REDD+ SES INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

STATE OF ACRE, BRAZIL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

The State of Acre in Brazil developed a comprehensive set of country-specific indicators and a self-assessment report of the social and environmental performance of the State System for Incentives for Environmental Services (SISA) REDD+ program through a process that had strong stakeholder participation and transparency following the ten steps of the Guidelines for the use of the REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards at Country Level (Version 2 November 2012) with some variations described in this report.

A brief description of the jurisdiction and use of REDD+ SES guidance and tools

The State of Acre in Brazil was among the first jurisdictions in the world to use the REDD+ SES guidance and tools and the first to have a REDD+ SES International Review performed. From 2010, Acre started to implement the state law for the System of Incentives for Environmental Services (SISA). The ISA Carbon Program under the SISA aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) and provide social and environmental benefits from actions that promote conservation and restoration of forests and their services. Acre used the REDD+ SES guidance and tools from 2010 as a means of monitoring the performance of the ISA Carbon Program with respect to these standards and the principles established by the SISA law.

The Institute for Climate Change (IMC), as government regulatory authority of SISA, is responsible for monitoring the emission reductions of the program and to ensure and monitor compliance with social and environmental safeguards governing the SISA. To ensure public participation in SISA the State Commission for Validation and Monitoring (CEVA) was established in 2012 composed of four representatives of the Government and four civil society members.

The purpose and scope of the International Review

This document provides an independent review of the extent to which Acre has used the process described in the Guidelines for the Use of the REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards at Country Level Version 2 November 2012 (REDD+ SES Guidelines). The International Review does not assess the content of the country's Safeguards Assessment Report (i.e. social and environmental performance versus the country-specific principles, criteria and indicators), but assesses the extent to which the REDD+ SES Guidelines have been followed. The REDD+ SES Guidelines set out a methodology for enhanced transparency and a strong country-led, multi-stakeholder process that, if followed, would be expected to lead to a fair and accurate monitoring and reporting of social and environmental performance.

This International Review undertaken in Acre had the following objectives:

1. To assess the quality of the process followed to use REDD+ SES guidance and tools with respect to inclusiveness, transparency, balanced participation of stakeholders, responsiveness, and relevance to Acre's context.

2. To assess the extent to which the REDD+ SES Guidelines have been followed, and understand the reasons for any significant differences between the actual process and the process defined in the REDD+ SES Guidelines.
3. To learn from Acre's activities that have led to outcomes and outcome pathways in using REDD+ SES to provide constructive feedback to those responsible in Acre, to help the REDD+ SES secretariat to improve REDD+ SES strategy and guidance to assist other countries, and for reporting to the donor (NORAD).

The review was guided by 8 questions (a) to (h) (see Summary of the Review Conclusions). This review covers the process followed in Acre for the use of REDD+ SES from 2010 to 2014. For logistical and planning reasons, the outcome evaluation for the third objective was undertaken separately and the results are provided in an Annex to the full report. This document provides recommendations and lessons learned from the review activities undertaken to address the first and second objectives above.

The methods and criteria used for the International Review

The International Review was undertaken by a small team composed of three people approved by the REDD+ SES International Steering Committee (ISC) supported by the REDD+ SES secretariat. The team reviewed documents and conducted interviews in Rio Branco 28 April to 2 May 2014. A draft version 1 of this report was produced in August 2014. This final version 2.2 was produced in October 2015 after Acre completed all ten steps of the REDD+ SES process, addressing feedback from the REDD+ SES International Steering Committee, and incorporating further information and feedback from IMC and CEVA in Acre. The report was approved by the ISC on 5 November 2015.

For each of the International Review questions and for each of the ten steps in the REDD+ SES Guidelines, the review team provided one of the following three ratings:

Full application of REDD+ SES - Good practices defined in the REDD+ SES Guidelines have been followed that are expected to provide credible and comprehensive safeguards information.

Partial application of REDD+ SES - Good practices defined in the REDD+ SES Guidelines have been followed with some variations that are not expected to greatly affect the quality of the safeguards information.

REDD+ SES as guidance - Good practices defined in the REDD+ SES Guidelines have been followed with variations that could affect the quality of the safeguards information.

