

Booklet

Understanding the safeguard requirements of
REDD.Plus: a Tool for Indigenous Peoples
and Local Communities

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In doing so, this project seeks to strengthen the high-integrity carbon market for Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to climate change that provide economic, social and environmental benefits for the countries and local communities producing the carbon credits.

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Acronyms

COP	Conference of the Parties
IP	Indigenous People
LC	Local communities
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries
REDD.+	REDD dot plus
RRU	REDD+ Result Units
SIS	Safeguards Information System
SOI	Summary of Information
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WFR	Warsaw Framework for REDD+

Introduction

Objective of this document

The objective of this document is to provide Indigenous Peoples and Local communities (IP and LC) with a clear understanding of the safeguard requirements of REDD.Plus developed by the Coalition for Rainforest Nations with the ultimate goal of empowering them to participate effectively in national or subnational government led processes in connection to REDD.Plus

This document is not intended to provide a critical analysis of REDD.Plus. Direct quotations from REDD.Plus official documentation and website will be directly cited and quoted in italic, and any other recommendations or analysis is the author's own, based on experience and best practices.

Structure of this document

As mentioned above, this tool aims to facilitate understanding of the REDD.Plus' safeguards requirements for IP and LCs. The document is structured as follows:

Section 1 presents the background and overview of REDD.Plus.

Section 2 presents the safeguards requirements of REDD.Plus.

Section 3 explains REDD.Plus safeguard related reporting requirements and offers guidance to IP and LCs on how to engage with national and subnational government led processes on this matter.

This paper has been developed through a mixed-methods approach. A desk-based analysis has been conducted particularly as a source for official information on REDD.Plus. A series of webinars have also been conducted with key stakeholders from IP and LC's organizations which have contributed to collecting context, views and perspectives on the matter.

Who should be using this tool?

This tool is primarily addressed to leaders from IP and LC organizations at both national and subnational level who are engaging with Jurisdictional REDD+ programs that are registered with REDD.Plus.

I. Background

REDD dot plus (REDD.Plus) is a platform for the registry and exchange for REDD+ results units (RRUs), which nominally equate to 1 tonne of CO₂e reduced or removed, and are certified according to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) verification process, before being serialized on REDD.Plus's own registry system.

REDD.Plus was created by the Coalition for Rainforest Nations to provide corporations and individuals access to purchase emission reductions generated by the REDD+ jurisdictional programs (national and subnational).

The Coalition for Rainforest Nations is a non-profit organization based in New York that acts as a single-issue negotiating bloc in international climate negotiations, with over 50 member countries¹. REDD.Plus manages the process to create REDD+ result units (RRUs) and the platform for their purchase, tracking the life-cycle of each RRU from issuance to retirement and reports this data toward making those units part of the Global Carbon Accounting system².

It is important to note that REDD.Plus is not a carbon standard like VCS or TREES, but rather a platform through which countries can register their REDD+ results to make them available to voluntary buyers. REDD.Plus uses the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (WFR)³ requirements regarding environmental and social safeguards, and the UNFCCC process as a method for quality assurance (without any additional requirements) of those emission reductions.

¹<https://www.redd.plus/help>

²Ibid

³Available at: <https://unfccc.int/topics/land-use/resources/warsaw-framework-for-redd-plus>

II. Understanding the Safeguard-related requirements of the Standard

What are the safeguards applied by REDD.Plus?

In terms of safeguards, REDD.Plus **does not have additional or specific requirements** beyond what is foreseen in the WFR (Box 1). As the REDD.Plus platform is entirely dependent on the UNFCCC process, it does not have any specific requirements for the validation and verification of these safeguard requirements.

Box 1: Safeguard requirements under the WFR

The UNFCCC recognizes that safeguards are a key part of REDD+ implementation and links the UNFCCC safeguards to results-based payments, requiring that Jurisdictional REDD+ programs demonstrate how they have addressed and respected them throughout the implementation of their REDD+ activities⁴. In 2013, the Conference of the Parties adopted the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ which establishes a robust framework for the effective and sustained application of REDD+ activities while aiming for environmental integrity and tangible results. The WFR also sets out the following safeguards requirements, setting a minimum baseline that States must uphold in the implementation of REDD+ activities:

Requirement 1: Implement REDD+ activities in a manner consistent with the UNFCCC safeguards.

REDD+ activities, regardless of their type of funding source, are to be implemented in such a way that is consistent with the UNFCCC safeguards⁵. This implies that Jurisdictional REDD+ programs should take steps to clarify what UNFCCC safeguards mean at the country context (i.e, define them as per their national legal framework), and how they will be implemented throughout REDD+ activities (what action plans and strategies will be used).

