

# Strategic and Design Considerations for Designing a Safeguard Information System

## A Self-assessment Tool



Supported by:



Federal Ministry for the  
Environment, Nature Conservation,  
Building and Nuclear Safety

based on a decision of the German Bundestag



## Acknowledgements

This self-assessment tool, entitled: **Strategic and Design Considerations for Designing a Safeguards Information System**, is an output of the project: **Operationalising National Safeguard Requirements for Results-based Payments from REDD+**, funded and supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety [BMUB]’s International Climate Initiative.

The project is being implemented in three regional hub countries - Ghana [Africa], Peru [Latin America] and Vietnam [South East Asia] over a three-year period [2016-2018]. It is being implemented by SNV, in partnership globally with Climate Law and Policy [CLP], in Ghana with KASA and in Peru with Law, Environment and Natural Resources [DAR].

The project aims to assist countries that have made significant progress towards REDD+ readiness in each region, with good prospects of near-term financing, meet multiple safeguard requirements and be eligible for results-based payments. This will be achieved at the national level through facilitating country-led safeguard approaches and designing of safeguard information systems, and at the subnational level through mainstreaming of safeguards into low-emissions development planning and piloting participatory forest monitoring approaches. In addition, the project has a global component, aimed at developing state of the art knowledge products and facilitating South-South knowledge and learning exchanges.

The authors are particularly indebted to Richard Rastall- SNV, REDD+ Advisor SNV Vietnam, Steve Swan - UN-REDD REDD+ Safeguards Coordinator, Saraswati Rodríguez and Victoria Suárez - REDD+ Safeguards Experts, for their substantive contributions during the development of these guidelines.

## Suggested citation

García, 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.

## Abbreviations

CAS	Country Approaches to Safeguards
CNSAS	National Committee on Environmental and Social Safeguards of Guatemala
CMSREDD+	National Multi-sectorial REDD+ Safeguards Committee of Guatemala
CONAFOR	National Forest Commission of Mexico
COP	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
CTC	National REDD+ Technical Advisory Committee of Mexico
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FGRM	Feedback grievance redress mechanism
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GRM	Grievance redress mechanism
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
NFMS	National Forest Monitoring System
NRAP	National REDD+ Action Programme of Viet Nam
NS/AP	National REDD+ Strategy or Action plan
NSS	National Safeguard System

OPs	Operational Policies
PaMs	Policies and Measures
PCI	Principles, criteria, indicators
PRAPs	Provincial REDD+ ActionPlans of Viet Nam
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PLRs	Policies, Laws and Regulations
PNG	Papua New Guinea
QC	Quality Control
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
REDD+ SES	REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards
SESA	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
SESTWG	Social and Environmental Safeguards Technical Working Group of Papua New Guinea
SIS	Safeguard Information System
SOI	Summary of Information
STWG-SG	Sub-Technical Working Group on Safeguards of Viet Nam
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
VNFOREST	Vietnam Administration of Forestry

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# Introduction

## Background

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’s [UNFCCC] Warsaw Framework for REDD+<sup>1</sup> outlined the following three key REDD+ safeguard-related requirements for countries participating in REDD+ and seeking to receive results-based payments:

- I. Ensure that REDD+ activities, regardless the source and type of funding, are implemented in a manner consistent with the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards [hereafter referred to as the Cancun safeguards];<sup>2</sup>
- II. Develop a system for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities;<sup>3</sup>
- III. Submit the most recent summary of information on how all the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are no official guidelines on how countries are supposed to set up a system for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected [commonly known as a Safeguard Information System or SIS], Parties to the UNFCCC have agreed on some broad guidance on the characteristics of a SIS.<sup>5</sup> Namely, it should:

- Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis;
- Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time;
- Provide information on how all the safeguards referred to in appendix I to decision 1/CP.16 are being addressed and respected;
- Be country-driven and implemented at the national level; and
- Build upon existing systems, as appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> Decisions 9/CP.19 to 15/CP.19, recalling all previous REDD+ related decisions, including 17/CP.8, 2/CP.13, 4/CP.15, 1/CP.16, 2/CP.17, 12/CP.17 and 1/CP.18. Design of Safeguard Information Systems. CLP and SNV, London, United Kingdom.  
<sup>2</sup> Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix II, Decision 2/CP.17 paragraph 63.  
<sup>3</sup> Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(d).  
<sup>4</sup> Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 3 and Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 4.  
<sup>5</sup> UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 2.

In the absence of more specific guidelines regarding the SIS, the system can be broadly understood as the domestic institutional arrangements - and associated processes - in place for providing information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected in a country throughout the implementation of its proposed REDD+ actions.<sup>6</sup>

While a SIS is intended to demonstrate how safeguards are being addressed and respected, it is merely an institutional framework for collecting, managing and disseminating information. It is important to note that a SIS on its own is not expected to - nor is it intended to - ensure that REDD+ actions/policies and measures are *implemented* in a manner that is consistent with the Cancun safeguards; although it may contribute to doing so.

Some countries have chosen to design a SIS as part of a broader *country approach to safeguards* [or a CAS], which aims to ensure consistency of REDD+ implementation with international safeguard requirements, as well as providing information on this implementation.<sup>7</sup> More information on the CAS will be presented in the first part of the tool.

