap that can be adapted by any country interested in designing its own integrated safeguards system.

Figure 13: Key steps for developing a cross-cutting Safeguards Framework.



Source: own elaboration.

Step 1: Identify safeguards and reporting needs – Define the CSF’s scope (geographic and sectoral) and clarify if it will be voluntary or mandatory for REDD+ safeguards reporting.

Step 2: Identify strategic safeguards frameworks – Select which safeguards frameworks to align (e.g., Cancun, GCF, World Bank) based on relevance, use, and legal grounding.

Step 3: Assess alignment across frameworks – Map common safeguard themes, identify overlaps and gaps, and determine the thematic structure of the CSF.

Step 4: Define the Cross-cutting Safeguards Framework – Structure the CSF into thematic safeguards tailored to national needs, drawing from aligned frameworks and country examples.

Step 5: Develop implementation tools – Create practical tools like guidance documents, risk screening forms, exclusion lists, and templates to operationalize the CSF.

Step 6: Build institutional and stakeholder capacity – Strengthen technical capacities for safeguards management among institutions, partners, and stakeholders to ensure effective application.

Step 7: Implement, report, and improve – Apply and monitor the CSF in practice, enabling iterative improvements through feedback, adaptive learning, and stakeholder engagement.

Nevertheless these steps suggested, it is worth highlighting that the approach to creating cross-cutting safeguards framework may vary depending on several factors, including the status and type of REDD+ activities, the scale at which they are being implemented, the legal framework, and budgetary and capacity considerations, among other factors.



Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) to download the practical guide to better explain how to combine and standardize different safeguards frameworks.



**LEARNING
TOOL**

11.2 Environmental and social (E&S) risk management

E&S **risk management** is a core component of Integrated Safeguards Systems, particularly during advanced stages of REDD+ implementation. Countries and jurisdictions develop tools to identify, assess, and manage potential E&S risks associated with REDD+ activities.

In the REDD+ context, **environmental risks** may include threats to biodiversity, ecosystem integrity, and resilience - such as displacement of deforestation or degradation (*leakage*) or conversion of natural habitats. **Social risks** often affect IP, LC, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups, including disruptions to livelihoods, displacement, restricted access to land or resources, inequitable benefit sharing, or violations of rights and cultural identity.

The type and magnitude of risks - and corresponding mitigation measures - vary depending on the nature and scale of REDD+ activities, ecological and geographic settings, and socioeconomic and governance contexts. Factors such as ecosystem characteristics, land tenure, and institutional arrangements are particularly influential.

In line with the **Cancun Agreement**, understanding these risks early helps identify

the relevant legal and institutional frameworks, competent authorities, and policy processes. This analysis also reveals how the national “addressing” of the Cancun Safeguards provides a foundation to prevent or mitigate potential impacts. Based on identified strengths and gaps, countries can design effective mitigation measures to ensure full “respect” of the Cancun and other safeguards in practice.

E&S risk management **tools and mitigation measures** should therefore be adapted to each jurisdiction’s context, considering:

- Existing legal and institutional frameworks
- The scale and scope of REDD+ activities
- Social, cultural, and political conditions
- Safeguard requirements under results-based finance, carbon markets, or development finance institutions

Table 6 provides examples of potential E&S risks in REDD+ implementation and corresponding mitigation measures, drawn from practical experiences and safeguards practices under the GCF Environmental and Social Policy, the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), and ART’s TREES standard.

Table 6. Potential E&S risks of REDD+ implementation with mitigation measures. Source: own elaboration.

 Subcategory	 Risk	 Mitigation Measure
Risk category: social		
Related to land and/or access to natural resources.	Land/resource speculation and land conflicts.	Promote inclusive and transparent land-use planning processes, recognizing customary and communal tenure rights.
Related to land and/or access to natural resources.	Conflicts among stakeholders or resource users.	Establish multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms and mediation mechanisms to manage potential conflicts.
Related to land and/or access to natural resources.	Contested land and resource rights.	Support tenure clarification through legal reforms and participatory mapping processes without requiring formal title. Support the recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ land and territorial rights through legal reforms and participatory mapping processes, respecting both customary and formal tenure systems.

 Subcategory	 Risk	 Mitigation Measure
Related to social inclusion.	Inefficient or insufficient stakeholder engagement.	Develop and implement inclusive stakeholder engagement strategies with attention to intercultural dialogue and participation.
Risk category: social.	Exclusion of Indigenous Peoples and local communities from decision-making.	Institutionalize (FPIC protocols aligned with UNDRIP and the ILO Convention No. 169, ensuring respect for traditional governance structures.
Related to social inclusion and livelihoods.	Loss of livelihoods due to forest protection and reduction of deforestation activities.	Implement alternative livelihood programs and support sustainable income-generating activities for communities affected by forest conservation measures. Promote capacity-building in sustainable agricultural practices and eco-friendly enterprises to ensure that communities maintain access to resources and income.
Related to gender inequality.	Exclusion of women and marginalized groups from benefits.	Conduct gender gap analyses and apply gender-responsive planning to promote equitable access to benefits and participation.
Related to gender inequality.	Concentration of REDD+ benefits among elite groups.	Design benefit-sharing mechanisms with equity criteria and transparent procedures to prevent elite capture.
Risk category: Environmental		
Biodiversity.	Intensified agriculture impacts on non-forest biodiversity.	Integrate biodiversity protection in land-use planning and promote agroecological alternatives to intensive agriculture.
Natural ecosystems and services.	Replacement of natural forest with monocultures.	Establish ecological criteria to prevent forest replacement with monocultures, favoring restoration with native species.
Natural ecosystems and services.	Plantations with few tree species or non-native species.	Design REDD+ activities that promote species diversity and avoid plantations that reduce ecosystem resilience.
Displacement and reversion of emissions.	Displacement of pressures to areas important for biodiversity.	Identify leakage-prone areas using spatial analysis and implement coordinated cross-boundary monitoring.
Displacement and reversion of emissions.	Lack of permanence in emission reductions.	Strengthen MRV systems with early-warning components and include safeguards in RBP agreements.
Displacement and reversion of emissions.	Poor implementation of measures for preventing emissions reversal.	Implement adaptive management protocols and periodic reviews to ensure effective and sustained implementation of measures selected.

