Operationalizing REDD+ Safeguards in Southeast Asia and the Pacific: Approaches, Experiences and Lessons of German Technical Cooperation

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Abstract

Countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific are progressing in their implementation of REDD+. The adoption of the 'Warsaw Framework on REDD+' in 2013 provides additional methodological guidance for REDD+ implementation.

A fundamental element of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) guidance are the seven Cancun Safeguards focusing on governance, social and environmental aspects of REDD+ activities. The resilience of forest communities and ecosystems and hence the sustainability and future of REDD+ can only be ensured if these safeguards are respected and addressed. Parties also agreed that the provision of the latest information on how safeguards are addressed (in a Safeguards Information System [SIS]) will be a precondition for any results-based payment under REDD+. However, during COP 20 in Lima countries could not reach consensus whether further guidance for the development of SIS is needed, leaving the requirements for such a system rather broad and dependent on the conditions of individual donor initiatives (e.g. UN-REDD, FCPF, bilateral programmes).

Yet, REDD+ countries are now on their way to translate international social, environmental and governance safeguards into national contexts.

This paper takes stock of approaches, experiences, lessons learned and challenges in implementing REDD+ safeguards and building SIS in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It discusses and highlights elements of a common approach of German technical cooperation in Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Vietnam and the Pacific Island Region, such as following UNFCCC guidance, the importance of monitoring impacts and establishing synergies with other sectorial initiatives as well as the need to build on countries' existing systems and to develop SIS in a simple and cost-efficient way, so as to avoid overburdening REDD+ countries. Based on the experiences and common elements, it proposes a practical implementation framework for REDD+ countries and practitioners.

Keywords: REDD+, safeguards, Safeguards Information System (SIS), governance, Southeast Asia, Pacific Region, lessons learned

Introduction, scope and main objectives

Compliance with social, environmental and governance safeguards is an integrated element of the REDD+ architecture and a precondition for results-based payments. Safeguards address elements such as consistency with national forest programmes, forest governance structures, indigenous knowledge and rights, stakeholder participation, forest and biodiversity protection, permanence and leakage.
The UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings from 2010 onwards defined these general safeguards principles and emphasized the importance of a system providing information about implementation of safeguards (SIS) in REDD+ activities as a tool to promote transparency and assess impacts of REDD+ measures through regular reporting to UNFCCC every four years (c.f. UNFCCC 2010 Decision 1/CP.16; 2011 Decision 12 /COP 17; 2013 Decision 9-15/CP.19).

Despite a currently missing consensus on the necessity for further guidance on the development of REDD+ SIS, countries continue to translate international social, environmental and governance safeguards into their national contexts. In the Southeast Asia and Pacific Region, German technical cooperation through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is supporting these efforts by collaborating with partner countries on the design and piloting of a national REDD+ mechanism. Safeguards, SIS and their implementation form an integral part of this process.

This paper takes stock of approaches, experiences, lessons learned and the challenges in building and implementing REDD+ safeguards and SIS in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region, based on which it proposes a practical implementation framework for REDD+ countries and practitioners.

Approach

This paper builds on the analysis of experiences by German technical cooperation projects commissioned by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) in the Southeast Asian and Pacific Region. Analysis took place through literature review on recent REDD+ safeguards related developments, study of documents from seven projects[1] and the documentation of knowledge exchange events organised within the framework of the GIZ REDD+ Working Group for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (c.f. Bertram and Gaiser 2014; FCPF 2012; GIZ/RECOFTC 2011; Lang *et al*. 2013; Rey and Swan 2014)

Results: Stock-taking for a common approach

The following chapter provides an overview of the activities jointly implemented by GIZ and its partner institutions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific on REDD+ safeguards preparation and implementation. Results, mainly directed at REDD+ practitioners, are presented through thematic categories illustrating common elements of a step-wise approach for REDD+ safeguards development.

