

Guidelines on the interpretation and application of the REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards at country level¹

3 February 2011

1. Introduction

The REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards (REDD+ SES) initiative aims to build support for government-led REDD+ programs that make a significant contribution to human rights, poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation. The REDD+ SES consist of principles, criteria and indicators which define issues of concern and conditions to be met to achieve high social and environmental performance and a process for assessment.

- **The principles** provide the key objectives that define high social and environmental performance of REDD+ programs.
- **The criteria** define the conditions that must be met related to processes, impacts and policies in order to deliver the principles.
- **The indicators** define the information needed to show that the criteria are met.

At principle and criteria levels the standards are generic (i.e. the same across all countries). At the indicator level, there is a process for country-specific interpretation to develop a set of indicators that are tailored to the context of a particular country. For this reason the international version of the standards includes only a “framework for indicators” that is intended to guide the country-specific interpretation process rather than provide specific indicators that must be used in each country.

The standards can be used to:

1. **Provide good practice guidance** for the design, implementation or evaluation of a REDD+ program;
2. **Provide a framework for countries to report on performance** of their REDD+ programs through a multi-stakeholder assessment process;
3. **Assess conformance** of social and environmental performance of a REDD+ program with respect to requirements of the standards (a true standard).

During the current phase using the standards in pilot countries during 2010-2011, the REDD+ SES Initiative is focused on the first and second levels, providing participating countries with a consistent and comprehensive framework for designing and reporting on social and environmental performance developed through an international multi-stakeholder process. A formal process of verification – an independent check on the quality and accuracy of the assessment - is not yet included. At this stage, the primary means of ensuring quality and accuracy is full and effective participation of rights holders and stakeholders in the assessment process, with the option for further evolution of the initiative to the

¹ ‘Country level’ refers to the level of the jurisdiction leading the REDD+ program, which could be national, state, provincial or other level.

third level, that is assessing conformance against the requirements of the standards through independent verification.

The assessment process defines how information on performance will be collected, reviewed by stakeholders and reported. The assessment process should promote participation and ownership by stakeholders, ensure transparency and accountability and also encourage improved performance. Guidelines for the assessment process have been elaborated in this document, but specific country-level assessment processes should be defined by each participating country as appropriate to their context.

The country-specific interpretations including governance, indicators and the assessment process will be reviewed at the international level to ensure consistency across countries.

The REDD+ SES Initiative is overseen by an International Standards Committee representing a balance of interested parties. The majority of committee members are from countries where REDD+ will be implemented, recognizing that developing country governments and civil society should lead the adoption of the standards. The process for development and use of the standards is being facilitated by an International Secretariat composed of the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) and CARE International with technical support from Proforest.

Phase 1 of the initiative culminated in June 2010 with publication of Version 1 of the standards for use in pilot countries. Starting in May 2009, these standards were developed through an inclusive and participatory process including consultations with stakeholders at national and local level in four countries that are developing REDD+ programs. During Phase 2 of the initiative from July 2010 to December 2011, the standards are being applied in five pilot countries including the State of Acre in Brazil, Ecuador, Nepal, Tanzania and the Province of Central Kalimantan in Indonesia.

These guidelines are intended to guide the use of the standards in pilot countries during Phase 2 of the initiative. This draft is based on the outputs of a workshop to launch the use of the standards in pilot countries held in Washington DC, USA, 3-5 August 2010 and review by the International Standards Committee at a meeting 26-27 November in Cancun, Mexico. These guidelines will be updated based on feedback from the pilot countries and other stakeholders during Phase 2 to produce a revised set of guidelines for public consultation later in 2011 prior to their use in a broader range of countries. Please send any comments to [redd@climate-standards.org](mailto:red@climate-standards.org).