While the UNFCCC does not mandate or provide specific guidance on E&S risk management tools, many jurisdictions have found it useful to develop instruments such as Environmental

and Social Management Frameworks (ESMF) or Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMP) as part of efforts to operationalize the Cancun Safeguards.¹⁰

¹⁰ It is important to distinguish that the ESMF is a specific tool designed to identify, assess, and manage environmental and social risks, while the ultimate objective is to establish a broader Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS). The ESMS provides the institutional framework, policies, and procedures to systematically implement and monitor safeguards, and may include the ESMF as one of its core components. This phase also involves extensive multi-stakeholder engagement to raise awareness of REDD+, its potential benefits, and the role of safeguards in ensuring transparent and equitable implementation.

Some countries developed ESMF during their REDD+ readiness phase, often linked to their National Strategies. These frameworks identified potential risks, proposed mitigation measures, and included indicative monitoring indicators - sometimes anticipating integration with the national SIS. In several cases where REDD+ implementation was delayed, ESMFs were initially underutilized but later updated to meet evolving financing requirements from the GCF, World Bank, or others (refer to section 3 for further information on the WB's approach to E&S risks management).

As implementation advances and specific activities and stakeholders are defined, ESMPs often complement ESMFs by allowing for site-level risk analysis and mitigation. Additional tools may include:

- **Exclusion lists:** to pre-emptively rule out activities with known high risks or safeguard incompatibilities, such as those that may result in IP displacement or involuntary relocation.
- **Screening forms:** to guide initial risk assessments and inform categorization processes, especially useful for activities on the ground (see Tool 8).

Regardless of the tool, aligning risk management instruments with the specific REDD+ activities set out in the NS/AP is key. Additionally, these E&S risks management tools shall be aligned with the SIS safeguards indicators, data generated by GRM and benefit-sharing systems, to enhance consistency, reduce duplication efforts in reporting, and support the overall coherence of an Integrated Safeguards System.

11.3 Safeguards in REDD+ benefit-sharing systems

BSS, plan or arrangement refers to a set of institutional and financial mechanisms intended to equitably distribute monetary and non-monetary benefits generated by REDD+ activities among stakeholders, including IP and LC. As such, a BSS is a key instrument for advancing equity, legitimacy, and effectiveness in REDD+ implementation.

To align with the "3E" principles - equity, effectiveness, and efficiency - a BSS may draw on environmental and social safeguards as guiding frameworks. These safeguards, complementary to regulatory instruments, can help ensure inclusive and accountable outcomes by identifying relevant stakeholders - especially IP and LC, women and youth - promoting their meaningful participation in decision-making, and embedding equity criteria, culturally appropriate processes, and performance-based allocations.

By doing so, safeguards help build trust and long-term support for REDD+ strategies, translating abstract principles such as inclusion and transparency into operational practice (IUCN, 2014; UN-REDD, 2021). They also contribute to preventing risks such as elite capture, exclusion of vulnerable groups, or conflict over land tenure, gender inequalities or resource access, while promoting integrity, participation and transparency in REDD+ design and implementation.



LEARNING TOOL

Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) to download the practical guide to better Explain the basics to develop a risks screening form.



Integrating safeguards in benefit-sharing design

Safeguards and BSS should not be addressed in isolation. When mutually reinforcing, they can help tackle underlying social and environmental inequalities. Embedding safeguards into BSS design allows countries and jurisdictions to move beyond risk mitigation - using safeguards as entry points for addressing historical injustices and advancing rights recognition. In this sense, BSS can serve as operational platforms for safeguards, while also delivering REDD+ social NCB.

Designing a BSS is inherently complex and politically sensitive. It requires balancing legal, institutional and technical dimensions, while navigating politically relevant issues. These may include the critical rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities - such as land tenure and self-determination - and shape broader development outcomes, including rural women's financial inclusion or poverty reduction.

If not strategically addressed, the BSS may be perceived as inequitable or non-transparent, which can undermine trust, reduce stakeholder engagement, and compromise the REDD+ strategy or programme it supports.

While a BSS is not a safeguard *per se*, it constitutes an enabling condition for the effective implementation and respect of multiple safeguards. For example, a well-designed BSS can support transparency in governance

(Safeguard B), uphold IPs' rights (Safeguard C), and foster social co-benefits (Safeguard E).

The following Table 7 presents key safeguard-related considerations for defining the foundational elements of a BSS, along with practical opportunities identified from REDD+ implementation experiences.

Gender and social inclusion approach in REDD+ BSS

Integrating a gender and social inclusion approach in BSS is essential to promote equitable outcomes in REDD+. This entails identifying and addressing context-specific barriers faced not only by women - such as unequal access to land, limited participation in decision-making, or exclusion from financial mechanisms - but also by other structurally disadvantaged groups, including youth, older persons, and low-income populations.

Rather than relying on rigid quotas - which alone may be insufficient to overcome entrenched inequalities and may pose challenges for tracking and reporting - BSS design and procedures may benefit from context-sensitive strategies. These include targeted capacity-building, gender-responsive scoring criteria, or earmarking resources for women-led or community-based initiatives. Linking these measures with REDD+ SIS and E&S risk assessments can help demonstrate the gender-related NCB of REDD+ implementation.

For further information on this topic, please visit the **UN-REDD Academy** and check the ***Benefit-Sharing Systems Learning Journal*** (publication pending)



**FURTHER
INFORMATION**



Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) to download the practical guide to better explain how to combine and standardize different safeguards frameworks.



