

## Commitments and options for safeguarding biodiversity in REDD+

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## International Commitments to Biodiversity

### United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

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+) has emerged as a potential response to tackling greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and enhancing removals, in the global forestry sector. The notion of REDD+ “co-benefits” was raised in the [2007 Bali Action Plan](#) of the UNFCCC, along with the potential of REDD+ to complement the aims and objectives of other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#).

Due to concerns about environmental and social risks from REDD+ implementation, a series of safeguards were developed and then adopted in 2010 by the UNFCCC. The ‘[Cancun safeguards](#)’ present aspirational guidance, though not specific direction, for addressing risks and opportunities of REDD+. (See table) Although their development is a positive move, the effectiveness of the safeguards will depend on how they are defined and implemented, as well as the extent of support given through other policy measures.

The recent U.N. climate change talks in Durban delivered a mediocre result for REDD+ in general and safeguards in particular. A weak decision on social and environmental safeguard reporting provided only minimal operational guidance to countries on safeguards. However, the decision on REDD+ financing, itself inconclusive, did acknowledge a link between the source and type of financing and safeguards requirements. Further technical guidance has been deferred to UNFCCC’s Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), meeting in May 2012, to consider the timing, frequency, transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness of summary safeguard reporting.

### Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

A key outcome of the CBD Conference of Parties 10 in 2010 was the adoption of a new Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2020. It established five strategic goals and 20 headline targets to be met by 2020, called the ‘[Aichi Targets](#)’. These include a number of targets relevant to REDD+ (See table). The CoP also tasked the CBD Secretariat with providing advice to Parties on relevant safeguards, in addition to identifying possible indicators and monitoring mechanisms for assessing the biodiversity impact of REDD+.

Pursuant to these decisions, the Secretariat organized a series of regional (Asia-Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Africa) capacity-building and consultation workshops throughout 2011. These workshops culminated in a submission to the UNFCCC Secretariat, and most recently

in a draft working document – [Advice on the application of relevant REDD+ safeguards for biodiversity](#) – informing the CBD’s 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), in April-May 2012. The CBD has also commissioned a consultancy study to provide further analysis and information to identify possible indicators to assess the contribution of REDD+ to the objectives of the Convention.

## International commitments on biodiversity and REDD+

Cancun safeguards (UNFCCC)	Aichi targets (CBD)
Para 2 (a) [REDD+ activities] complement / consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements	Target 5 rate of loss...forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero...degradation and fragmentation significantly reduced
Para 2 (d) full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in [REDD+] activities and...national strategies	Target 7 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity
Para 2 (e) [REDD+ activities are] consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that actions...are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests...	Target 11 at least 17 per cent of terrestrial...areas... of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through... well-connected systems of protected areas... integrated into wider landscape
Para 2 (f) address the risks of reversals	Target 14 ecosystems that provide essential services... are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities...
Para 2 (g) reduce displacement of emissions	Target 15 ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems...