2. Country-level governance

2.1 The country-level Standards Committee

- i. A country-level Standards Committee should be created to ensure balanced stakeholder participation in the use of the standards and the membership of the committee itself should reflect this balance.
- ii. Where appropriate, it is important to build from and integrate with existing structures created for REDD+ planning and implementation. Where an appropriately balanced multi-stakeholder body exists, unnecessary duplication of structures should be avoided. In other cases, it will be necessary to establish the country-level standards committee as a separate entity to ensure an adequate stakeholder balance.

- iii. The role of this committee is to oversee and support the use of the standards in their country. The responsibilities of the committee should include:
 - a. Oversee the interpretation and application of the REDD+ SES for the country in question, assisting and guiding the facilitation team (see 2.2 below) and ensuring that the REDD+ SES process in the country is aligned with the global level strategies of the REDD+ SES Initiative.
 - b. Provide guidance and assist the facilitation team to ensure effective participation of relevant stakeholder groups in the interpretation and application of the REDD+ SES.
 - c. Review and approve draft versions of the country-specific indicators and assessment process prepared for public comment, the response to comments, and the final versions, ensuring that these are appropriate and sufficient to demonstrate effectively the performance of their country's REDD+ program against the principles and criteria.
 - d. Review and approve draft versions of reports on social and environmental performance of the REDD+ program against the REDD+ SES developed for stakeholder review, the response to feedback from stakeholders on the draft reports, and the final version of the report for publication.
 - e. Promote effective integration of REDD+ SES with other safeguard frameworks/processes being applied to the country's REDD+ program e.g. FCPF SESA, UN-REDD and safeguards required by bilateral agreements.
 - f. Ensure that experiences in the country help to inform the further development of the international REDD+SES initiative and use of the standards in other countries through reporting to the international Standards Committee.
- iv. The committee members should present a balance of interested parties including those affected by the REDD+ program and the standards, and those with expert knowledge related to the standards.
- v. The categories of key stakeholder groups relevant to the REDD+ program which should participate in the committee include:
 - a. Government departments (probably including different departments relevant to REDD+ such as economic development, forestry, agriculture, rural development, environment and also potentially including regional/local government),
 - b. Indigenous Peoples
 - c. Local communities
 - d. Civil society non-governmental organisations (including both environmental and social NGOs).
 - e. Private sector

There can be some flexibility in categories depending on the specific groups that need to be included in a particular country. Women's interests and rights must be effectively represented, notably within categories b., c., and d. Alternatively a separate category for women may be defined.

- vi. Including those who will be responsible for organizing assessment of performance against the standards (collecting information, producing a report that assesses performance against the indicators, and responding to feedback on the report from stakeholders) in the country-specific interpretation of indicators and development of the assessment process will help to ensure that

they are clear and feasible so a representative of this team should be included in the Standards Committee.

- vii. Experience suggests that having only one person representing a commonly-marginalized group is not enough to allow them to engage fully in the debate, so it is recommended to have more than one representative for some categories. It may be the case that some groups would not accept or be comfortable with being represented by others.
- viii. In cases where a lot of people from a particular stakeholder group want to be involved, subgroups or 'consultative groups' could potentially be created that nominate a representative or representatives to be on the country-level Standards Committee.
- ix. Experience shows that it is hard to manage with more than 20 people involved in a decision-making group so it is proposed that the maximum membership of the country-level Standards Committee should be 25 and preferably it should not exceed 15.
- x. In principle, the stakeholder groups should identify their own representatives to ensure legitimacy. In practice, this may require active facilitation by the body that has overall oversight of the REDD+ program, or a multi-stakeholder REDD+ group, or the facilitation team to call for nominations and propose a process for selecting representatives.
- xi. Although it is important to strive for consensus, it is always good to have a voting mechanism set up from the beginning just in case it is not possible to reach consensus in the time available. This voting mechanism should be organized to ensure that no single interest group can dominate, and that no single interest group can be marginalized. Commonly, organizations divide participants into interest groups (or chambers), and organize voting along these lines².