<sup>6</sup> UN REDD Programme [2016] REDD+ Safeguard Information Systems: Practical Design Considerations. Technical Resource Series. Safeguards Edition I  
<sup>7</sup> For more information on the development of Country Approaches to Safeguards please refer to Rey, D., Korwin, S., Ribet, U. and Rivera L. [2016] Best Practices and Considerations for the Development of REDD+ Country Approaches to Safeguards and Design of Safeguard Information Systems. CLP and SNV, London, United Kingdom.

Objectives and structure of this document

While there is some broad guidance from the UNFCCC on the objectives and characteristics of a SIS, countries are still facing the challenge of designing their own - country-tailored - SIS.

The objective of this tool is to assist countries to strategically plan the design process of their Safe-guards Information System, drawing from countries’ best practices and lessons learned, through a self-assessment approach. It is worth noting that this tool is **not** intended as a step-by-step guide for designing a SIS, but rather aims to help facilitate decision-making processes at the national level by promoting country-led discussions and analyses. Examples of countries’ best practices and lessons learned have been included in boxes linked to each planning and design consideration.<sup>8</sup>

The tool is structured into two sections.

The **first part** of the tool examines the *strategic planning considerations* for the design of a SIS, by which is meant, the strategic decisions required to guide the design process of the SIS. Each strategic planning consideration includes a list of guiding questions to enable a self-assessment approach for planning the design of a SIS. Such considerations include:

- I. Defining the objective[s] of the SIS
- II. Identifying linkages with efforts to ensure consistency of REDD+ actions with the Cancun safeguards
- III. Identifying linkages with FCPF processes<sup>9</sup>
- IV. Stakeholder engagement
- V. Timeframes
- VI. Available and required resources

The **second part** of the tool examines the *main design considerations* of a SIS. These design considerations consider existing UNFCCC guidance - when available - and as in the previous section, include key guiding questions to enable a self-assessment approach. Such design considerations include:

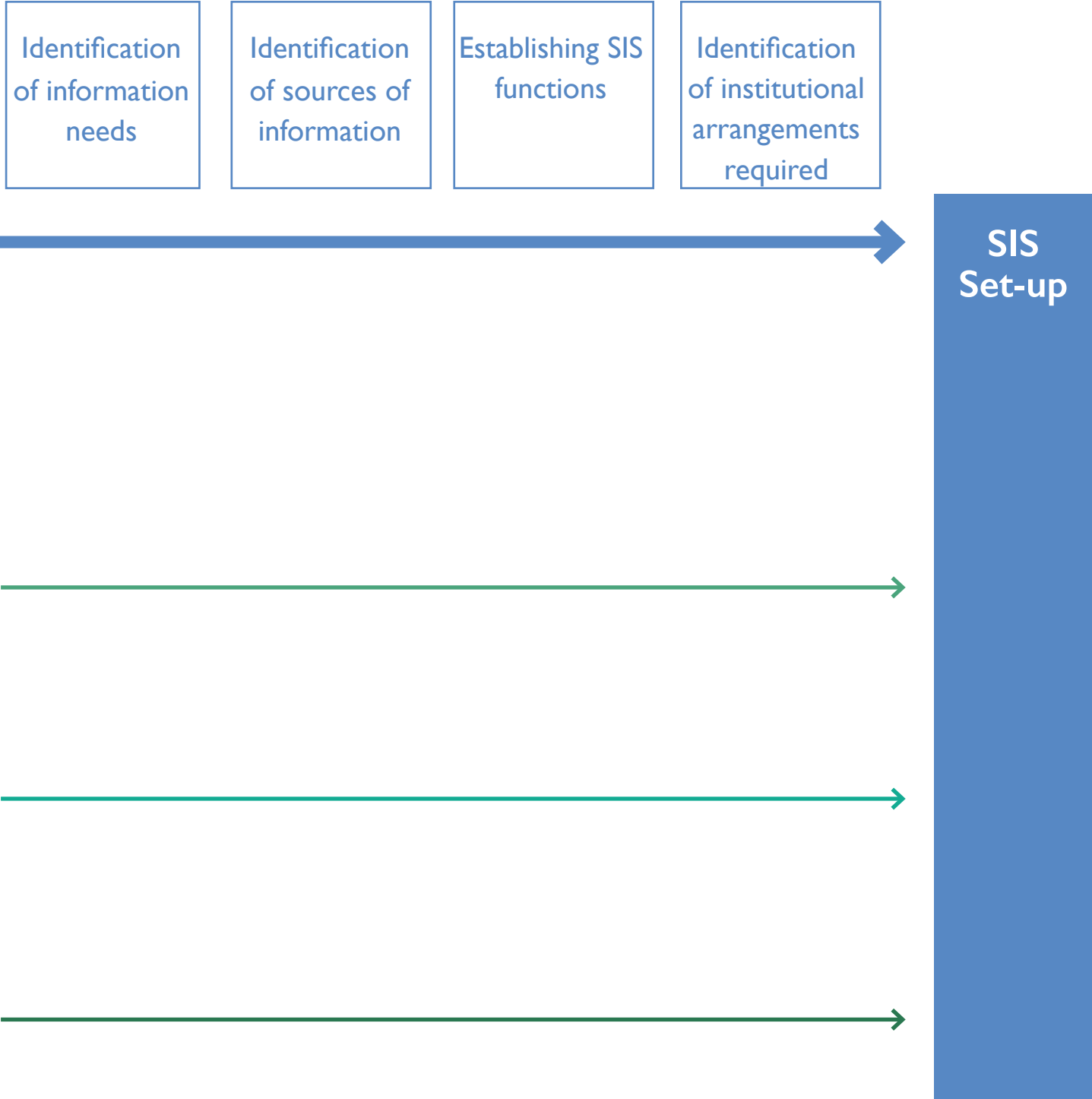
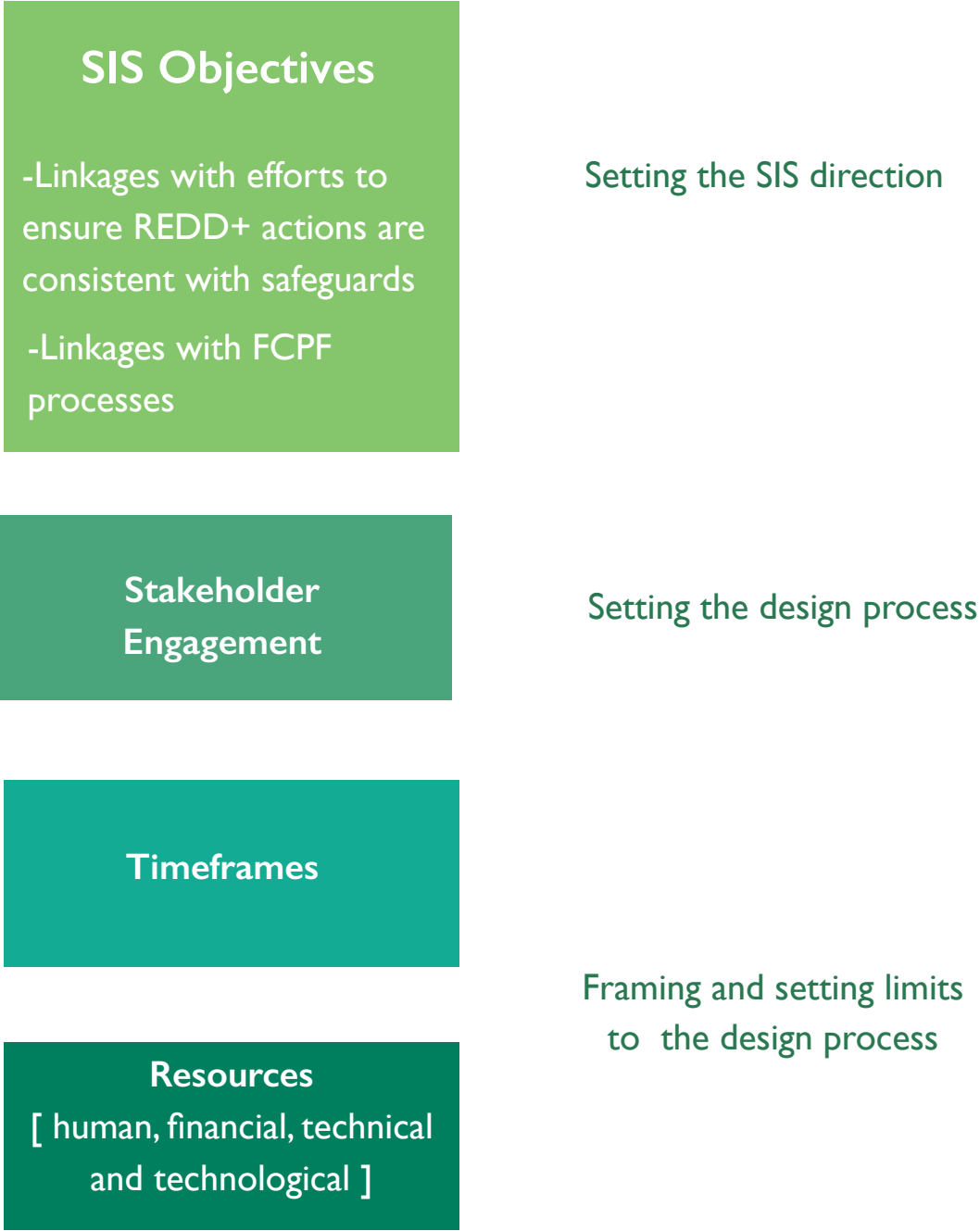
- I. Identifying information needs of the SIS
- II. Identifying sources of information of the SIS
- III. Establishing functions of the SIS
- IV. Identifying / establishing institutional arrangements of the SIS

<sup>8</sup> For more information on countries’ best practices and lessons learned regarding safeguards-related requirements please refer to Rey, D., Korwin, S., Ribet, U. and Rivera L. [2016] Best Practices and Considerations for the Development of REDD+ Country Approaches to Safeguards and Design of Safeguard Information Systems. CLP and SNV, London, United Kingdom.

<sup>9</sup> This tool has considered the importance for assessing potential linkages with FCPF processes on safeguards, given existing guidance and requirements on the matter under the FCPF, however a similar assessment should be considered for other safeguards-related initiatives applicable to the country, for instance future guidance under the Green Climate Fund, bilateral contractual commitments, others.

**Figure** Strategic Planning and Design Considerations

I.



Audience for this self-assessment tool

This tool is primarily addressed to in-country stakeholders involved in REDD+ readiness, in particular, safeguards processes, such as policy-makers and civil servants from national institutions, as well as other relevant stakeholders - including civil society - and organisations engaged in relevant government-led REDD+ readiness processes.

II.

Strategic considerations for planning the design of a SIS

The following section outlines strategic planning considerations that can inform thinking when preparing for the design of a SIS. This section covers key strategic decisions that must be made as part of the design process of the SIS. Under each consideration, a list of key guiding questions is offered, drawing from best practices in leading countries.