Summary of the review conclusions

- Relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups identified and engaged
- Balance of interests in governance of the process
- Quality of the interpretation process to develop country-specific indicators
- Quality of the assessment process to develop a safeguards assessment report
- Effective participation of rights holders and stakeholders in consultations
- Quality of the process for revisions to address stakeholder feedback
- Transparency and accessibility of information

REDD+ SES ten-step process

- Step 1 - Awareness raising and capacity building
- Governance| Step 2 - Establish the Facilitation Team
- Governance |Step 3 - Create the Standards Committee
- Interpretation | Step 4 - Develop Plan for the REDD+ SES Process
- Interpretation| Step 5 - Develop Draft Country-specific Indicators
- Interpretation | Step 6 - Organize Consultations on Indicators
- Assessment | Step 7 - Prepare Monitoring and Assessment Plans
- Assessment | Step 8 - Collect and Assess Monitoring Information
- Assessment | Step 9 - Organize Stakeholder Review of Draft Assessment Report
- Assessment | Step 10 - Publish the Assessment Report

Review conclusions

Relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups identified and engaged

a) *To what extent were all the relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups identified and given sufficient knowledge of the REDD+ program, safeguards issues, and the safeguards process to be able to participate effectively?*

Strengths

Since 2009, Acre has been discussing a REDD+ program with capacity building and public consultation, always with a special attention for risks and safeguards. This discussion has been made with the help of specific methodologies where different public groups were identified and efforts were made to provide sufficient knowledge to stakeholders for an informed participation.

Public councils, municipalities, Indigenous Peoples, smallholders, rubber tappers, and women's organization were involved in the discussions. Public technical staff specialized in working with these groups were also mobilized.

In this context, the Acre government has clearly adopted an inclusive approach to identify the relevant rights holders and stakeholders, to reach them and to allow them to have a meaningful participation in REDD+ safeguards discussions.

Weaknesses

Awareness raising and capacity building with private sector organizations was limited to Asimmanejo (Acre Logging industry association) that participated in capacity building as a member of CEVA.

Interviews with small producers, as well as the report from the planning workshop of the IMC Monitoring Unit showed that even with the awareness raising and capacity building, small producers had difficulties to understand fully what is at stake with safeguards as well as the different steps of the process.

Although many Indigenous Peoples' groups participated in the adaptation the REDD+SES principles, criteria and indicators in Acre, it should be noted that many other Indigenous Peoples groups' were not part of this process even though they were invited to participate in workshops and consultation meetings.

Recommendations

- Make more effort to involve private actors and direct beneficiaries from private projects.
- Use innovative methodologies and language to help to explain safeguards and technical content to vulnerable groups including smallholders, rubber tappers and indigenous peoples.
- Develop an approach to enable participation of more of Acre's indigenous peoples groups in future consultation and governance processes.

Balance of interests in governance of the safeguards process

b) How did the governance (facilitation and decision-making) of the safeguards process ensure a balance of interests among government and relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups for all key phases of planning, interpretation and assessment?

Strengths

The REDD+ SES process has been facilitated by a Facilitation Team that prepared documentation and made decisions in all key phases. CEVA, institutionalized by the SISA law, assumed the role of a Standards Committee and was responsible for decision making. Besides CEVA's key role, a specific Indigenous Working Group was created to ensure that indigenous interests were taken into

consideration. The Indigenous Working Group can decide and propose any project that they may want to develop in their territories.

CEVA representativeness of women, smallholders, workers and private interests ensured that civil society rights holders' and stakeholders' perspectives all influenced decision-making. The Indigenous Working Group also added to this representativeness and CEVA has made sure to seek this group's opinion and approval for all decisions. In addition, this governance structure allows for a responsive process.

Weaknesses

According to IMC and CEVA's own evaluation, they did not yet identify a verifiable and transparent procedure to ensure effective participation of women in decision-making about activities affecting their rights to land, territories and resources. CEVA is addressing this in 2015 through the creation of a Gender Working Group that will advise CEVA and IMC on issues related to gender and women's rights. Targeted capacity building workshops are planned in different regions of the State to raise awareness of gender issues and identify representatives for the working group. This is an example of a weakness being addressed in order to become a strength.

Recommendations

- Include a local civil society representative, ideally with connections to national processes, in the Facilitation Team alongside IMC in order to facilitate outreach to local civil society and also to insert the process into potential national civil society discussions on safeguards. In 2015, WWF is supporting with one person to work with IMC to enhance the implementation of social and environmental safeguards for SISA. This helps to strengthen the involvement of CEVA and civil society.
- Develop and implement a verifiable process to ensure the full and effective participation of women in decision-making on activities affecting them.

Quality of the interpretation process to develop country-specific indicators

c) *What were the strengths and weaknesses of the interpretation process to develop comprehensive safeguards indicators, adapting the REDD+ SES indicators to the country context? Were all changes properly justified and did they maintain the key elements and the overall intent of the REDD+ SES principles, criteria and indicators?*

Strengths

A major strength of the interpretation process to adapt the REDD+ SES indicators to the country context was the use of a multi-stakeholder process. This ensured that key issues of importance to stakeholders in Acre are included in the indicators and will be assessed.