**LEARNING
TOOL**

Table 7. Key safeguard-related considerations in the design of a BSS

Building block	Safeguard perspective	Opportunities and approaches	Main Cancun Safeguard(s) approached
Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safeguards guarantee the effective participation of stakeholders, particularly IP and LC at all stages, including in design and implementation (monitoring) phases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inclusion of stakeholder representatives, including IP and LC, in the BSS governance body with some decision-taking or with monitoring faculties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ C: IP's rights ■ D: Stakeholders engagement
Funding management ("distribution")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safeguards support the establishment of effective and transparent mechanisms for resource transfer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A transparent, publicly accessible platform could be used to share information regularly and openly about how funds are distributed, including the criteria used, the recipients, and the amounts. ■ Implement outcomes indicators of public access to allow stakeholders to monitor BSS effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ B: Effective and transparency
Definition of benefits & beneficiaries ("allocation")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safeguards help define fair criteria for identifying who should benefit and how much. ■ They promote the recognition of pre-existing rights and the diversity of territorial actors. ■ They ensure that non-monetary benefits (e.g., cultural, spiritual, environmental) are acknowledged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish clear and fair criteria based on need, contribution to forest conservation, ERR generation and vulnerability. Communities that actively protect forests or those facing the greatest environmental or economic challenges could receive a larger share of benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A: Alignment with national forest policy ■ C: IP's rights ■ E: Environmental and social benefits

Building block	Safeguard perspective	Opportunities and approaches	Main Cancun Safeguard(s) approached
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ They help prevent conflicts through participatory and transparent agreement processes. ■ Safeguards ensure that fund distribution is equitable and prioritizes those in vulnerable situations, including women and IP and LC. ■ They ensure that financial flows respect collective rights and gender equity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ They help prevent conflicts through participatory and transparent agreement processes. ■ Funds allocation for the maintenance of traditional ecological knowledge or support community-led initiatives that protect sacred forests, recognizing that these intangible benefits are as important as monetary compensation. ■ By ensuring that all stakeholders, especially IP and LC, are included in the negotiation and decision-making processes regarding the allocation of benefits. ■ Prioritize Indigenous Peoples and local communities, by allocating a larger share of benefits to those who are most vulnerable. ■ Funds could be earmarked specifically for women's empowerment projects within IP and LC (based on priority, score or similar), or decision-making processes could ensure that both men and women have equal representation in governance structures. 	

Building block	Safeguard perspective	Opportunities and approaches	Main Cancun Safeguard(s) approached
Monitoring and report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safeguards support the development of E&S and governance indicators for monitoring. ■ They strengthen accountability to both communities and donors. ■ They ensure disaggregated data collection to capture differentiated impacts. ■ They promote transparency and continuous learning to improve implementation. ■ They help prevent decisions that could result in negative social or environmental impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create indicators on E&S participatively, such as community engagement levels, gender equality in decision-making and other NCBs associated. ■ Require regular reporting and audits, ensuring that communities are informed about how funds are used, and donors receive updates on progress and outcomes. ■ Collect data separately for men, women, and different ethnic groups to understand how each community is affected by the REDD+ activities, ensuring no group is overlooked. ■ By making monitoring reports and lessons learned accessible to all stakeholders, BSS could encourage open dialogue and adapt its strategies based on feedback and new insights. ■ Mechanisms for E&S impact assessments incorporated during all phases of the BSS implementation can be included, then potential risks are identified and mitigated before implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ B: Effective and transparency ■ D: Stakeholders engagement ■ F and G: Reversal and Leakage risks



Case Study 9

The Benefit-Sharing Plan of Chile

Chile's benefit-sharing arrangements under its National Strategy on Climate Change and Vegetation Resources (ENCCRV) are operationalized through a comprehensive **Benefit-Sharing Plan**. This BSP has an online platform developed as part of the GCF REDD+ Results-Based Payments project *+Bosques*, the BSP allocates 80 per cent of REDD+ non-monetary benefits - such as technical assistance - through competitive public tenders for proposals. While initially focused on GCF resources, the platform is enabled to also channel benefits from other sources, such as the FCPF.

Eligible activities to access the BSP must align with ENCCRV, (i) including afforestation using native species; (ii) restoration with native species, (iii) preventive silviculture to reduce wildfires risks; (iv) sustainable forest management and; (v) sustainable biomass production.

The BSP is designed to be inclusive, focusing on IP, women and small-scale producers. To ensure safeguards are respected, the BSP is underpinned by a robust **Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS)** of the ENCCRV, with a cross-cutting safeguards approach that aligns the Cancun Safeguards, the World Bank and FAO standards among others. Applicants confirm through the platform that they are not applying for activities that are excluded according to the ENCCRV ESMF, and become an active part of the development of the **Environmental and Social Management Plan (PGAS)** tailored to the proposed activity, aligned with the ESMS. This plan includes safeguards protocols operationalizing FPIC, GRM, and measures to enhance co-benefits and prevent harm.

Preliminary evidence suggests that this safeguards-integrated model is enabling more equitable access to REDD+ benefits while managing risks for vulnerable groups. Nonetheless, operational challenges persist - many intervention sites are small (often 10.5 hectares), which increases per-hectare costs and complicates safeguards supervision at scale (UN-REDD Programme, 2023).

For more information, visit the BSP at: <https://www.enccrv.cl/sistema-distribucion-beneficios>

A gender and social inclusion approach is essential to ensure equity in BSS. This requires designing and applying effective strategies so that REDD+ benefits reach women on equal terms, particularly in rural contexts of many developing countries where they may face cultural, legal, or institutional barriers. These may include limited access to land and natural resources, as well as restricted participation in decision-making processes within their communities. An adequate gender-responsive BSS therefore needs to assess these risks and contexts, and put in place practical measures to overcome them.

Incorporating a gender approach in benefit-sharing does not necessarily mean setting

fixed quotas for women beneficiaries, as in some contexts this could limit the mechanism's performance if bankable projects or proposals are insufficient. Alternative approaches include strengthening capacity-building and financial inclusion programmes targeted at women; awarding higher scores in competitive schemes to proposals led by women; or allocating a set percentage of funds to projects that directly benefit women's organizations or cooperatives. Finally, it is essential to link gender-related performance in benefit-sharing with environmental and social risk assessments and SIS reporting, to demonstrate the gender-related non-carbon benefits generated by REDD+ actions.