Objective of the SIS

The default objective of a SIS, from a UNFCCC perspective, is to provide information that demonstrates how the seven Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected<sup>10</sup> throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities. However, countries might want to consider additional objectives for their SIS, bearing in mind additional safeguards related - information and reporting - commitments that may have been made to other agencies or donors financing REDD+ implementation or providing results-based payments, as well as any other national reporting objectives that may benefit from the SIS. It will be important to consider these pre-existing commitments and broader reporting objectives during the initial planning process.

Key guiding questions to examine when considering the objectives of the national SIS:

- What other safeguard reporting commitments does the country have beyond those under the UNFCCC? For example, does the country have contractual commitments with the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility [FCPF] or other investor[s]/donor[s]<sup>11</sup>?
- If so, is the SIS expected to gather and provide information to meet these additional reporting requirements [e.g. information on implementation of Environmental Social Management Framework under the FCPF or other safeguards-related processes and requirements that are applicable to the country]?

<sup>10</sup> UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16 paragraph 71 (d).  
<sup>11</sup> Including the Green Climate Fund and /or accredited entities under the Fund.



- Is the SIS expected to collect, manage and disseminate broader information beyond demonstrating how the Cancun safeguards are being ‘addressed’ and ‘respected’? For example, to track the implementation of other national policies beyond REDD+?
- Is the SIS expected to be an independent / stand-alone information *arrangement* for reporting on how the Cancun safeguards are being ‘addressed’ and ‘respected’, is it expected be part of a broader REDD+ information system, or, is it expected to be part of a broader socio-environmental information system?<sup>12</sup>
- Has the country considered a step-wise approach to expanding and/or improving the SIS over time? For instance, the SIS could be initially focused on REDD+ safeguards, and subsequently expanded to include additional reporting responsibilities, or gathering and providing information beyond REDD+ implementation.

Box

I.

## Overview of international best practices for ‘settling SIS objectives’

It is important to consider that the design of a SIS is likely to be an iterative undertaking. Countries may, over time, wish to consider additional objectives for their SIS, for example to ensure that REDD+, through the application of safeguards, contributes to broader sustainable development policy goals, but also keep in mind that REDD+ is likely to be implemented in a step-wise approach. As such, an initial or piloting phase for the SIS can allow for subsequent adjustments/improvements as well as subsequent expansion of its objectives if required.

The SIS should be regarded as a country-driven<sup>13</sup> and country-tailored *institutional arrangement* that should respond to both national circumstances and capabilities, but also to national reporting needs and commitments. Thus, considering possible additional objectives when designing a SIS may result in a cost-efficient system for gathering and reporting on social and environmental dimensions of implementation not just of REDD+ actions, but actions undertaken in relevant sectors, such as forestry or land-use more generally.

<sup>12</sup> For example, covering the forest sector or even multiple sectors.

<sup>13</sup> UNFCCC decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 2.

## Linkages with the efforts undertaken to ensure consistency of REDD+ actions with the Cancun safeguards

Countries are required to undertake efforts to ensure that their REDD+ actions<sup>14</sup> are consistent with the Cancun safeguards.<sup>15</sup> However, the SIS itself is not expected to contribute to ensuring the consistency of REDD+ actions with the Cancun safeguards. Instead, the SIS is expected to collect and provide information on how such REDD+ actions are consistent with safeguards throughout their design and implementation.

For that reason, it is important to remember that the SIS objectives and functions must be defined in a way that ensures that it gathers information on both the design and implementation of the country’s NS/APs [or, if the NS/APs are too broad, linked to the REDD+ actions]. This is important as if the SIS is not adequately tailored to the NS/AP/REDD+ actions it may not be able to gather and provide the necessary information. This is particularly relevant given that different approaches to REDD+ [Policy interventions, projects, hybrid approaches] require different types of SIS design.

Key guiding questions to examine when planning the design of a SIS to ensure that it is adequately linked to the REDD+ actions and the measures taken to ensure consistency with the Cancun safeguards, include:

- Has the country analysed - or considered analysing - how/whether the Cancun safeguards should be clarified/interpreted and anchored to domestic legal and governance frameworks, as the basis for the SIS design? See Box 7 below for more details.
- Has the country analysed - or considered analysing - how/whether the Cancun safeguards should be anchored to the country approach for REDD+ implementation [i.e. National Strategy/Action Plans -NS/APs]?
- Has the country already identified - or made official - its NS/APs? If not, when will it be available and / or when will there be official information about the proposed REDD+ actions?

<sup>14</sup> REDD+ actions can be understood as those Policies and Measures – PaMs – aiming to ‘guide the implementation of REDD+ activities [emissions reductions and/or removals]’. For more information refer to: UNREDD, UNITAR, REDD+ Academy Learning Journal 7: Policies and Measures for REDD+ Implementation. 2015.

<sup>15</sup> And other safeguards related commitments depending on particular countries’ reporting commitments under other investors/donors.

- Has the country developed/considered developing specific measures to ensure that REDD+ actions are implemented in consistency with safeguards?
- Has the country identified priority issues - for instance key risks and benefits - associated to the NS/APs?

Box

2.

Overview of international *best practices* for ensuring SIS linkages with efforts to ensure consistency of REDD+ implementation with safeguards

The coordinated efforts undertaken by countries to ensure that REDD+ actions/policies and measures are implemented in a manner that is consistent with the Cancun safeguards [and that information on these efforts is collected and reported in compliance with all safeguards requirements], are often described as a *country approach to safeguards* [CAS].