The Facilitation team adapted the indicators to the local context, and also simplified the language of the indicators. The Acre Facilitation team took the initiative to identify the essence of the indicator and include other important elements as qualifiers to make the indicators easier to understand, which was later adopted by the REDD+ SES Initiative for the Second Edition.

The changes that were made to the REDD+ SES framework of indicators were justified and, overall, the resulting indicators are very comprehensive, covering a full range of safeguards issues, and relevant to the Acre context.

Weaknesses

Some issues such as coherence of the ISA Carbon program with other relevant policies and plans, including the contribution to sustainable development policies and plans and to strengthen human rights, are only covered under one indicator.

Quality of the assessment process to develop a safeguards assessment report

> *What were the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment process? How comprehensive was the assessment? Was appropriate information collected to provide sufficient evidence for the analysis?*[1]

Strengths

The assessment was very detailed and provided information about most of the Acre-specific indicators that had been developed through an inclusive participatory process with broad support from stakeholders.

The detailed information is provided in a checklist format that organizes the information and provides evidence for the performance with respect to each indicator. The information is summarized in a Summary Self-assessment Report that helps stakeholders to understand the assessment. In particular, the Summary provides information about the gaps in performance that can provide the basis for future improvements to address safeguards for the SISA program.

Weaknesses

There was no development of a specific Monitoring or Assessment Plan tailored to the current assessment period.

The Monitoring Plan lacked details on responsibilities for collecting or providing the information. The entities involved were also not included in the assessment report, so it was not clear if the

[1] These questions were not included in the terms of reference for the REDD+ SES International Review. They have been included during the drafting of v2.0 of this report to give a more complete appraisal of the quality of the process followed in Acre.

information was collected by IMC or by third parties. It would be helpful to include this in the report because the level of participation in collecting information provides an indication about the credibility of the report.

A lack of detail in the monitoring plan on specific information to be collected, and methods for collection (e.g. for collection of primary or secondary data) led to an assessment report that lacks detailed information to demonstrate the performance during the assessment period. In some cases, the assessment report does not provide adequate evidence to justify why an indicator is 'Fulfilled' or 'Partially fulfilled' (see Section 5.8).

In general, the assessment report relies too heavily on statement of laws and does not provide specific information about progress with respect to the indicator during the assessment.

Recommendations

- Define the scope of the assessment in advance and get approval for the scope from CEVA; defining what components of the program will be assessed for what time period.
- Prepare a version of the Monitoring Plan for the current assessment that specifies which indicators will be monitored and provides a rationale for why some are excluded.
- Include information about who is responsible for collecting or providing different information in the Monitoring Plan.
- Provide more detail in the Monitoring Plan about the specific information to be collected and the methods for collection in order to be able to provide sufficient information to justify whether an indicator is 'Fulfilled' or 'Partially fulfilled'.
- Ensure that the assessment report provides sufficient information or evidence to justify the ratings 'Fulfilled' or 'Partially fulfilled'. For example, in addition to information about the existence of a policy, law or regulation, provide information about whether it is actually implemented. This is important in order to be able to provide information on how the safeguards were respected during the assessment period.

Effective participation of rights holders and stakeholders in consultations

d) To what extent did relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups participate effectively in consultations about the indicators and in review of the Assessment Report and how could this be improved?

Strengths

The relevant rights holders and stakeholders participated effectively in consultations about the indicators and the draft assessment report since this was carried out through face to face consultations (meetings and workshops) and sometimes by email. The workshops were particularly important for the engagement of Indigenous Peoples and other communities who are not well

informed with electronic communication. The State of Acre provided some logistics to enable an effective participation.

Weaknesses

The consultation process could have been improved by providing copies of the documents for consultation to the different stakeholder and rights holder groups in advance in order to have more effective participation.

There is a REDD+ SES indicator on ensuring that representatives provide information back to people they represent. However, the timeframe did not provide enough time for communities and constituencies to provide their input.

Recommendations

- Provide copies of documents to the different rights holder and stakeholder groups in advance of consultations.
- Encourage representatives to provide information back to their constituents, and to seek their input, and allow sufficient time for this process.

Quality of the process for revisions to address stakeholder feedback



e) *How were indicators and the Assessment Report revised based on feedback received from rights holders and stakeholders?*

Strengths

The indicators and the assessment report were revised based on feedback received from rights holders and stakeholders and this process was seen as positive by the stakeholders. For consultations on the indicators and also for consultations on the draft assessment report, IMC organised workshops with different stakeholder groups including small producers, indigenous peoples, civil society organisations (including social movements) and a combined meeting of the three State Councils. This process also encouraged some rights holders like the Indigenous Peoples to produce a "plan of life" for their constituencies.