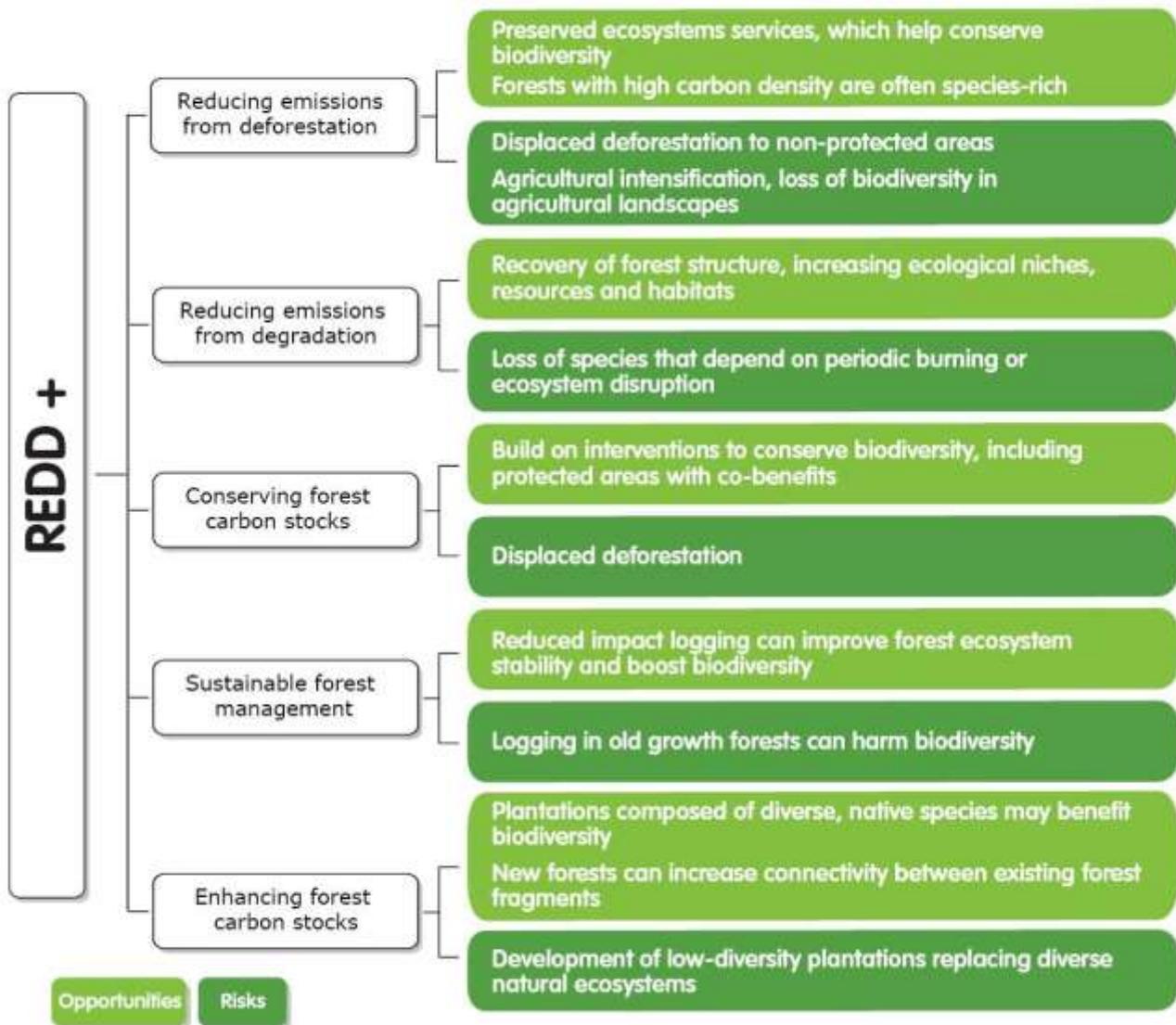
Source: Swan and McNally (2011)

## Risks and Opportunities for Biodiversity

The implementation of an international REDD+ programme presents both opportunities and risks to forest biodiversity (See Fig 1). On the positive side, REDD+ could spur improved *in situ* conservation through establishing protected areas and increasing tropical forest connectivity. It could lead to improved production forest management practices through incentives for activities such as reduced impact logging. Forest governance could be improved through tenure reform and better law enforcement. And REDD+ could lead to better monitoring and reporting of biodiversity benefits through, for example, participatory forest monitoring approaches.

But REDD+ could also undermine biodiversity conservation efforts. Direct risks include the conversion of natural forests to industrial monocultures, or to the afforestation of valuable, biodiverse non-forest ecosystems. There are also indirect risks to biodiversity, including ‘leakage’ — where deforestation, forest degradation and unsustainable forest management practices are simply displaced from areas with relatively low biodiversity to more biodiverse forests. Leakage control measures themselves, to provide alternative supplies of forest and agricultural products, might adversely impact biodiversity if they involve clearance of natural ecosystems or agricultural intensification.

**Fig 1 Biodiversity opportunities and risks presented by REDD+ mitigation actions**



Source: Compiled from Miles and Dickson (2010); Pistorius et al. (2010)

Another indirect risk is an increase in social inequities caused by disenfranchisement, exclusion or tenure reform reversals. Social inequity would negatively impact forest-dependent indigenous peoples and local communities. These very communities often conserve biodiversity effectively through decentralised forest management and governance.