For example, a voting system may require that a majority of the members of each interest group must agree to a proposal. In this case, the proposal cannot be approved if any one interest group does not agree, but the proposal can be approved if a few individuals disagree. This approach also allows the numbers in each constituent group to be different while still giving equal weight to each group.
- xii. The voting mechanism and the roles, responsibilities and rules of the group should be agreed prior to the commencement of the process.

2.2 The facilitation team

- i. A facilitation team composed of government and non-governmental technical experts should facilitate the process of interpreting and applying the standards in each country. It is suggested that this be limited to one government staff and one to two non-governmental staff, each allocating a significant part of their time to the REDD+ SES Initiative. The total amount of time required for all the members of the team combined will vary according to the country but is likely to be at least 50-100% of a person.
- ii. The role and responsibilities of the facilitation team include:
 - a. Organize meetings of the country-level Standards Committee and ensure record keeping, minute taking and circulation of papers to the committee members.

² Round Table on Responsible Soy has Civil Society, Producers, Industry/trade and Finance constituency groups. Forest Stewardship Council has Economic, Social and Environmental chambers.

- b. Prepare drafts of the standards and responses to comments received during stakeholder consultations for review, discussion and approval by the country-level Standards Committee.
- c. Organize consultations with stakeholders and public comment periods and compile comments received.
- d. Organize the implementation of the assessment process, including collecting and analyzing information on social and environmental performance of the REDD+ program, and preparing drafts of a report of performance against the standards for review by stakeholders and approval by the country-level Standards Committee.
- e. Learn from and contribute to the development of good practice for the use of the REDD+ SES through the participation of at least one member of the facilitation team in international exchange and learning events of the REDD+ SES initiative.

3. Country-specific interpretation

3.1 The process for country-specific interpretation

- i. Country-specific interpretation of the REDD+ SES includes two key elements, creation of country-specific indicators and design of the country-specific assessment process, and results in production of a set of country-specific indicators (using the template provided in Appendix 1), and a monitoring, review and reporting plan.
- ii. The facilitation team should organize the country-specific interpretation through an inclusive and participatory process through workshops or by convening a working group of key stakeholders and/or experts. There should be effective consultations on the draft indicators and the draft design of the assessment process using culturally appropriate methods to encourage input from a full range of stakeholders including women and other marginalized groups.
- iii. It is important to allow adequate time for consultations, providing stakeholders with sufficient time to absorb information, consult among themselves and provide considered feedback. The ISEAL³ Code of Good Practice for setting social and environmental standards suggests two public consultation periods should be held to facilitate stakeholder and public participation in the indicator development process - the first at least 60 days and the second at least 30 days. The period of the public consultations should enable effective stakeholder participation, reflecting the circumstances of the particular country (for example, considering seasonal impacts on communication).
There should be at least two periods of stakeholder consultation. The first consultation period may be reduced to no less than 30 days if proactive methods (e.g. facilitated stakeholder meetings) are used to gather feedback from the key stakeholder groups. Such proactive methods are also likely to result in richer feedback.
- iv. The facilitation team should give advance information of public consultation periods and encourage stakeholder groups to hold workshops or discussions that can provide feedback. This is particularly the case for countries where there are sizeable and significant stakeholder groups for whom

³ International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling Alliance www.isealalliance.org

commenting on written documents is much less common and less productive than face to face discussion.

- v. It is very important to encourage transparency at all stages in the country-specific interpretation process: e.g. using open calls for participation, posting terms of reference and a timeline for indicator or report development on web sites, advance notice of public consultation periods, posting drafts on web sites, translating documents into all relevant languages, engaging proactively with stakeholder groups to ensure a good level of understanding of the process etc.