Determining what the *country’s approach to safeguards* will be is considered key for framing the SIS design/set-up and to ensure that the SIS will be able to provide information of how safeguards are being addressed and respected. This entails a sound understanding of what the Cancun safeguards mean to the country context and how they are reflected in the domestic legal and governance frameworks.<sup>16</sup>

When aiming to ensure that REDD+ actions are consistent with safeguards - or as part of their broader CAS<sup>17</sup> -, some countries are carrying out assessments to determine which aspects of their existing legal framework may be used to ensure consistency with/enforceability of the Cancun safeguards throughout the implementation of the proposed REDD+ actions [e.g. law and regulations to ensure full and effective consultation with vulnerable groups]. In these circumstances, the SIS would be expected to report on the implementation of such aspects of the legal framework.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the development of Country Approaches to Safeguards please refer to Rey, D., Korwin, S., Ribet, U. and Rivera L. [2016] Best Practices and Considerations for the Development of REDD+ Country Approaches to Safeguards and Design of Safeguard Information Systems. CLP and SNV, London, United Kingdom.  
<sup>17</sup> In the case a country has adopted a CAS.

Linkages with FCPF relevant processes

While there’s a broad agreement on the importance of REDD+ safeguards and related required processes amongst donor countries and the diversity of entities providing REDD+ funding - including the GCF -, in the absence of more specific guidance and requirements that are to be considered by REDD+ countries, this tool has focused on those linkages between the SIS and FCPF processes relevant for REDD+ safeguards and the SIS.<sup>18</sup> Countries receiving FCPF funding for readiness preparation through the World Bank, as well as seeking to obtain results based funding from the FCPF Carbon Fund, are required to ensure compliance with the common approach to environmental and social safeguards for multiple delivery partners [Common Approach].<sup>19</sup>

As part of the Common Approach, countries must carry out a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment [SESA], and develop an Environmental and Social Management Framework [ESMF]. Therefore, countries seeking to meet both UNFCCC and FCPF safeguard related requirements, need to consider what are the implications and opportunities of meeting both requirements, when planning the design of their SIS.

Key guiding questions to examine when planning the design of a SIS, with a view of ensuring linkages with the FCPF processes are:

- Has the country defined how/whether FCPF safeguard related processes would be linked to safeguards commitments/requirements under the UNFCCC, or how the Social and Environmental Strategic Assessment could inform the NS/APs?
- Has the country considered potential linkages between the Environmental Strategic Management Framework and measures to be undertaken to ensure REDD+ actions are implemented in consistency with safeguards?
- Is the SIS expected to be able to gather and provide information about how the identified potential risks and benefits of REDD+ are being addressed, and how the specific Work Bank safeguards are being applied, as well as on the implementation of the Environmental Strategic Management Framework?
- What are the country - and other relevant stakeholders - expectations concerning the scope of the reports to the FCPF?

<sup>18</sup> If additional safeguards-related processes and requirements are applicable for the country, and are expected to be addressed through the SIS [see section 2.1], then similar a self-assessment approach - and guiding questions - should be considered for each funding commitment.  
<sup>19</sup> UN REDD FCPF [2012] R-PP Template Annexes Version 6, for Country Use p. 44 and FCPF [2013] Carbon Fund Methodological Framework. Final. P. 17.

## Overview of international *best practices* for ensuring SIS linkages with FCPF relevant processes

If the country chooses to promote a unified and coherent process for addressing safeguards requirements and commitments under the UNFCCC together with those under the FCPF, it will be important to strategically determine synergies between the design process of the SIS and the preparation and reporting of the ESMF, including whether reporting on the implementation of the ESMF can feed into the SIS as a source of information.

Moreover, if the expectation that the SIS objective is to serve to provide information on the implementation of the ESMF, it will be important to aim to ensure that the ESMF is completed by the time the SIS is intended to become operational.<sup>20</sup>

### Stakeholder engagement

UNFCCC Decision I/CP.16 requires full and effective stakeholder participation to be ensured throughout REDD+ readiness, as well as during the implementation of REDD+ actions.<sup>21</sup> It is therefore important for countries to consider adequate stakeholder engagement during the design process of the SIS as a key condition to ensure its legitimacy and sustainable further operation.

Key guiding questions to examine when planning the design of a SIS, with a view of ensuring an adequate stakeholder engagement process includes:

- Has the country identified domestic legal and governance frameworks - as well as country specific international legal commitments - which should inform, guide and regulate participation and engagement processes in the context of REDD+?
- Has the country undertaken - is undertaking - broader participation and engagement efforts for broader REDD+ readiness processes?

<sup>20</sup> Similar strategic considerations will be required to be taken into consideration, in case the country has other safeguards related commitments to be reported on as part of the SIS objectives.

<sup>21</sup> UNFCCC Decision I/CP.16, paragraph 72.