Box 8

Benefit-sharing in TREES

TREES does not prescribe a specific benefit-sharing system (BSS) model; rather, it places emphasis on the process undertaken to design and implement the arrangements. To this end, TREES sets out procedure- and outcome-based indicators on BSS design and implementation, distributed across Safeguards B, C, D, and E.

An additional key requirement relates to carbon rights. Before issuance of carbon credits, the participant must explain how carbon rights are defined and recognized under the applicable legal framework. Where IP and LC are present in the programme area, the participant must also demonstrate any agreements - existing or planned - governing the transfer of Emission Reductions and Removals (ERR) rights between these groups and the participant. Such arrangements may still be in progress at the time of programme registration and can be updated through subsequent TREES Monitoring Reports. However, TREES credits are only issue for the number of ERR for which the Validation and Verification Body has verified that the participant can demonstrate rights, regardless of how the credits will be used.

By requiring a documented link between safeguards performance and benefit allocation, and allowing flexibility in how carbon rights arrangements are operationalized, TREES promotes a governance approach in which social and environmental integrity are mutually reinforcing. This is particularly relevant as REDD+ increasingly operates in more complex finance landscapes, where credibility and inclusiveness are decisive factors for accessing high-integrity carbon markets.

Under the draft TREES 3.0 Standard (currently under review), participants are required –as an additional requirement- to provide a description of the benefit sharing arrangements that govern the distribution of proceeds and benefits derived from TREES Credits, detailing the intended beneficiaries, the principles and criteria for benefit allocation, and the related procedures and institutional arrangements.

11.4 Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

GRMs are designed to receive, channel and respond to stakeholder concerns related to REDD+ programmes or projects. They offer affected actors a structured process to raise grievances, seek resolution, and access remedial action - contributing to transparency, fairness and accountability (UN-REDD, 2025).

While not explicitly required under the UNFCCC, GRM are frequently embedded in national and

subnational safeguards systems or SIS. They help improving safeguards respect by reducing risks and building trust - particularly among IP, LC and women - by offering accessible, gender-responsive and culturally appropriate channels. Besides, GRMs are increasingly becoming mandatory under most of the REDD+ financing mechanisms, such as results-based finance schemes (i.e. GCF RBP), as well as for jurisdictional REDD+ programme standards, such as TREES¹¹ and JNR.

¹¹ In the case of TREES, the requirement is to have in place procedures that guarantee non-discriminatory and non-cost prohibitive access to dispute resolution mechanisms at all relevant levels, anchored in relevant ratified international conventions/agreements and/or domestic (and, if applicable, subnational) legal frameworks.

In practice, many national interpretations of the Cancun Safeguards have incorporated GRM as enabling conditions to fulfill several safeguard dimensions, particularly those related to:

- **Access to justice (Safeguard B):** GRMs function as practical tools for early-stage conflict resolution, offering timely, locally grounded alternatives that help reduce institutional burdens and promote procedural justice. They complement - rather than replace - formal judicial or administrative channels by providing accessible pathways for dialogue and resolution
- **Gender-responsive approaches (Safeguards B and D):** Gender-sensitive GRM may include tailored modalities - such as separate channels, affirmative measures, or gender focal points - to promote women's participation and ensure their concerns are addressed, especially where structural or cultural barriers hinder equal access.
- **Rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (Safeguard C):** GRM with culturally appropriate features - such as the use of Indigenous languages, simplified procedures, and respect for traditional governance systems - can play a critical role in protecting the rights of IP and LC, particularly in contexts of historical exclusion or limited state presence.
- **Effective participation (Safeguard D):** GRMs are commonly referenced under this safeguard, as they provide structured channels to submit grievances, request information, or raise concerns - generate no cost, without fear of retaliation, and managed by impartial bodies. Their accessibility enhances opportunities for diverse stakeholders to engage meaningfully throughout REDD+ implementation.

Box 9



Integrated grievance redress mechanisms (GRM) in REDD+ nested schemes

In nested REDD+ systems, aligning GRM across different scales remains a key challenge. National and subnational programmes, as well as carbon standards, often include GRM requirements, but these tend to operate independently, limiting coherence and oversight.

Integrating GRMs under a common framework - with shared standards, procedures and reporting tools - could enhance safeguards reporting and improve environmental and social governance across scales. This approach may also support the creation of centralized registries and more effective links with SIS. For further detail, see *Nesting Approaches for REDD+* (UN-REDD, 2024 e, p. 42).

For further information on this topic, see [Nesting Approaches for REDD+](#) (UN-REDD, 2024 e, p. 42).

Lessons learned and good practices in designing GRM for REDD+

Effective GRM should be grounded in core principles such as legitimacy, accessibility, predictability, transparency, equity, rights-compatibility, and capacity for continuous learning (FCPF & UN-REDD, 2015). While these principles may vary across safeguards frameworks or national approaches, they are generally aligned with the UN's *Ruggie Principles*.¹²

To ensure GRM go beyond formal compliance and become genuinely functional, these principles must be operationalized through concrete design features and implementation practices. Based on REDD+ experience at policy and project levels, the following elements have proven especially relevant:

- **As participatory mechanisms - not just for conflict resolution:** In several jurisdictions, GRM are being implemented as effective systems to facilitate citizen participation, not only to resolve grievances. In many cases, GRM also serve as channels to receive feedback, information requests, and community inputs related to REDD+ activities.
- **Inclusiveness:** GRM may consider offering diverse interfaces and access channels adapted to local contexts. This could include oral submissions in Indigenous languages, outreach to forest-dependent communities, and measures to facilitate participation by women, elders, youth, and other groups in vulnerable situations - particularly in areas with limited connectivity or low literacy levels.
- **Centralized tracking:** Although multiple entry points for grievances can enhance accessibility, routing all cases through a unified tracking matrix can provide a clearer understanding of risks and grievances associated with REDD+ implementation. In nested approaches, some countries have found it helpful to link project-level GRM with national mechanisms, enabling upward information flows and coordinated handling of complex issues (see *Nesting REDD+ Approaches*, UN-REDD, 2024).
- **Standardized procedures:** Establishing clear steps - from intake to resolution and feedback - can contribute to transparency and predictability. While the level of detail may vary, having agreed procedures and timelines helps ensure that grievances are managed consistently.
- **Multiple channels:** Multi-tiered and multi-channel mechanisms, including community meetings, online forms, mobile platforms and messaging apps, have been adopted in various contexts to enhance accessibility and respond to diverse needs and capacities.
- **Review structures:** Some REDD+ GRM apply a layered resolution model, where initial complaints are addressed at the local or project level, with options for escalation if needed. This structure can help balance timeliness with impartial oversight.
- **Visibility and outreach:** Experience suggests that low grievance volumes may not reflect the absence of issues, but rather limited awareness or access. Communication strategies, stakeholder training and proactive dissemination can support more meaningful use of GRMs and reinforce transparency and accountability.
- **Stepwise development:** Countries may consider beginning with simple, low-cost systems - such as toll-free numbers or free digital tools - and adapting or scaling up as capacity and resources allow. This gradual approach can support learning and allow for adjustments over time.