3.2 The creation of country-specific indicators

- i. The creation of country-specific standards is a process of interpretation that provides an opportunity to make the international REDD+SES locally-relevant, referencing local terms, stakeholders, governance processes, institutions and legislation.
- ii. Principles and Criteria: No changes are allowed to REDD+ SES Principles and Criteria as these must be consistent across all countries.
Note: Any suggested modifications to existing principles and criteria or proposals for new criteria should be raised with the International Secretariat and may be addressed in the next version of the standards during a revision to be initiated in 2011.
- iii. Indicators: The existing 'framework for indicators' provides a starting point for developing country-specific indicators. Indicators may be maintained as they are, adapted, deleted or added, as follows:
 - a. **Maintained**: carrying forward an indicator from the existing international "framework for indicators" without change other than translation.
 - b. **Adapted**: adjusting the indicator to reflect the country context. Eg. using appropriate technical terms, referencing specific government agencies, using local language. I.e. making the indicator specific to the country but not changing the meaning or intention. This may include merging two indicators.
 - c. **Deleted**: Deletion is allowed when indicators are found to be redundant due to duplication (in which case two indicators are merged), or where they are not relevant to a particular country/regional context.
 - d. **Added**: New indicators may be added where needed. They must add value to demonstrating performance against the criterion.
- iv. Where adaptations, deletions, and additions to indicators are proposed, a justification must be provided.
- v. Each of the framework indicators aims to assess one aspect of the conditions needed to achieve the criterion. The indicators can generally be characterized into three main categories:
 - **Policy indicators** assess whether policies, legal frameworks, institutions related to the REDD+ program are in place.
 - **Process indicators** assess whether a particular process related to the REDD+ program has been planned/established.
 - **Outcome indicators** assess the impacts of the REDD+ program.

A combination of these different types of indicators can ensure that the indicators are sufficient to assess effectively the performance of a country's REDD+ program against the principles and criteria. A justification must also be provided for any changes to the indicator type.

- vi. The country-specific indicators should be developed for both the current phase of the countries' REDD+ program and for future phases, e.g. from readiness through to implementation.
- vii. A template for development of country-specific indicators is provided in Appendix 1 including the following information for each framework indicator:
 - a. **Country-specific indicator**
 - b. **Type of interpretation** – maintained, adapted, deleted or added
 - c. **Justification** - should be provided in all cases where indicators have been adapted, deleted or added
 - d. **Specific Monitoring Information** - defining *what* information will be used to assess performance against the indicators. A brief description of what will be monitored and reported on will help to consider how feasible it will be to assess performance against each indicator.
 - e. **Guidance notes** - may be added to provide guidance to local, national and international stakeholders on the indicators. E.g. Explaining the intention behind each indicator, explaining the local context etc.

3.3 The design of a country-specific assessment process

The assessment process has three components

- **Monitoring** - identifying, collecting, and compiling 'specific monitoring information' to evaluate the performance of the REDD+ program for each of the indicators in the standard.
- **Reviewing** the specific monitoring information to ensure that the assessment is accurate and credible.
- **Reporting** - communicating the analysis of the monitoring and the review of the performance of the REDD+ program against the standards.

The process adopted for each component of assessment has a strong influence on the credibility of the evaluation of performance against the standards. The assessment process developed for each country should be reviewed and approved by the country-level Standards Committee.

These guidelines focus on the first assessment cycle applied in pilot countries during 2011. An important output of this phase will be to develop guidelines for long-term assessment.

3.3.1 Monitoring

- i. Focusing on the current reporting period, a monitoring plan should be developed defining, for each indicator:

- a. **Specific Monitoring Information** defining *what* information will be used assess performance against the indicators *within the current assessment period*. I.e. taken from the country specific indicators template but adjusted, if necessary, to apply specifically to the current assessment period.
- b. **Source** defining *where* the information will be found, for example in the results of an existing survey or report (a secondary source) or through direct collection of information through surveys, focus groups etc. (a primary source).
- c. **Methods** defining *how* the information will be gathered and analyzed, such as:
 - Secondary source – define process for reviewing existing information
 - Primary source – define an information gathering tool e.g. survey, focus groups...
 - Sampling strategy, as appropriate
 - Methods for data analysis
- d. **Responsibilities** defining *who* will do what:
 - Who organizes the information gathering process
 - Who actually gathers or contributes the information
 - Who analyses the information.