- If so, which key stakeholders<sup>22</sup> related to REDD+ design and implementation have an interest in safeguards and the SIS?
- Has the country identified these relevant stakeholders' key expectations regarding participation and engagement in the SIS design process?
- Has the country identified other stakeholders, besides those involved in REDD+ preparations, whose engagement is key during the SIS design? For instance, which government agencies and other government agencies/multi-stakeholder platforms need to be involved to inform or provide technical input for the SIS design?
- Has the country determined the extent to which stakeholder participation and engagement will be promoted throughout the SIS design process? Will the level of stakeholder participation and engagement vary according to each SIS design stage [see sections 3.1 to 3.4 below]?
- If broader participation and engagement efforts for REDD+ readiness have been - are being - undertaken - are such existing participation platforms/efforts fit for fulfilling such role?
- Is there a need to make additional arrangements [i.e. platforms, consultations, workshops] to ensure adequate stakeholder participation?
- Is there enough clarity as to who should lead such participation/engagement processes?
- Has the country considered the extent to which stakeholders participation and engagement will be promoted during the operationalization of the SIS? If so, which role would they have and which actors / institutions have been deemed relevant?
- Has the country identified measures to ensure that stakeholder feedback is considered in the SIS design and to demonstrate as such? If not, is it planning to do so?

<sup>22</sup> May include actors and institutions, both governmental and non-governmental.

## Overview of international *best practices* on stakeholders’ engagement

Most countries have carried out stakeholder engagement throughout their REDD+ readiness process, including in the design of their NS/APs and their SIS, though these have often been done separately. Engaging stakeholders in a siloed manner during the different aspects of REDD+ readiness is one way of responding to the diversity of interests, and can help draw on the most appropriate expertise for each context. Lessons learned from these countries, however, suggest that stakeholder engagement should as far as possible, be a coordinated and coherent process covering all aspects of REDD+ readiness [and implementation], by recognising stakeholder engagement as a key strategy for ensuring transparency.

Moreover, in terms of efficient allocation of REDD+ readiness resources, it may be more cost-effective for countries to utilise broader REDD+ or national participation efforts/platforms, including consultations and workshops, to fulfil safeguards and SIS participation/engagement needs.

### Timeframes

The SIS is a *country-tailored* information arrangement required to be in place to access to results-based payments.<sup>23</sup> While UNFCCC guidance states that the SIS should be country-driven and that it could be built upon existing information systems<sup>24</sup>, it is important to examine country-specific timing implications that the SIS design process entails. Understanding the SIS design timing implications means bearing in mind both the strategic considerations discussed above [see sections 2.1 to 2.4 above], and the methodological considerations, to be further developed in section 3 below.

Therefore, one of the first steps that several countries have taken is to establish realistic timeframes for the SIS design process. Key guiding questions to assist in this process include:

<sup>23</sup> UNFCCC Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 4.  
<sup>24</sup> UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 2.

- What are the government’s expectations with regards to the time-frames for having the SIS set-up?
- Are there specific time-frame expectations/commitments with regards to the SIS set-up from other relevant national stakeholders [see section 2.4. above]?
- Are there specific time-frame expectations/commitments from other international stakeholders [e.g. donors, FCPF] that are relevant for SIS design, including expectations for accessing results based payments?
- Has a step-wise approach been considered for the SIS design and implementation? If so, what SIS objectives and/or functions might be implemented in the short-term and which might be developed and/or improved for the medium and long run?
- If the country has considered clarifying and anchoring the Cancun safeguards to domestic legislation and country circumstances [see section 2.1. above], when will this process be completed? Is it feasible to ensure timing coherency between this process and the SIS design?
- If the country has considered anchoring the Cancun safeguards to NS/APs or developing specific measures to ensure the safeguards are met [see section 2.2. above], when will this process be completed? Is it feasible to ensure timing coherency between this process and SIS design?
- If the SIS is expected to gather and provide information about SESA and ESMF implementation, has the country considered how to ensure timing coherency amongst the SESA and ESMF development and the proposed timing for the SIS design?
- Has adequate consideration been given to how stakeholder participation and engagement efforts envisioned during the SIS design process, may affect the SIS design plan in terms of timing? If additional efforts [i.e. platforms, consultations, workshops] will be required for fulfilling such role[s], what timing implications would this have?



## Overview of international *best practices* for SIS design timeframes

Experience shows that countries undertaking SIS design processes have invested an average of twelve-months in the design of their SIS, including the initial strategic planning phase. The time spent on strategic planning and design of the SIS planning will largely depend on the degree of clarity the government has regarding strategic considerations 2.1 to 2.3 above, as well as on the available capacities and resources to undertake methodological design processes examined under sections 3.1. to 3.4. below. Overall time-frames will also depend on the degree of participation/engagement that is expected as part of the design of the SIS.

### Available and required resources

Countries need to consider the human and financial resources required to design their SIS and reconcile this with the amount of resources that are available. The level of resources needed will largely depend on the objectives of the SIS, on the current national capacities and capabilities and whether a step-wise approach for designing and implementing the SIS is being considered.

Key guiding questions include:

- Does the REDD+ government agency / national entity in charge of the REDD+ readiness processes - and future implementation - have sufficient staff - and the required expertise - for designing and implementing the SIS [see sections 3.1 to 3.4]?
- What financial and technological resources are available for the design and implementation of the SIS [see sections 3.1 to 3.4.]? What additional resources will be required?
- What participation/engagement efforts are likely to be conducted during the SIS design and implementation, and what financial and human resources are required for fulfilling such task? Are these available or is additional support required?
- Considering the time-frames proposed [see section 2.5.], are the human, financial and technological resources available to meet such time-frames?

## Overview of international *best practices* on required resources for SIS design

In terms of human resources required for the SIS design, experience from countries shows the need for multi-disciplinary expertise in order to undertake design and SIS implementation tasks [see sections 3.1 to 3.4], including on design and management of information systems and REDD+. Likewise, specialised expertise will be required to undertake participation/engagement processes, defined in section 2.4.