¹² The Ruggie Principles, are a set of 31 guidelines that outline the responsibilities of states and businesses in preventing and addressing human rights abuses related to business activities.

- **Cost planning and sustainability:** Estimating the human and financial resources needed for GRM operation and maintenance can help avoid disruptions in service. Some countries have integrated GRM-related costs into broader safeguards system budgeting.

Case study 10



Ensuring accountability and inclusion: Peru's MAC-REDD+ grievance redress mechanism

Peru has established a dedicated GRM for REDD+, known as “Citizen Service Module for REDD+” (MAC REDD+), to address the concerns and needs of stakeholders affected by or engaged in REDD+ processes.

MAC-REDD+ allows individuals and communities to submit information requests, suggestions, consultations, or formal complaints through three accessible channels: online, in-person, and by telephone. A key strength of the mechanism is its emphasis on intercultural accessibility, enabling submissions in Indigenous languages and ensuring broad usability.

The system is structured around a formal registry that tracks submissions and responses, and is fully aligned with national legal frameworks. MAC-REDD+ is equipped to address a wide range of issues, including the implementation of safeguards, benefit-sharing arrangements, and REDD+ financial management. Its integration into Peru's national REDD+ architecture makes it a model for grievance mechanisms that are both responsive and rights-based.

For further information on this topic, please visit the [UN-REDD Academy](#) and check the latest version of the **UN-REDD Stakeholders Engagement and Gender Learning Journal** (publication pending)



**FURTHER
INFORMATION**

12. Incorporating non-carbon benefits (NCB) into safeguards systems

NCB are the social, environmental and governance outcomes that REDD+ generates beyond emission reductions. These include improved forest governance, biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods, gender equality, and the protection of Indigenous Peoples and local communities rights and cultures. As an integral part of REDD+ safeguards, NCB reflect the “do good” dimension of safeguards implementation - delivering tangible, sustainable benefits for people and nature, in addition to mitigating risks.

Although NCB are promoted in Cancun Safeguard E and reaffirmed in Article 5 of the Paris Agreement,¹³ safeguards implementation has often focused more on risk avoidance than on generating positive outcomes. For example, tools such as Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMFs) tend to prioritize mitigation of negative impacts, while benefit-sharing systems (BSS) may not fully reflect the socio-economic value of positive contributions. Similarly, most SIS lack clear procedures or indicators for tracking and reporting NCB.

Nonetheless, a growing number of countries and jurisdictions are working to strengthen their capacity to measure and report NCB. Within these efforts, the consolidation of safeguard systems has enabled countries to explore appropriate indicators, data collection methods, and reporting frameworks for monitoring NCB performance in REDD+ (Wong et al. 2016 in GCF, 2024).

Enhancing NCB measurement systems is key to recognizing REDD+ not only as a climate finance mechanism, but also as a catalyst for improved forest and climate governance. By capturing broader social and environmental outcomes, REDD+ can help align public and private resources with national and subnational forest policies, while placing people - particularly IP and LC, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups - at the centre of climate action. Their inclusion aligns with growing international support for rights-based, inclusive approaches in conservation and climate mitigation.

12.1 Types of NCB

The table below outlines examples of typical NCB associated with REDD+ activities. It also highlights common improvement measures - often drawn from ESFM or comparable frameworks - used within REDD+ programmes and projects to strengthen and report NCB in practice.

¹³ 2. Parties are encouraged to take action to implement and support (...) activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (...) while reaffirming the importance of incentivizing, as appropriate, non-carbon benefits associated with such approaches (article 5, Paris Agreement)

Table 8. Examples of social non-carbon benefits (NCB) from REDD+ and corresponding improvement measures.

Non-Carbon Benefits	General improvement measures adopted
Social non-carbon benefits from REDD+	
<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved forest governance and law enforcement . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishment of decentralized forest governance frameworks. ■ Capacity building of local institutions. ■ Strengthening forest monitoring systems, including community-based and participatory MRV. ■ Strengthening of environmental law enforcement mechanisms. ■ Strengthening protected areas systems.
<p>Livelihoods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthened livelihoods and improved access to natural resources . ■ Provide new sources of incomes and based on sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support for sustainable forest-based enterprises. ■ Implementation of alternative and sustainable livelihood schemes with added value (e.g. agroforestry, bio-economy, non-wood products, etc.). ■ Development of local value chains and market access strategies. ■ Technical training and microfinance for community cooperatives.
<p>Indigenous Peoples and local communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Protection of territories and cultures of IP and LC. ■ Clarified/secured tenure and resource rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participatory mapping of ancestral territories and natural resource use. ■ Support for legal recognition of customary tenure and access rights. ■ Development of FPIC protocols in REDD+ project cycles. ■ Integration of traditional knowledge into forest management planning.
<p>Social inclusion and gender equity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advancement of gender equality and empowerment of women and other marginalized groups. ■ Increased community voice and participation in decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishment of inclusive local governance structures (e.g. gender-balanced forest user committees). ■ Gender-responsive safeguards and monitoring frameworks (e.g. indicators and targets). ■ Targeted leadership programs for women, youth, elder and other generally marginalized groups in rural and forest economic activities. ■ Institutionalization of community consultation and feedback mechanisms. ■ Equitable and active inclusion of women and youth in deforestation free value chain support (e.g. farmer field schools, etc.).