Proposed template for a monitoring plan:

Country-specific Indicator	Specific Monitoring Information ⁴ (<i>what</i>)	Source of Monitoring Information (<i>where</i>)	Methods (<i>how</i>)	Responsibility (<i>who</i>)

- ii. In principle, all indicators should be assessed, but since REDD+ program development is in the early stages in most countries, it may not be possible to monitor and report on all indicators in the first assessment cycle in 2011. Subject to approval by the country-level Standards Committee, the first monitoring plan should focus on indicators that can be monitored at the current stage of the REDD+ program, thereby reducing the number of indicators that will be used at this stage. The Specific Monitoring Information for each indicator defined in the monitoring plan should be those that are applicable during 2011, i.e. it is not necessary at this stage to develop a monitoring plan for information that will only become available after this phase. In general, it will not be possible to report at this stage on ‘outcome indicators’, e.g. social and environmental impacts which take time to become measurable.
- iii. The credibility of monitoring can be affected by:

⁴ Relevant to the current monitoring period.

- **The quantity of information collected.** If the indicator relates to outcomes across the REDD+ program the monitoring will be less credible if information is collected from just one site and will be most credible if a process is put in place to monitor all sites. A more practical solution, which can still be credible, may be to collect information from a sample of sites of different types and geographic locations.
- **The quality of information collected.** Existing information is easier and cheaper to use but can undermine credibility if it is unreliable or contentious/contested. In this case it is better to try to collect primary data provided this can be done properly and effectively. Where reliable sources already exist, these should be used in the interests of cost effectiveness. To check reliability, “spot checks” may be used.
- **Who collects the information.** Where the performance of an agency is being assessed, there will be more confidence in the monitoring if other stakeholders have had the chance to contribute to information collection or if the information is collected by an independent third party. While independent monitoring may increase credibility, it will probably also be more costly. Taking responsibility for monitoring in collaboration with other stakeholders can also be an important way to encourage adaptive management by the agency responsible for designing and implementing a REDD+ program.

3.3.2 Reviewing

- For the current Phase 2 of the REDD+ SES Initiative during 2011, review of the draft monitoring report should be undertaken through stakeholder consultation. A review plan should specify how this will be organized, ensuring that a sufficiently broad range of stakeholders have had the opportunity to review the draft report and should explain how the feedback from the review will lead to modification of the report prior to its finalization.
- As a second stage in the review process the Standards Committee should review the draft report and how stakeholder comments on the report have been addressed, prior to approval of the final report.

3.3.3 Reporting

- Countries participating in the REDD+ SES Initiative should define a reporting plan, making a full report of performance against the indicators publicly available and, in the interests of maximizing credibility and transparency, countries are encouraged also to make comments received about the report, and the response to comments, publicly available.
- The credibility and transparency of reporting is affected by the comprehensiveness and availability of the reports. Reporting can range from a minimal summary to a full report of all relevant information. Reports can be produced exclusively for internal use, made available to a limited external audience or put in the public domain.
- An important part of the development of a country-specific assessment process will be the discussion and definition of the extent of public reporting.

Appendix 1. Template for development of country-specific indicators

	Principle 1: Rights to lands, territories and resources are recognized and respected by the REDD+ program				
	Criterion: 1.1 The REDD+ program effectively identifies the different rights holders (statutory and customary) and their rights to lands, territories and resources relevant to the program.				
Framework for indicators	Country-specific indicators	Type of interpretation⁵	Justification	Specific monitoring information⁶	Guidance notes
1.1.1 A participatory process is established to inventory and map existing statutory and customary lands, territories and resources tenure/use/access/management rights relevant to the program including those of marginalized and/or vulnerable groups, and including any overlapping or conflicting rights.					
1.1.2 Land-use plans including forest management plans in areas included in the REDD+ program identify the rights of all relevant rights holders and their spatial boundaries including any overlapping or conflicting rights.					

⁵ Maintained, adapted, deleted or added

⁶ *What* will be used to assess performance against the indicator.