Experiences from REDD+ safeguards activities

1. Analysis of existing frameworks

The translation of UNFCCC safeguards principles into national contexts needs to take existing country-specific circumstances into account, such as policies, laws and regulations, socioeconomic and environmental factors as well as expected requirements associated with REDD+ funding. Safeguards as such are not new in forest conservation and management, both at local, national and international

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[1] See Acknowledgement for more information on the individual projects.

levels. Various policies, regulations and practices are already in place to ensure that activities in forests and other landscapes have minimum negative impacts on local communities and the environment. These include

1. Legal and policy frameworks (e.g. forestry and human right laws, national forest programmes, indigenous peoples acts, biodiversity conservation strategies)
2. Specific schemes, monitoring and reporting systems with principles, criteria, indicators such as environmental and social impact assessments, sustainable forest management and timber legality schemes (e.g. FSC/FLEGT)
3. Grievance and redress mechanisms (e.g. forest councils, multi-stakeholder forums and platforms, ombudsman offices)

These existing structures are valuable assets that can be utilized as a basis for building a REDD+ SIS that is suitable for the national context. GIZ provides policy advice by using a combination of policy and legal analysis tools to assess existing frameworks and their effectiveness. Awareness raising and consultation processes in a multi-stakeholder environment (e.g. REDD+ steering committees, working groups, land trust boards etc.) with representatives from governments, civil society and private sector are key elements of the approach.

In Indonesia, GIZ supported partners in an assessment of existing mandatory and voluntary policies and regulations based on relevance, feasibility, and effectiveness criteria, as well as limiting factors at national and subnational scales to identify gaps and to align the existing systems with the Cancun safeguards. GIZ Philippines supported a series of policy studies, comprising comprehensive analysis of existing legal and policy frameworks as well as of REDD+ relevant information systems. A country-wide assessment of existing Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) implementation resulted in a proposal for revision of FPIC policies. In Vietnam GIZ conducted an analysis of existing safeguards and gaps on subnational level, supporting the national level policy process with on the ground information.

2. Design of the safeguards framework

Based on a gap analysis of existing policy frameworks, partner countries are supported to create new policies for REDD+ where appropriate, or to revise existing ones. This includes the set-up of REDD+ strategies at national and subnational levels, REDD+ regulations but also REDD+ working groups or councils.

In Lao PDR GIZ conducted a safeguards gap analysis and supports partners in the revision of the forestry law. GIZ is also supporting the implementation of the FPIC process including a grievance mechanism as part of a provincial REDD+ programme. GIZ Pacific has supported the development of a Pacific Regional Policy Framework for REDD+, referenced to national and international documents and agreements with provisions for safeguards and co-benefits. Special attention was given to the strengthening or set-up of grievance and complaint mechanisms including clear and transparent processing guidelines. GIZ Philippines supports REDD+ specific policies, such as national REDD+ governance structures, enhanced guidelines for the conduct of the Free and Prior Informed Consent Principle, a forest monitoring system as well as decentralized technical working groups as part of the REDD+ coordination and governance structure.

To measure the impacts of REDD+ activities on people and the environment, a robust safeguards indicator framework and a monitoring and assessment methodology needs to be set up. GIZ projects are assisting the partners to conduct a gap analysis of existing monitoring and information systems and to define REDD+ safeguards specific elements. Partner countries are supported in the set-up of principles, criteria and indicators. GIZ Indonesia has set up a monitoring framework for verifying the indicators of the national safeguards. Based on a defined monitoring and assessment methodology, socio-economic and environmental baselines have to be developed against which impacts, both positive or negative, can be measured and monitored for corrective action. All GIZ projects considered in the

analysis for this paper have conducted socio-economic baseline surveys as well as biodiversity or eco-system assessments.

3. Trial and revision

Trials at national and subnational levels are a key element to test country-based safeguards frameworks. GIZ follows a multi-level bottom-up approach consisting of consultation, participation and capacity development mechanisms to obtain feedback, assess the practicality of the designed framework and to revise the framework accordingly.