Non-Carbon Benefits	General improvement measures adopted
Environmental non-carbon benefits from REDD+	
<p>Biodiversity & ecosystem services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintenance and restoration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Biodiversity – forest species and ecosystems of conservation concern. > Ecosystem services – e.g. water quality, erosion control, timber and non-timber forest products, pollination, local climate regulation, cultural values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integration of biodiversity conservation objectives into forest planning, e.g. through “High Conservation Value” and “Key Biodiversity” areas. ■ Restoration of degraded lands through Forest Landscape Restoration approaches. ■ Implementation of ecological connectivity corridors and protected areas. ■ Valuation and monitoring of ecosystem services (e.g. watershed protection, pollination). ■ Limits on the use of agrochemicals (e.g. pesticides, fertilizers); prohibition of exotic/invasive species; protection of non-forest ecosystems such as grasslands and wetlands.
<p>Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Intact and connected forests are more ecologically stable (resilient and resistant) to climate change impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Climate-risks impacts assessment. ■ Promotion of ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) and nature-based solutions. ■ Maintenance of forest cover in critical climate buffer zones. ■ Climate-resilient landscape planning tools. ■ Monitoring forest vulnerability and adaptation capacity indicators.



Case study 11

Effective non-carbon benefits in REDD+ of Costa Rica

Costa Rica stands out as a pioneer in implementing REDD+ activities that explicitly promote NCB. As part of its collaboration with the UN-REDD Programme, the country undertook a spatial analysis to identify and prioritize the environmental and social benefits that could be enhanced through REDD+ implementation. This effort aimed to both maximize positive impacts and strengthen compliance with the Cancun safeguards under the UNFCCC framework. The analysis focused on seven co-benefits aligned with national legislation, including soil erosion control, reducing water stress vulnerability, biodiversity conservation, natural scenic beauty and contributions to local livelihoods and governances.

A key aspect of Costa Rica's approach was the development of spatially explicit planning tools to assess where these benefits converge. The identification of areas with high potential for multiple NCB enabled the strategic targeting of REDD+ activities in regions where they could deliver the greatest additional value. These spatial analyses were rooted in the legal mandates of the country, particularly the Forest Law No. 7575 and the Law on Soil Use, Management, and Conservation No. 7779, reinforcing the integration of REDD+ into the country's environmental governance framework (UN-REDD & FONAFIFO, 2015).

Moreover, Costa Rica has aligned its REDD+ strategy with key sectoral policies and programs, such as the National Forestry Development Plan, the Low-Carbon Livestock Strategy, and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) for the agricultural sector. This policy integration ensures that REDD+ activities contribute not only to climate mitigation but also to other key government's agenda, such as biodiversity conservation, soil management, and rural development. The country has also made efforts to develop and propose a set of indicators for monitoring these co-benefits. These indicators are intended to be embedded in the REDD+ implementation monitoring system, enabling consistent tracking of outcomes and further reinforcing transparency and accountability (UN-REDD & FONAFIFO, 2015).

12.2 Considerations and practical experiences on reporting NCB

Despite the opportunities for reporting NCB, to date only a few countries have established effective systems to measure and report them - generally with data from the BSS implementation and reported via their SIS. Most of these pioneering efforts are linked to countries participating in a GCF and World Bank's RBP

Within this pioneering group, efforts have largely focused on assessing the potential for REDD+ actions to generate NCB, for example by mapping expected benefits by activity type, stakeholder group or geographic area. However, only a limited number of countries have developed concrete methodologies to monitor and report how NCB are being actually generated through REDD+ activities (see Box 10 for some practical examples).

Box 10



Measuring NCB in REDD+ implementation: comparative experiences in LAC

The measurement of NCB in REDD+ programmes varies across countries but generally relies on a combination of geospatial analysis, ecological or hydrological modeling, and participatory mapping or surveys that capture both environmental and socio-economic dimensions. Comparative analyses of methodologies applied in countries such as Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay, and Argentina, reveal three main trends:

- (i) a focus on *avoided loss* of ecosystem and social benefits;
- (ii) spatial convergence of multiple benefits;
- (iii) the expansion of areas under sustainable forest management.

1. Environmental indicators (soil and water)

A. Soil erosion control

- **Costa Rica** measures relative risk of water erosion by combining long-term average rainfall and slope gradients in geospatial layers.
- **Panama and Paraguay** apply a *forest importance index* to quantify the role of forests in limiting erosion, integrating data on rainfall, slope, and water bodies to produce a seven-class index where higher values represent greater soil stabilization potential.
- **Argentina** estimates potential soil loss using a national adaptation of the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE), integrating factors such as rainfall erosivity (R), soil erodibility (K), and slope length and steepness (LS). The model identifies areas of maximum potential soil loss without vegetation, highlighting the relative role of forests in erosion control.

B. Water balance regulation (runoff reduction)

- **Costa Rica** evaluates water stress vulnerability by comparing modeled water supply and demand, overlaying these with hydrological simulations under forest restoration scenarios using the *WaterWorld* model.
- **Panama and Paraguay** recognize hydrological services as key benefits but associate them indirectly with erosion control rather than modeling them explicitly.
- **Argentina** models groundwater rise control and water production using *WaterWorld*, comparing the current water balance to a total deforestation scenario to estimate forest contributions to hydrological regulation and salinity control.

2. Biodiversity and connectivity indicators

Biodiversity indicators typically identify key conservation areas and assess species richness and protection status.

- **Costa Rica, Panama, and Paraguay** overlay *Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)* lacking legal protection with maps of threatened vertebrate species richness and carbon density, identifying “hotspots” of REDD+ mitigation and conservation synergy.
- **Argentina** integrates multiple spatial prioritization layers - such as biodiversity importance indices, KBAs, vertebrate endemism, and ecological corridors for flagship species (e.g., jaguar) - using spatial optimization tools like *Zonation*.