⁴UNFCCC Decision 2/CP.17, Paragraphs 63 and 64, which should be read along with UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, Paragraph 69 and Appendix 1, Paragraph 2.

⁵"Agrees that, regardless of the source or type of financing, the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 70, should be consistent with the relevant provisions included in decision 1/CP.16, including the safeguards in its appendix I" UNFCCC Decision 2/CP.17 paragraph 63

Requirement 2: Establish a system to provide information on how the UNFCCC safeguards are being addressed and respected.

Jurisdictional REDD+ programs implementing REDD+ activities are required to establish a system to provide information on how the seven UNFCCC safeguards are being addressed and respected in all of the phases of implementation of REDD+ activities⁶. This is commonly referred to as the Safeguard Information System (subsequently referred to as the SIS).

Requirement 3: Provide a summary of information on how the UNFCCC safeguards are being addressed and respected.

In order to receive results-based payments, Jurisdictional REDD+ programs must present their most recent summary of information demonstrating how the safeguards have been addressed and respected (subsequently referred to as the summary of information or SOI)⁷. The UNFCCC also establishes that the summary of information should be provided periodically – usually yearly - and be included in national communications or other communication channels identified by the COP. An additional and voluntary format for providing information to the UNFCCC is through the UNFCCC REDD+ web platform.

As REDD.Plus uses the WFR⁸ requirements, the seven UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards agreed upon in 2010 – also known as the Cancun Safeguards - will be the default safeguards for performance. Figure 2 illustrates the seven REDD+ safeguards adopted by the UNFCCC.

Figure 2. Cancun Safeguards

What are the REDD+ ('Cancun') safeguards?

A Actions are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements.

B Transparent and effective national forest governance structures

C Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities

D Full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders

E Actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, and enhance other social and environmental benefits.

F Actions to address the risks of reversals to ensure sustainability

G Actions to reduce displacement of emission

⁶UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16 Paragraph 71(d).

⁷Decision 9/CP, Paragraph 4, UNFCCC Decision 2/CP.17, op cit, Paragraph 63 and 64.

⁸Available at: <https://unfccc.int/topics/land-use/resources/warsaw-framework-for-redd-plus>

Key take aways for IP and LCs?

- As noted above, REDD.Plus does not prescribe general or specific approaches that must be used to ensure safeguards are upheld. This means REDD.PLUS does not require that Jurisdictional REDD+ programs clarify what the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards mean to country context, to determine how they will be implemented throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities nor any procedures that governments must undertake to uphold safeguards throughout, such as environmental and social risk assessments and the adoption of associated management plans.
- REDD.Plus does not have a validation and verification standard or process engage in any assessment of safeguard conformance. As mentioned above, REDD.Plus relies on the UNFCCC REDD+ process, which does not assess conformance with REDD+ safeguard requirements⁹.

How does REDD.Plus address land tenure and prevent land grabbing?

As noted above, REDD.Plus **does not have additional or specific requirements** beyond what is foreseen in the WFR. The WFR deals with land tenure by requiring that Jurisdictional REDD+ programs:

1. “Ensure the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, inter alia indigenous peoples and local communities; when developing and implementing national strategies or action plans, to address, inter alia, the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, **land tenure issues**, forest governance issues, gender considerations and the UNFCCC safeguards.” Although this is a broad requirement to address land tenure issues, it should be understood as a pathway for ensuring that the rights of ownership and possession are recognized and respected, in alignment with relevant international legal obligations¹⁰ and that they should be consulted with IP and LCs.

⁹Please note the UNFCCC process only assesses the Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL) or Forest Reference Level (FRL), whether the data is transparent, consistent, complete and accurate, whether the results are accurate to the extent possible and uncertainties have been reduced based on the assumptions used, etc.

¹⁰Including ILO Convention 169 (in particular article 14.1) and UNDRIP (in particular article 26.1)

2. Implement REDD+ activities in a manner consistent with the UNFCCC safeguards. Although the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards do not explicitly mention land tenure, international best practices over the scope of interpretation of the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards^{11, 12} recognize that safeguards ‘b’ and ‘c’ encompass the recognition and respect for collective and individual land rights, which extend to their land tenure rights.

How does REDD.Plus address Benefit-Sharing?

REDD.Plus does not have additional or specific requirements beyond what is foreseen in the WFR, which means it does not explicitly call for a benefit sharing agreement to be in place.

This said, the WFR deals with benefit sharing by requiring that Jurisdictional REDD+ programs implement REDD+ activities in a manner consistent with the UNFCCC safeguards. Although the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards do not explicitly mention benefit sharing, international best practices over the scope of interpretation of the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards^{13 14} recognize that safeguards ‘b’ and ‘c’ encompass the fair and equitable distribution of benefits by calling for the respect for IP and LC knowledge and rights, and also ensuring transparent and effective forest governance systems.