It is crucial to the long-term success of REDD+ to invest in forest biodiversity – the basic asset delivering the sustained ecosystem service of carbon sequestration. Therefore a “high-biodiversity REDD+” approach is essential in reducing the risks of forest ecosystem dysfunction in a changing climate.

## Promoting Biodiversity in REDD+ International and National Options

In November 2011, SNV-The Netherlands Development Organisation produced an analysis of policy options for encouraging 'high-biodiversity REDD+ at international and national levels'. This is not a set of programmatic standards, but a menu of options for practically addressing the Cancun safeguards, in addition to contributing to relevant Aichi Targets, and ensuring environmental co-benefits. These options are presented in brief below, and are explained in further detail in a [full technical paper](#), [summary guidelines](#) and [policy brief](#) (produced with the International Institute for Environment and Development – IIED).

### International options for operationalising REDD+ Safeguards

When it comes to influencing the design of REDD+ to ensure biodiversity benefits, actions can be taken at both national and international levels. Within global arenas, there are three main sets of activities to pursue.

**1. Strengthening international policy.** This includes clearly defining key terms — such as 'natural forest' and 'sustainable management of forests' — used in the [Cancun safeguards](#), and harmonising guidance across the UNFCCC and CBD. Addressing leakage issues is also important, and will require wide participation in the international REDD+ mechanism. An international levy, following the precedent of the two per cent adaptation levy applied to all [Clean Development Mechanism](#) (CDM) transactions under the UNFCCC, could also help promote high-biodiversity REDD+. And the proceeds of such a 'biodiversity duty' could be used by developing countries to defray any additional costs associated with promoting safeguards and incentivising best practices.

**2. Application of standards through the REDD+ readiness phase.** This is arguably the most immediately relevant development in the field of REDD+ co-benefits, and has attracted greatest interest as a way of implementing the Cancun safeguards. Prominent standards at the national, and sub-national, level include the [Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment](#) and the [UN-REDD draft Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria](#), which are both being applied as potential conditions for accessing REDD+ readiness funds. Another major set of standards is the voluntary [REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards](#), developed by the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance in collaboration with CARE International. These are not the only standards that could be applied to REDD+ for co-benefit purposes. Indeed, coping with the proliferation of co-benefit standards being promoted by individual REDD+ investors and proponents is a potential burden to developing countries, which often have limited human resource capacity. The potential for procedural overloading is compounded further by many of these countries simultaneously pursuing other similar processes in the forestry sector, such as Forest Law Enforcement and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreements and national forest certification standards.

If developing countries are to effectively implement standards and keep transaction costs at acceptable levels, REDD+ biodiversity standards need to be harmonized and developing countries must be allowed to play a leading role in defining their own biodiversity priorities and indicators to track, as part of a multi-stakeholder planning process. The readiness phase of REDD+ is important for ensuring that these countries are provided with the financial support, technical assistance and capacity-building they need to do this and integrate national biodiversity and REDD+ strategies.

**3. Application of financial incentives and preferences applied by countries, or funds, 'buying' REDD+ credits.** These would be relevant to the results-based phase of REDD+, but should be tested during the readiness phase. Adopting policies such as minimum targets, price premiums or joint financing would raise the demand for actions that reduce emissions while also yielding significant biodiversity co-benefits, and potentially influence their price. These options are equally relevant to a market-based scheme, where governments buy REDD+ credits from many 'competitor' countries, as to a more regulated system based on international or bilateral funds.

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## **National options for operationalising REDD+ Safeguards**

Safeguard compliance does not demand substantive policy innovation or adoption of new tools and technologies. What must be done to deliver emissions reductions and biodiversity conservation in the forestry sector remains largely unchanged from current actions; forest management and governance practices need to be improved upon through REDD+ rather than overhauled or replaced.

Six broad categories of options for operationalising the Cancun safeguards and contributing to relevant Aichi targets can be identified. These options for national-level safeguard responses are presented in the context of delivering environmental co-benefits; however, they are equally applicable to social co-benefits.