Furthermore, IT expertise will be required if a *web based* SIS is being considered. Experience from some pioneering countries completing the initial design of their SIS shows that the costs can average USD 100-150k. It is worth noting that costs will largely vary from country to country, depending on the design aspects they seek to put in place, as well as on national capabilities and existing governance arrangements relevant for designing the SIS.

*The strategic considerations examined in the above sections might also contribute to national planning efforts, with a view of developing a work plan, roadmap or action plan which might help guide the SIS design process forward.*

III.

Design considerations for the SIS

Drawing from pioneering countries’ best practices and experiences, the following section aims to highlight some of the main design considerations that may influence the design of the SIS:

- Information needs of the SIS;
- Sources of information of the SIS;
- Functions of the SIS; and
- Institutional arrangements of the SIS.

Under each key consideration a list of key guiding questions is offered to orientate countries in this planning process. If relevant and available, methods and tools are offered.

Information needs of the SIS

The SIS is expected to provide information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected. However, the UNFCCC does not offer guidance as to what ‘type of information’ needs to be provided to demonstrate how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected. The process to identify these types of information is usually referred to as the identification of the ‘SIS’ information needs’.

Key guiding questions to consider when determining the information needs of the SIS:

- Has the chosen REDD+ approach - i.e. subnational vs national, project vs policy based, a mix of both -, been factored when defining the scale of the information needs? If so, are specific measures for ensuring the safeguards are met available?
- Has the country identified the key inputs<sup>25</sup> that will inform the SIS information needs? If so, are these key inputs available? If not, when will they be available?

- Has the country analysed the Cancun safeguards in the context of domestic legal and governance frameworks, including country specific international legal commitments [see section 2.2]? If so, is this expected to inform the SIS design?
- Should the chosen REDD+ implementation approach [i.e. NS/APs including national or sub-national policy interventions, project based, or a mix of both] inform the scope and scale of the SIS design [see section 2.2]?
- If the SIS is expected to gather and provide information for the FCPF purposes, how will the SESA and ESMF be used to inform the identification of the SIS information needs?
- If the objective of the SIS is to manage information beyond demonstrating how the Cancun safeguards are being ‘addressed’ and ‘respected’ [see section 2.1] what additional inputs may be required to identify information needs?
- To what extent has stakeholder participation been considered - or is required - for identifying SIS information needs?
- What actors / institutions are best placed to inform / provide technical inputs to the development of the SIS information needs?

<sup>25</sup> For instance, the clarification of the Cancun Safeguards in accordance to national circumstances, the identification of priority potential risks and benefits associated to REDD+ implementation, the SESA Report, etc.

## Overview of international *best practices* for identifying SIS information needs

The process of interpreting/clarifying how the general principles contained in the Cancun safeguards are reflected in the national context has been regarded as a key input for the ‘information needs. Undertaking such an exercise aims to ensure that the SIS will be able to gather and provide information that reflects the country context. It is also important to consider that the information needs of the SIS are expected to be linked to the country’s NS/APs [or, if the NS/APs are too broad, linked to the REDD+ actions], for it to be able to gather and provide the necessary information.

Country best practices have shown that this task is an iterative undertaking, as the information needs will have to be further refined once the REDD+ actions are defined more clearly. One way of refining the information needs could be if a risks and benefit assessments of the proposed REDD+ actions is carried out. Most of the countries examined to date have invested an average of six months in determining their initial SIS information needs. In addition, if multi-stakeholder consultations are envisaged, participation time-frames should be considered, and factored into the overall time-frame and resources considerations for the SIS set up [see section 2].

## Sources of information of the SIS

According to the UNFCCC guidance on SIS design, countries should, as appropriate, ‘build upon existing systems’ that are deemed relevant for providing information on the Cancun safeguards.<sup>26</sup>

Key guiding questions to assist in the process of identifying and assessing the information systems and sources for the SIS:

- Does the country have a clear idea of existing information systems and sources that are relevant for the SIS? If not, have specific research or analysis been commissioned/considered?
- Are such information systems and sources gathering and providing information at a scale that is compatible with the scale of REDD+ implementation?

<sup>26</sup> UNFCCC Decision 12/CP.17 paragraph 2.

- How comprehensive is the social, governance and environmental information that is currently being collected and reported by existing information systems?
- How can existing information systems linked to the implementation of the country’s legal framework be used as a source of information?
- Have the SIS information needs been identified? To what extent will they be used as a parameter to assess the availability and adequacy of information available in existing systems and sources?
- To what extent are the SIS information needs met with existing information systems and sources? If not, is it feasible for existing information systems to include new reporting man dates?<sup>27</sup>
- How can other sources of information contribute to meeting the SIS information needs, for instance, independent monitoring at national or local scale REDD+ implementation by non-governmental initiatives? Is it feasible to use such sources of information for official monitoring and reporting purposes?
- How will the SIS information needs be met in the case existing information systems and sources are not sufficient / able to meet such needs?
- Is it relevant - and feasible - to use FCPF and/or other REDD+ projects / initiatives’ social and environmental monitoring and evaluation processes as sources of information to meet the SIS information needs?
- To what extent has stakeholder participation been factored into the process of identifying/ assessing relevant sources of information?
- Which actors / institutions are the best placed to inform / provide technical inputs regarding sources of information?

<sup>27</sup> Consider that additional information arrangements/sources may be required.