GIZ Laos is establishing pilot activities for the implementation and monitoring of safeguards at the subnational level. Laos intends to use the Verified Carbon Standard's (VCS) jurisdictional and nested REDD+ approach (JNR) for its target areas. Within the VCS JNR approach, Laos will orient itself towards REDD+ SES as guidance for principles, criteria and indicators to ensure environmental and social safeguards. In the Philippines, the safeguards framework is to be tested at national and site level in conjunction with capacity development and orientation measures on REDD+, safeguards and SIS. Assessments of the applicability, measurability and attainability of the criteria and indicators will be fed back and allow a revision of the framework and guidelines. It is intended that information on how the safeguards are addressed and respected will be integrated in the country's measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) system. GIZ Indonesia supported the development of a national SIS consisting of principles, criteria and indicators, a web platform as well as a monitoring and reporting framework. Currently trials are conducted at the provincial level with the REDD+ working group of East Kalimantan. In a second step lessons learned will be shared on the national level to refine the safeguards framework especially the SIS web platform.

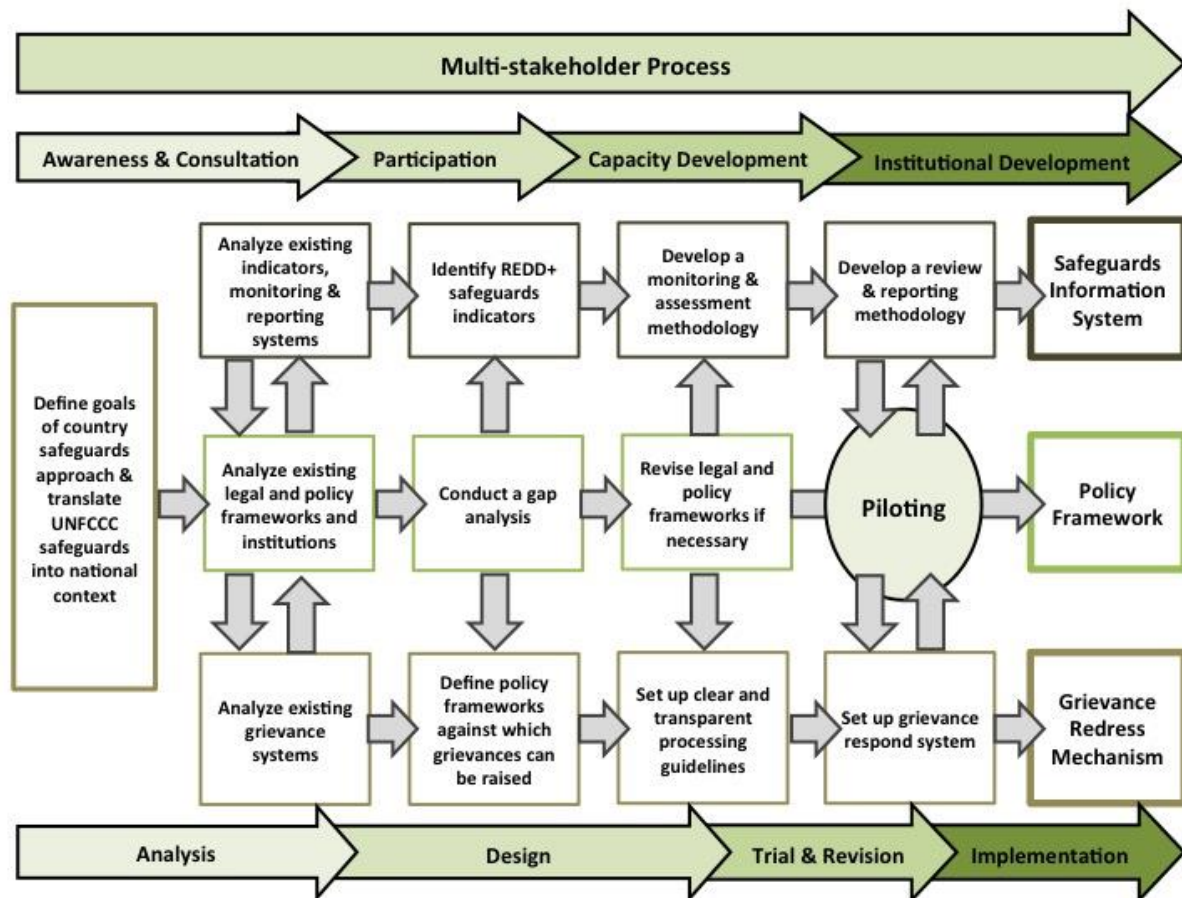### 4. Prepare the implementation

To prepare the implementation of safeguards frameworks, GIZ projects conduct capacity building measures to support institutional development of specialized government agencies, working groups, or forums. GIZ Indonesia, for example, facilitates capacity building of national and subnational safeguards information managers such as ministry agencies, provincial forest services and local forest management units for the implementation of reporting mechanisms. GIZ Philippines supports institutional arrangements, such as overall coordination and implementation structures among government agencies, civil society and academia under the Philippines National REDD+ Strategy, including capacity development of the national and subnational REDD+ steering institutions. In Laos, GIZ assists the establishment of a REDD+ office and technical working groups. Two out of the foreseen seven working groups will cover issues related to safeguards (benefit sharing, ethnic groups and local community participation). GIZ Vietnam contributes to the conceptual design of legal frameworks and provides technical advice to national REDD+ processes, thus ensuring the development and implementation of certain safeguards aspects.

Establishing a REDD+ safeguards framework: A step-wise approach

German technical cooperation in Southeast Asia and the Pacific supports countries in building their national REDD+ frameworks and in carrying out readiness activities. Safeguards and their implementation form an integral part of this cooperation. The overview of GIZ's on-going safeguards-related activities above has shown that although GIZ support is tailored to the specific country context, all interventions share a series of common elements. These common elements provide a strong basis for defining a joint framework for REDD+ safeguards development and their implementation in partner countries.

