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Overview

This section is focused on issues related to environmental impacts, biodiversity and ecosystem services, which can be referred to either as "safeguards" or as environmental standards depending on the initiative.

Safeguards have been traditionally understood to be the operational policies and procedures of multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank that prevent and mitigate undue harm in the process of implementing development projects. In other words, safeguards are most commonly associated with a "risk-based approach".

More recently, the establishment of the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards as part of the Cancun Decision marks a shift away from a "do no harm" approach towards an approach that encourages positive social and environmental outcomes. Many emerging programs are looking to the UNFCCC guidance, for example, according to its Charter the FCPF is required to "seek to ensure consistency with the UNFCCC Guidance on REDD" and the VCS JNR requires jurisdictional programs to be carried out in accordance with the Cancun Safeguards.

In addition, private initiatives that develop and implement projects (such as CCBA or Plan Vivo) have developed "social and environmental standards" which must be distinguished from "safeguards" as the latter are binding conditionalities that must be met as part of the regulatory regime or in order to qualify for financing for a project or programme whereas the former are additional qualitative characteristics of a project that are reported in exchange for obtaining a certification.

The majority of project-based carbon accounting standards generally take a "do no harm" approach to environmental safeguards and most require project proponents to document environmental impacts and, if needed, how the project is mitigating any negative impacts. Only ACR requires net impacts to be positive overall; other voluntary carbon standards recommend projects obtain certification from a separate social/environmental standard (such as CCB). For example, VCS and CCB have partnered to streamline registration for both standards and use a common template for documentation.

REDD+ carbon accounting standards and initiatives that operate at a jurisdictional level

(subnational or national) tend to have more stringent requirements around environmental safeguards, including an expectation that programmes will take into account the UNFCCC Cancun decision on safeguards, which includes reference to conservation of natural forests, biological diversity, and ecosystem services and to enhance environmental benefits. This is also true of the agreement to fund results between Guyana and Norway, whereby Guyana is required to make positive progress on indicators that include protection of biodiversity and intact forest landscapes.

See another Design Feature

Environmental measures or requirements ▼

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Further reading

A Guide to Understanding and Implementing the UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards [12]
Safeguards in REDD+ and Forest Carbon standards: A Review of Social, Environmental and Procedural Concepts and Applications [13]
Risks and opportunities of REDD+ implementation for environmental integrity and socio-economic compatibility [14]
A framework for integrating biodiversity concerns into national REDD+ programmes [15]
Submissions from Parties on Redd+ Safeguards and Assessment of Impacts on Biodiversity [16]
Advice on the Application of Relevant REDD+ Safeguards for Biodiversity, and on Possible Indicators and Potential Mechanisms to Assess Impacts of REDD+ Measures on Biodiversity [17]
REDD plus biodiversity safeguards: decisions and activities of the CBD [18]

Related encyclopaedia articles

- Carbon Accounting [19]
- Ecosystem [20]
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