IP and LCs should advocate for these to comply with relevant international conventions and agreements, domestic legal frameworks and international best practices¹⁵, which generally consider that benefit sharing plans should:

- **Outline a meaningful participatory process for developing the BSP.** The plan should clearly outline how stakeholders will be engaged in the process of developing the BSP, with the aim of ensuring their meaningful engagement. This should build on a robust and transparent stakeholder mapping exercise to correctly identify the relevant stakeholders.

¹¹Braña Varela, J., Lee, D., Rey Christen, D., and Swan, S. 2014. “REDD+ Safeguards: Practical Considerations for Developing a Summary of Information.”

¹²Rey, D., Roberts, J., Korwin, S., Rivera, L., and Ribet, U. (2013) A Guide to Understanding and Implementing the UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards. ClientEarth, London, United Kingdom.

¹³Braña Varela, J., Lee, D., Rey Christen, D., and Swan, S. 2014. “REDD+ Safeguards: Practical Considerations for Developing a Summary of Information.”

¹⁴Rey, D., Roberts, J., Korwin, S., Rivera, L., and Ribet, U. (2013) A Guide to Understanding and Implementing the UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards. ClientEarth, London, United Kingdom.

¹⁵For example, https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_assessment_report_redd_programs_v4.pdf or https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/tnc_benefit%20sharing_web.pdf or https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/REDD-Benefit-Sharing.pdf

- **Identify their legal basis.** The plan should consider a mapping of the legal basis, to help ensure the BSP is designed through existing structures, albeit not, strictly speaking, tailored to REDD+. In accordance with emerging best practices, when these existing structures are well-functioning, countries should consider regulating benefit sharing within the framework of these existing structures, which can make it easier for concerned actors to participate in REDD+ than to build an entirely new structure.
- **Identify the beneficiaries.** Beneficiaries are understood as a group of stakeholders (people involved in or affected by REDD+ Program implementation) to receive Monetary and/or Non-Monetary Benefits resulting from the REDD+ Program. Beneficiaries may include but are not limited to, communities, civil society, and the private sector, including any nested REDD+ projects. Governments, as Program Entities and parties to the Emission Reduction Payment Agreement (ERPA), may be considered beneficiaries, and retain a certain amount of ERPA Payments to cover their costs for implementing and/or managing the REDD+ Program.
- **Identify the types of benefits.** The plan should identify the form/types of benefits that are expected to be offered in correlation to the relevant REDD+ actions, which include Monetary and/or Non-Monetary Benefits.
- **Identify the mechanism/process for the distribution of benefits.** The plan should outline the way in which Monetary and Non-Monetary Benefits are to be shared with Beneficiaries, including both their proportion and the mechanism used.
- **Identify the necessary institutional arrangements.** The plan should also identify the institution(s) responsible for the BSP.
- **Identify the monitoring provisions for the implementation of the BSP.** The plan should also identify the necessary monitoring provisions for the BSP.

How does REDD.Plus address grievances and the need for a grievance redress mechanism at the jurisdictional level?

REDD.Plus **does not have additional or specific requirements** beyond what is foreseen in the WFR.

This said, the WFR deals with grievance redress by requiring that Jurisdictional REDD+ programs implement REDD+ activities in a manner consistent with the UNFCCC safeguards. Although the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards do not explicitly mention grievance redress mechanisms, international best practices over the scope of interpretation of the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards¹⁶¹⁷ recognize that safeguards ‘b’ and ‘d’ encompass adequate access to justice/grievance redress mechanisms. These mechanisms are expected to be aligned with ratified international treaties and conventions.

These mechanisms and/or procedures are expected to be aligned with relevant international agreements or conventions and domestic legal frameworks in a way that guarantees the right of access to justice in the context of REDD+ activities. In this sense, IP and LCs should consider and advocate that the available grievance redress mechanisms incorporate the following principles set out by international best practices¹⁸:

- a) **Legitimate:** enabling trust from the stakeholder groups for whose use they are intended and being accountable for the fair conduct of grievance processes. Accountability for ensuring that the parties to a grievance process cannot interfere with its fair conduct is typically one important factor in building stakeholder trust.
- b) **Accessible:** being known to all stakeholder groups for whose use they are intended and providing adequate assistance for those who may face barriers to access. Barriers to access may include a lack of awareness of the mechanism, language, literacy, costs, physical location, and fears of reprisal.
- c) **Predictable:** providing a clear and known procedure with an indicative timeframe for each stage, and clarity on the types of process and outcome available and means of monitoring implementation. For a mechanism to be trusted and used, it should provide public information about the procedure it offers.