To bring above-described experiences of GIZ and partners into a wider context, the attempt was made to develop a step-wise approach covering the most crucial elements for successful REDD+ safeguards

framework establishment. The figure below illustrates this purpose by visualising the key elements and processes for setting up REDD+ safeguards frameworks.

Figure 1: Stepwise approach of GIZ for setting up REDD+ safeguards frameworks with partner countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific

Discussion: Lessons learned for REDD+ safeguards developers

The previous chapter has already identified common elements for REDD+ safeguards establishment and also proposed a potential step-wise approach based on these experiences. Here, the paper will build on these insights and discuss lessons learned and provide recommendations, which could also be of use to other actors and countries aiming to implement REDD+ safeguards as part of the overall REDD+ mechanism.

Building on existing instruments and country systems

Existing policy and regulatory instruments and best practices – if available – are very helpful in translating global REDD+ safeguards guidelines into the national context. Partner countries need to establish safeguards and safeguard information systems in a country-driven approach, building on existing, already applied instruments, such as laws, policies, regulations, voluntary standards, or risk assessment tools. This includes established institutional structures, such as agencies mandated with safeguards relevant issues and specific monitoring and information systems. REDD+ countries face a variety of different donor requirements with regard to safeguards implementation (e.g. FCPF, UN-REDD, REDD+ SES and bilateral initiatives). Although the harmonization of these processes remains limited, GIZ is committed to advice partners towards integrating and harmonizing international ap-

proaches on the basis of UNFCCC outcomes and increasing compatibility with existing country systems.

Defining responsibilities for implementation and monitoring

Different actors hold different responsibilities in ensuring that certain safeguards are in place. Often, while local REDD+ actors are responsible for implementing social and environmental safeguards, policy frameworks established by national and subnational governments, determine their adherence to governance safeguards. In addition REDD+ countries need to be encouraged not only to provide information on the improvements in local safeguards implementation, but also to monitor both positive and negative social and environmental impacts of REDD+ activities, and feed results back into the REDD+ strategy and policy processes. GIZ supports the set-up of methodologies for the establishment of socio-economic and environmental baselines and monitoring that are cost-efficient and replicable by partner agencies. This approach has been put into practice in all investigated projects and programmes.