3. Socioeconomic and cultural indicators

A. Cultural identity

- **Paraguay and Argentina** assess threats to cultural heritage by mapping Indigenous settlements and sacred sites, overlaying these with deforestation risk and the distribution of species with cultural or medicinal significance.

B. Livelihoods, employment, and gender

- **Costa Rica** uses the *Social Development Index (IDS)* to identify districts with “very low” development levels and classify them as high-priority areas for REDD+ interventions.
- **Panama, Paraguay, and Argentina** analyze poverty–carbon overlap by mapping poverty incidence against carbon stock distribution, while Panama additionally maps areas with ecotourism potential.
- **Gender and employment indicators** - applied in several countries including Chile - track the rate of female employment and participation in REDD+ activities as measures of progress toward gender equity.

For more information on these countries, consult the following bibliography:

Argentina:

[Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development \(MAyDS\). \(2021\). Social and environmental benefits of native forests: methodological guide and results by forest region. Tools for implementing REDD+ safeguards on the ground. Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina.](#)

Costa Rica:

[García-Rangel, S., Walcott, J., de Lamo, X., Epple, C., Miles, L., Kapos, V., Carrión, D., Herrera Ugalde, M. E., López Lee, T., Ballesteros, M., Vega Araya, E., Quirós Ramírez, G., & Gómez Román, A. \(2017\). Multiple benefits of REDD+ in Costa Rica: spatial analyses to support decision-making. UNEP-WCMC.](#)

Panama:

[Kapos, V., Walcott, J., Thorley, J., Mariscal, E., Labbate, G., Ravilious, C., Miles, L., Narloch, N., Trumper, K., & Bertzky, M. \(2015\). REDD+ planning in Panama: ensuring social and environmental benefits. UNEP-WCMC.](#)

Paraguay:

[Walcott, J., Thorley, J., Kapos, V., Miles, L., Woroniecki, S., & Blaney, R. \(2015\). Mapping the multiple benefits of REDD+ in Paraguay: using spatial information to support land-use planning. UNEP-WCMC.](#)

12.3 The importance of NCB to unlock forest finance

The growing emphasis on environmental and social integrity in REDD+ (topic developed in section [The role of safeguards for REDD+ integrity](#)) has led funders and crediting programmes to increasingly recognize the added value of ERR that are demonstrably linked to NCB. Countries and jurisdictions are also showing interest in positioning broader

socio-environmental contributions as a way to complement relatively low carbon prices, and to enhance the perceived integrity and impact of REDD+ interventions over time.

Reflecting this trend and the emergence of high-integrity market expectations, funding sources such as the World Bank and carbon market standards and programmes have introduced initiatives to certify or label specific NCBs at the jurisdictional level of REDD+ (see an example

in Box 11). These efforts aim to strengthen the recognition and to provide value added to ERR or carbon credits by associating them with verifiable NCBs. Additionally, at the project level

there are also initiatives, such as Verra's CCB Standards, that are widely used to validate that projects deliver tangible climate, community and biodiversity benefits.¹⁴

Box 11



Beyond Carbon Benefits (BCB) Certification*, under ART

* At the time writing, the BCB is under development: a draft was released in July 2025 for a 60-day public comment period, and the final version is expected in 2026.

The Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART) introduced the Beyond Carbon Benefits (BCB) Certification to formally recognize and incentivize the delivery of social, environmental, and governance co-benefits from REDD+ programmes. This certification complements the TREES standard (v2.0) and is applicable to jurisdictions that meet or exceed defined performance thresholds beyond emission reductions or removals (ART, 2024).

The BCB Certification is comprised of three distinct benefit modules: forest services, biodiversity, and social-cultural. Each module contains desired outcomes and indicators to be reported by the Participants. Indicators relate to several types of benefits of jurisdictional REDD+ programs, such as governance, improvements in the livelihoods and conditions of women, territorial rights, economic benefits for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, improvements in water quality, air quality and climate regulation, and enhancement of biodiversity values, among others (ART, 2025b).

The process for obtaining BCB Certification is voluntary and follows the successful validation and verification of emission reductions under TREES. Participating jurisdictions must submit additional evidence, assessed by independent verifiers, to demonstrate high performance in selected thematic areas. Recognition through BCB Certification enhances transparency and accountability, and signals commitment to high-integrity REDD+ implementation (ART, 2025).

This certification is expected to facilitate access to broader climate finance mechanisms by showcasing robust contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), while also providing confidence to donors and carbon credit buyers regarding the non-carbon value generated by REDD+ efforts.

For more information: <https://artredd.org/beyond-carbon-benefits/>

¹⁴ The CCB certification can be applied to any land management project, including afforestation, sustainable agriculture, and grassland management. They can be applied exclusively to a project or in conjunction with VCS certification. For more information visit: <https://verra.org/programs/ccbs/>

13. Safeguards Systems in nested REDD+ approaches

“Nesting” in the REDD+ context relates to aligning carbon accounting, governance and safeguards across multiple scales - from project to national levels. This approach helps to ensure a cohesive and integrated framework that enhances carbon accounting consistency and supports broader environmental and social governance and safeguards” (UN-REDD, 2024 e, p. 7).¹⁵

In this context of REDD+ being implemented simultaneously at different scales and through diverse funding channels such as results-based finance and carbon markets, this often introduces complex challenges for the coherent and effective application of safeguards systems. Key challenges observed include:

- **Consistency in implementation and reporting:** Coordinating safeguards measures across multiple levels (e.g., jurisdictional and project) while ensuring that monitoring and reporting systems remain coherent and complementary.
- **Harmonizing E&S risks management tools:** Aligning frameworks and procedures across scales so that risk assessment, mitigation, and oversight are consistent - even when different standards or methodologies are used.