¹⁶Braña Varela, J., Lee, D., Rey Christen, D., and Swan, S. 2014. “REDD+ Safeguards: Practical Considerations for Developing a Summary of Information.”

¹⁷Rey, D., Roberts, J., Korwin, S., Rivera, L., and Ribet, U. (2013) A Guide to Understanding and Implementing the UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards. ClientEarth, London, United Kingdom.

¹⁸For example, https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/kproducts/ti_document_-_guide_complaint_mechanisms_final.pdf or <https://irm.greenclimate.fund/resources/other> or https://climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Stakeholder-Participation-Guide_ch9.pdf

- d) **Equitable:** seeking to ensure that aggrieved parties have reasonable access to sources of information, advice, and expertise necessary to engage in a grievance process on fair, informed and respectful terms. Where imbalances are not redressed, perceived inequity can undermine both the perception of a fair process and the mechanism's ability to arrive at durable solutions.
- e) **Transparent:** keeping parties to a grievance informed about its progress and providing sufficient information about the mechanism's performance to build confidence in its effectiveness and meet any public interest at stake. Providing transparency about the mechanism's performance to wider stakeholders, through statistics, case studies or more detailed information about the handling of certain cases, can be important to demonstrate its legitimacy and fairness, and retain broad trust. At the same time, confidentiality of the dialogue between parties and of individuals' identities should be provided where necessary.
- f) **Rights compatible:** these processes are generally more successful when all parties agree that outcomes are consistent with applicable national and internationally recognized rights. Grievances are frequently not framed in terms of rights and many do not initially raise human rights or other rights concerns. Regardless, where outcomes have implications for rights, care should be taken that they are consistent with applicable nationally and internationally recognized standards and that they do not restrict access to other redress mechanisms.
- g) **Enabling continuous learning:** drawing on relevant measures to identify lessons for improving the mechanism and preventing future grievances and harms. Regular analysis of the frequency, patterns, and causes of grievances; strategies and processes used for grievance resolution; and the effectiveness of those strategies and processes, can enable the institution administering the grievance redress mechanism to improve policies, procedures, and practices to improve performance and prevent future harm.

It is also worth noting that REDD.Plus has not set-up a grievance redress mechanism, so there is currently not an avenue to raise complaints directly to them. The only available email of contact is: info@redd.plus

III. Understanding REDD.Plus relevant reporting requirements

How does REDD.Plus require the application of UNFCCC reporting requirements?

In alignment with UNFCCC requirements, REDD.Plus requires Jurisdictional REDD+ programs submit their most recent SOI and also have a SIS in place. However, the UNFCCC does not undertake a qualitative assessment over the SOI nor the SIS, and nor does REDD.Plus.

REDD.Plus does not offer any further guidance for the design/set-up of the safeguard information system, nor does it clarify what it means to have a SIS “in place” for validation and verification purposes. Experience has shown that having an operational SIS is essential to ensuring all stakeholders’ meaningful participation in gathering/analyzing safeguard-related information (as per UNFCCC guidance)¹⁹, and to provide quality assurance of such information²⁰.

In this sense, it would be recommended that IP and LCs advocate that a SIS is adequately set-up in each jurisdiction, and used to strengthen the quality, reliability and credibility of information used to demonstrate conformance with safeguards. This means that the SIS should be easily accessible, with detailed information on how to submit feedback and information.

¹⁹UNFCCC Decision 2/CP.17 paragraph 63

²⁰García, M., Rey, D., Rivera L., Korwin, S., and Ribet, U. [2017] Strategic and Design Considerations for Designing a Safeguard Information System, A Self-assessment Tool. CLP and SNV, London, United Kingdom.

How can IP and LCs access information submitted to REDD.Plus?

Given REDD.Plus simply uses the process outlined in the WFR and conducted by the UNFCCC, all the information submitted to the UNFCCC by jurisdictions that is relevant to REDD.Plus can be found at the Lima REDD+ info hub, available here: <https://redd.unfccc.int/info-hub.html>

In decision 9/CP.19 the COP decided to establish the Lima REDD+ Information Hub on the REDD+ Web Platform as a means to publish information on the results of REDD+ activities, and corresponding results-based payments. The Lima REDD+ Information Hub aims to increase transparency of information on REDD+ results-based actions.

Additionally, the REDD.Plus website publishes information from the participating jurisdictions. It can be accessed here: <https://www.redd.plus/>

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[REDD.+ platform](#)

[The UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform](#)

[Warsaw Framework for REDD+](#)