Weaknesses

While IMC and the stakeholders affirm that comments received were compiled and addressed in the revised documents, this process was not documented and the comments and responses were not published.

Recommendations

- Publish a full compilation of the comments received and how they were addressed in the revision of the indicators and the assessment report.

Transparency and accessibility of information



f) How transparent was the process and how was all relevant information (plan and timeline for developing the country safeguards approach, draft indicators, consultation process, comments, response to comments, draft assessment, final Assessment Report etc.) made publicly available and appropriately accessible. To what extent did this enable effective participation of all relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups?

Strengths

The process followed by Acre to provide information to stakeholder groups and members of the numerous governance bodies of the program prioritized transparency. There was extensive use of the IMC website for distribution of information.

There was an attempt in different parts of the process to tailor communications (beyond the website) to enable effective participation of rights holder and stakeholder groups which do not use the internet regularly. The State of Acre has an inclusive approach to development and implementation of public policies and related processes. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples and other communities have been approached and informed electronically and by workshops.

Weaknesses

At times, the website was not always maintained with current information. It was not clear from some of the information provided on the website, how stakeholder engagement (via public comments) was facilitated through the website.

An effective participation and dissemination process is time consuming and expensive to do a proper job.

Recommendations

- Develop a website/push email functionality to allow stakeholders to sign up and receive automatic updates on the program.
- Publish 2014 and 2015 documentation about CEVA and its meetings on IMC website.
- Publish and disseminate all future plans related to safeguards assessment and review. This will provide stakeholders with advance notice of opportunities to participate.
- Communicate the project assessment process to project proponents (Private Projects of the ISA Carbon Program of SISA as specified in the Manual de Monitoramento das Salvaguardas

Socioambientais de REDD+ no SISA). It is also recommended to conduct an assessment of any conflict, overlap and/or additional requirements when compared to existing international market standards (unless required by Acre law).

REDD+ SES 10 step process

g) *What were the challenges in following the REDD+ SES ten-step process, how did the process followed vary from the Guidelines for the Use of REDD+ SES at Country Level (November 2012) and how may these variations have affected the quality of the safeguards information positively or negatively?*

It was clear that Acre made a very strong attempt to follow the REDD+ SES Guidelines and apply the defined process. They have been largely successful in that effort, with only minor variations that are unlikely to affect the quality of the safeguards information. More significant variations only occurred in Step 8 Collecting and Assessing Safeguards Information where a lack of detail in the monitoring plan on specific information to be collected, and methods for collection (e.g. for collection of primary or secondary data) led to an assessment report that, in several cases, lacks detailed explanation of performance during the assessment period.

The challenges observed through the International Review process were mainly based on two points 1) Acre was building their regulations for implementation of the SISA law at the same time it was developing the REDD+ SES process and the government required that these two efforts were integrated which made it more complex and 2) Acre was the first jurisdiction to move through the REDD+ SES process and complete a assessment report thus having to forge a new path on each element.

Lessons Learned

h) *What do different stakeholder groups (including government) and the members of the review team think could be improved in the approach to safeguards for REDD+ in Acre, and what lessons learned could improve the REDD+ SES guidance and tools for other countries?*

This International Review was conducted through a participatory process. The review team learned from the different stakeholders interviewed in Acre about their views on strengths, weaknesses, suggestions for improvement and lessons learned. Specific recommendations for Acre are included under questions a-f above. General lessons learned for other countries and for REDD+ SES Initiative include:

- An iterative, inclusive and participatory process, with adequate time and resources, helps to develop shared ownership of the results and the process to implement and monitor safeguards.
- A multi-stakeholder process helps to ensure that key issues of importance to stakeholders are included in the indicators and will be assessed.

- It is important to strengthen existing institutions or develop new ones when key stakeholder groups such as Indigenous Peoples and women are not adequately represented.
- It helps the government agency responsible for safeguards to have support from a civil society organisation ideally with connections to related national processes to facilitate the safeguards process.
- Simplifying the language of the indicators, and using local terms, helps to facilitate the participation of a wider range of stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- It is important to develop an assessment plan that outlines the process and timing for the development of the assessment report as well as a monitoring plan that identified what information should be collected, using what methods and by whom, and to tailor them for the current period.
- It is important to give members of the multi-stakeholder committee sufficient time to review documents before meetings and to consult with their constituents.
- Recognising that it may be helpful to adopt a stepwise approach to providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected, it may be helpful for the first assessment report to focus on a gap analysis of existing policies, laws and regulations to address the safeguards elements in the indicators, with the aim that future assessments will also assess the extent of their implementation.
- It is important to incorporate an additional step in the 10-step process for using REDD + SES at country level to develop an action plan from the assessment report in order to address the identified gaps and improve the design and implementation of the REDD + program.