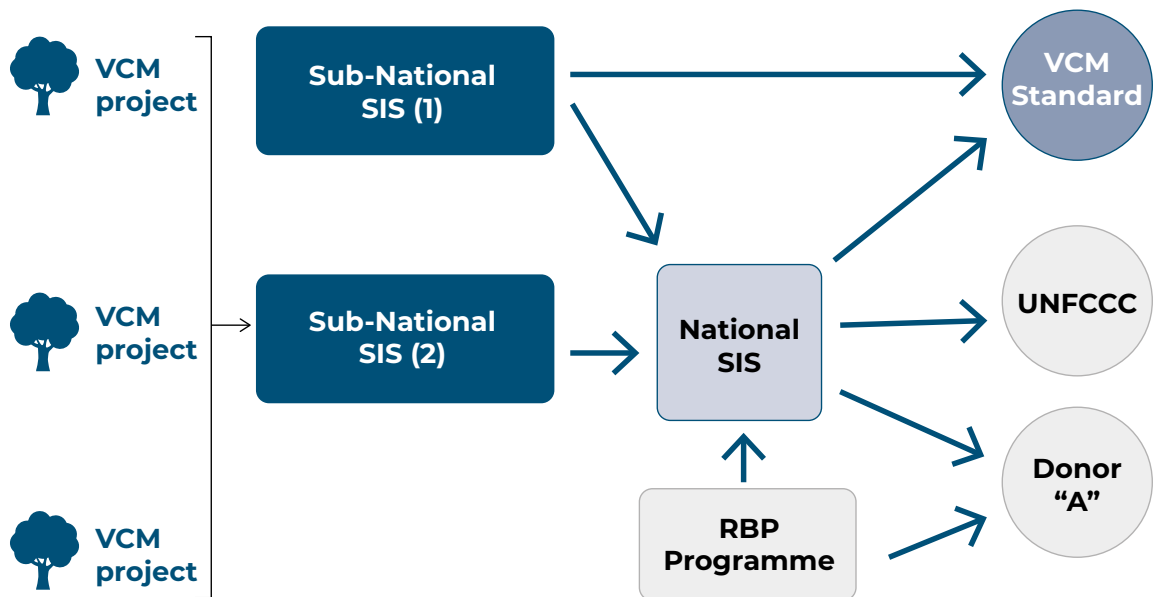
- **Operationalizing core safeguards principles across systems:** Ensuring that fundamental elements such as participation, gender responsiveness, IP and LC rights, FPIC, and grievance redress mechanisms are effectively applied and aligned throughout nested structures (UN-REDD, 2024 e).

In this complex context of REDD+ implementation, while countries are designing the overall nesting approach for their NS/AP, safeguards nesting considerations, including through the development of safeguards systems that are integrated across different scales can help to address these challenges and contribute to ensuring effective safeguards application at different scales (UN-REDD, 2024 e).

An example of a nested approach applied to a safeguards system could result in devolving an **integrated safeguards reporting** scheme, consisting in establishing guidelines, regulations or others for applying, monitoring and reporting on safeguards at different the scales of REDD+ implementation (national, subnational, programmes and projects, including VCM), into a national SIS, in an integrated and effective way (see Figure 14). In practice, this could imply establishing requirements for subnational SIS; applying a cross-cutting safeguards framework; guidelines for reporting to national SIS; mandatory safeguards indicators to be reported by different REDD+ implementors, etc.

¹⁵ For further information on nesting, please visit the [REDD+ Academy- Nesting Journal](#)

Figure 14: Potential flow of information for integrated safeguards reporting (UN-REDD, 2024 e).



Additionally, a nested approach applied to a safeguards system might also approach aspects such as **Framework benefits-sharing mechanisms; integrated GRM** and other tools

for safeguards implementation (i.e. tools on FPIC, gender, E&S risks management or other, of mandatory use in all levels and approaches of REDD+ implementation in a certain jurisdiction).



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on Safeguards Systems in nested REDD+ approaches, see the UN-REDD Learning Journal on REDD+ Nesting (2024 e)



LEARNING TOOL

Your learning journey is concluded: What do you know now about REDD+ safeguards? Go to the [REDD+ Academy Platform](#) and answer the questions to assess your actual knowledge.





Key takeaways

- **Integrated Safeguards Systems (ISS):** In contexts where multiple safeguards frameworks overlap, some countries are moving toward Integrated Safeguards Systems that go beyond SIS reporting to encompass E&S risks management, based on cross-cutting Safeguards Frameworks (CSF), grievance redress mechanisms (GRM) and benefit-sharing. These flexible and evolving systems could reduce transaction costs, enhance coherence across funding streams, and strengthen safeguards implementation at national and subnational levels.
- **Cross-cutting Safeguards Frameworks (CSF):** Some countries are experimenting with CSF to reduce duplication and increase coherence across multiple safeguards frameworks. These experiences suggest that, while not mandated by the UNFCCC, CSF can be useful tools for aligning national, subnational, and project-level safeguards requirements under one integrated approach.
- **E&S risk management:** Countries increasingly rely on Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMF) and Plans to identify and mitigate risks. Although initially designed during the readiness phase, these tools are being updated and adapted to meet the requirements of diverse funding sources such as the GCF or the World Bank, reinforcing their relevance in REDD+ implementation.
- **Institutional integration and capacity building:** The effectiveness of integrated safeguards systems depends on clear institutional mandates, strong coordination mechanisms, and sustained investment in technical capacities at both national and subnational levels.
- Safeguards create opportunities to reinforce the generation and recognition of **non-carbon benefits (NCB)**. Emerging experiences like the Beyond Carbon Benefits certification under the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART) highlight a growing opportunity to integrate, track and report NCBs through safeguards SIS or benefit-sharing mechanisms, enhancing their role in delivering inclusive and sustainable REDD+ outcomes.
- **Safeguards in benefit-sharing systems (BSS):** BSS design is highly sensitive, given its link to rights, equity, and transparency. When safeguards principles are embedded in BSS, they serve as enabling conditions for effective implementation - helping to prevent elite capture, ensure fair distribution, and build trust among stakeholders.
- **Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM):** Well-designed GRM are increasingly recognized as more than compliance tools. They can function as inclusive participation channels, support early conflict resolution, and strengthen the transparency and accountability of REDD+ governance.
- **Safeguards in nested REDD+ approaches:** Applying safeguards coherently across national, subnational, and project scales remains a significant challenge. Aligning monitoring, reporting, and risk management across different levels and funding schemes requires strong institutional coordination and integrated safeguards systems.

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