## Overview of international *best practices* for identifying SIS information sources

Country’s early experiences have demonstrated that using the ‘SIS information needs’ to inform/ identify sources of information has been effective, as they provide a framework to assess the extent to which the identified information systems are relevant for the SIS purposes. Existing information systems and sources can contribute to the cost-efficiency of the SIS design since they already have a mandate, allocated budget and institutional support.

In most countries, the process of determining the relevance of existing information sources requires engaging the governmental agencies in charge of the information systems and sources that have been identified as possibly relevant, as well as information systems experts, and has taken an average of four months [dependent and linked to the chosen consultation processes]. The assessment of existing information systems and sources will also inform the feasibility of setting-up a SIS based on principles, criteria and indicators [PCIs].

In addition, if multi-stakeholder consultations are considered appropriate as part of this task, adequate consideration should be given to the time and resources necessary for their completion [see section 2]. It should however, be noted that existing systems may not on their own be sufficient to meet the SIS information needs, particularly if the country’s REDD+ approach heavily relies on project-type interventions.

Drawing from country’s best practices Annex I outlines methods for the identification and assessment of information systems and sources.

## Functions of the SIS

The UNFCCC does not offer any guidance on what specific functions the SIS should perform beyond the ‘need to ‘provide transparent and consistent information’ on how all the Cancun safe-guards are being addressed and respected ‘that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis’.

Key guiding questions to examine in the process of determining what should be the key functions of the SIS:

- Considering the objectives established for the SIS [i.e. providing information on FCPF processes, providing information on broader REDD+ implementation, etc.], what key functions<sup>28</sup> should the SIS be required to meet these objectives, including cases where the objective is broader than providing information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected in the context of the UNFCCC process?
- What are the key functions of the existing information systems and sources that have been considered as relevant for the SIS?
- To what extent will existing and additional information sources inform SIS functions? For instance, would information collection be done based on the collection methods of existing information systems, or will the SIS require tailored information collection methods?
- What types of quality control/assurance arrangements are needed to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of information collected and provided by the SIS?
- In terms of dissemination, and according to the SIS objectives, what should be the frequency for the SIS to disseminate information and to whom?
- Should this dissemination frequency - and outputs - be based on reporting commitments? For instance, summaries of information for the UNFCCC, ESMF implementation reports, etc.<sup>29</sup>
- What relevant information systems and/or actors/institutions/agencies should be involved in the design and operation of each function of the SIS? If relevant information systems and/or institutions will be involved in operating the SIS, which roles/responsibilities will they have regarding the SIS functions?
- To what extent has the country considered participation / consultation on reports delivered by the SIS on how safeguards are being addressed and respected? If so, which structures / processes have been considered to fulfil such role?

<sup>28</sup> The types of functions information systems may perform include: information collection, aggregation, analysis, quality control/assurance, dissemination, etc.

<sup>29</sup> UNFCCC requires submission of summary with National Communications, but expectations at national level may be information is provided on a more frequent basis.



## Institutional arrangements of the SIS

While UNFCCC guidance makes no reference to this design consideration, lessons learned from countries during their SIS design have highlighted the importance of giving due thought to the institutional arrangements necessary to operationalize the SIS. This means determining who [i.e. a single government institution and / or a combination of governmental and non-governmental actors] will be involved in the operation of the SIS, and in performing the different functions of the SIS, as well as how such functions will be carried out.

This may include identifying/creating a specific institutional platform for the SIS<sup>30</sup> as well as exploring and establishing information sharing agreements between the existing [and new] sources of information and the SIS management body. Moreover, such institutional arrangements with regards to information-sharing and putting in place the SIS functions may also contribute to ensure the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the SIS.

Key guiding questions to consider when determining the possible institutional arrangements of the SIS include:

- Is the SIS expected to be a standalone information arrangement specifically designed for reporting on REDD+ safeguards or will it be part of a broader information system? If the second option is chosen, is this broader system already established or does it need to be built?
- Which institution/agency should host - and/or be responsible for - the SIS?
- What institutions have been identified as relevant for providing information, to ensure the SIS meets its information needs?
- What relevant institutions/agencies should be responsible for performing each function once the SIS operation starts?
- What types of institutional arrangements will be required to operationalize the SIS, and to ensure that it carries out the chosen functions, including accessing information from other information sources/systems?
- Are there existing institutional arrangements - for information sharing for instance - already in place between the institution/entity hosting the SIS and those key institutions and/or key information systems and sources that are relevant for the SIS operation?

<sup>30</sup> If the SIS will be conceived as an independent institutional arrangement and/or a web-based platform.

### Box

## 9.

## Overview of international *best practices* for identifying institutional arrangements required for the SIS set-up

When identifying/designating the institution or agency that will be responsible for hosting and managing the SIS, it will be important to consider necessary institutional mandate, human and financial resources.

Regarding the ‘information collection’ function, experience from selected countries suggests that specific institutional arrangements may vary from one source of information to another. For instance, information sharing arrangements/agreements will be required when information will be obtained from existing information systems and sources. In addition, information templates and protocols may be required to be able to collect relevant information, and these will likely need to be tailored to accommodate the procedures and capacities of each individual source. Moreover, such templates and protocols can contribute to ensure that information gathered by the SIS can be processed and compared by standardizing the information feeding the SIS.

*Key design considerations examined above aim to contribute both to national REDD+ readiness [design of SIS framework] and to gain a sense of the scale of efforts and resources necessary for implementation [operationalising the framework design].*

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