Keeping it simple – avoiding overburdening REDD+

REDD+ safeguards frameworks should be simple and cost-efficient. There is a high risk of overburdening countries with complex frameworks, which are expensive, hardly implementable and do not make use of available systems and processes. GIZ supports the application of safeguards instruments, always in accordance with a country's preferences and in compliance with specific requirements, as well as adapted to the appropriate jurisdictional level.

Thorough consultation and multi-stakeholder participation takes time

It is crucial to involve stakeholders from the beginning of concept and system development to the trial and implementation, even if it takes significant time and resources. Such an involvement creates acceptance and ensures that the outputs fit within the regional, national and subnational contexts and can be applied effectively. Multi-stakeholder processes are essential for harmonising different REDD+ safeguards initiatives driven by countries, donor agencies and civil society.

Setting up safeguard frameworks requires sufficient financial capacities

There is still limited experience on the real investment, transaction and implementation costs for setting up national and subnational safeguards frameworks. Most safeguards initiatives still follow a trial and error approach. It is essential to define cost effective safeguards elements from the outset and also communicate potential investment costs to the international community.

Establishing synergies with other sector initiatives to develop holistic approaches

The alignment between safeguards frameworks developed by multilateral and bilateral institutions and those developed by REDD+ countries would ease safeguards implementation. International frameworks should be relatively general to accommodate the wide differences of contexts and conditions between REDD+ implementing countries.

Safeguards frameworks have significant potential to assist other frameworks, such as FLEGT, UN-CBD, or UN-DRIP in gathering the information needed, thereby boosting efficiency. In addition, SIS may have the potential to be developed as one element of a broader Forest Management Information

System, which is able to address aspects including sustainable forest management (SFM), good forest governance (through FLEGT), and biodiversity conservation. A combined approach of human capacity development and procurement of sufficient technical infrastructure will be needed both at national and subnational level.

Conclusion and outlook

By taking stock of approaches, experiences, lessons learned and the challenges in setting up REDD+ safeguards and SIS in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region, this paper aimed to propose a practical framework for REDD+ countries and practitioners on how to set up REDD+ safeguards and safeguards information systems.

Key findings include that applying a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach is very effective for building a safeguards framework. REDD+ safeguards and information systems need to be based on existing systems, while keeping local capacity constraints in mind. Major challenges are that the basic conditions for addressing safeguards under REDD+ and other schemes are often not yet in place, especially at local level. In addition a detailed guidance for the set-up of safeguard frameworks is not existent, leading to several different frameworks by donors and civil society. Despite differences between REDD+ countries, the establishment is in general a complex and time consuming task and little is known so far on investment, transaction as well as implementation costs of safeguards. Consequently, countries should develop their frameworks in a step-wise and multi-tier approach that allows starting simple to address current capacity constraints while increasing the level of complexity over time.

Since this paper focuses on German technical cooperation approaches in selected countries of Southeast-Asia and the Pacific it will be important to enrich the assessment and further support with additional experiences by other countries or programmes to develop a comprehensive approach for REDD+ safeguards framework establishment.

Acknowledgements

Project title	Country	Lead executing agency	Overall term	Commissioned by
Forest and Climate Change Programme (FORCLIME)	Indonesia	Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry	2009-2020	BMZ
Climate Protection through Avoided Deforestation (CliPAD)	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) Department of Forest Resource Management (DFRM)	2009-2018	BMZ
Climate-relevant Modernization of the National Forest Policy and Piloting of REDD Measures in the Philippines	Philippines	Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)	2009-2013	BMUB
Preparation of a National REDD+ Mechanism for	Philippines	Department of Environment and Natural Re-	2012-2017	BMUB

Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Conservation of Biodiversity in the Philippines (National REDD+ System Philippines)		sources (DENR)		
Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of Forests in Vietnam	Vietnam	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	2013-2017	BMZ
Climate Protection through Forest Conservation in the Pacific Island Countries	Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)	2010-2015	BMUB
Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region	Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)	2009-2015	BMZ

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