### **1. National policy strengthening and coherence**

- Ensure that REDD+ plans and policies are consistent with existing biodiversity policies. This can go a long way to addressing some of the weaknesses of the broad, generic statements in the Cancun safeguards. It can also help in ensuring that implementation of REDD+ does not conflict with other national and international commitments and obligations (a safeguard in itself).
- Make explicit statements of biodiversity conservation in national REDD+ strategies and programmes. The Government of the United Kingdom has already commissioned guidelines on how biodiversity safeguards can be addressed during the development of national REDD+ strategies and programmes. Equally, statements of proactive REDD+ engagement should be made in national biodiversity policy, such as National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and national protected area strategies.
- Bring together information, and engage staff from different government departments in policy reform processes. In many countries, responsibilities for forests and for biodiversity are not held in the same government departments or line ministries. A relatively simple action, already taken by some developing countries, is to establish inter-ministerial committees and multi-stakeholder technical working groups for REDD+.

### **2. Integrated and strengthened sub national planning**

- Climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation performance measures need to be mainstreamed into planning at the sub national level. The first step towards operationalizing the Cancun safeguards is integrating environmental co-benefits into a policy framework for REDD+. However, a significant gap can exist between national policy and local practice— an effort should be made to close it.



Photo by Takeshi Toma

- To balance competing needs for land, explore trade-offs across the broader productive landscape. This requires an integrated landscape-level approach to land use. It can be thought of as an application of the [Ecosystem Approach](#), a primary framework for action under the CBD, which involves considering multiple needs and uses at a landscape scale. As a baseline, decide which areas are best suited for different types of REDD+ activity and identify areas where there might be a risk to, or opportunity for, biological diversity.

### **3. Applying national REDD+ programme-level standards for co-benefits**

- Adopt national REDD+ programmatic standards to clearly demonstrate a national commitment to the Cancun safeguards. There are already a number of multilateral initiatives developed at the international level that can be (and are being applied to) national standards for delivering REDD+ co-benefits. Work to harmonise processes that are similar within REDD+ and the broader forestry sector, such as the negotiation processes for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance & Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA).
- Countries must play a leading role in defining appropriate standards. Using a country-led approach to determine biodiversity priorities has considerable advantages, which would not disregard internationally developed standards but translate them for a specific national context.

### **4. Regulatory approaches**

- Consider using regulatory approaches beyond national-level co-benefit standards for REDD+. Regulatory approaches that can be used to promote safeguards that would build on and strengthen existing national forestry policy and practices include: protected area management; forest landscape restoration; sustainable forest management (SFM); and improved forest governance.



Photo by Unna Chokkalingam

- Focusing on the maintenance of existing and development of new protected areas is the most direct regulatory safeguard response. Natural forest carbon stock enhancement activities under REDD+ could also incentivise mosaic and broad-scale forest landscape restoration, significantly expanding forest habitat quality and quantity across the tropics.
- In production forests safeguards regulatory responses could include promotion of sustainable forest management. SFM approaches, such as extension rotation length and reduced impact logging, could yield improvements over conventional logging both for carbon emission reductions and biodiversity.
- Renewing or revitalizing political commitments to forest governance reform, such as community forest management, collaborative management and co-management of forests can promote and support REDD+ safeguards. Good governance is also essential for effective forest biodiversity conservation. Statutory reinforcement of customary forestland tenure and management practices can help to protect forest carbon stocks and biological diversity in the longer term.

### **5. Economic incentives**

- Apply economic incentives as appropriate, where governments are supporting local actors to deliver REDD+. Incentives can increase revenues, reduce costs, or reduce risks for the local stakeholders, be they sub national government agencies, private companies, civil society or local people, in implementing REDD+ activities. Economic incentives could be applied to those REDD+ actions that have potential to yield higher biodiversity performance in addition to climate change mitigation, e.g. payments for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, community forest management and sustainable production forest management.

- Economic incentives applied internally within the developing countries' domestic supply chain for REDD+ emission reductions can take a number of forms: biodiversity premiums; differential taxes on REDD+ credits; front-loading of payments; risk mitigation discounts; subsidies on inputs of goods and services required to deliver co-benefits from REDD+ actions. The appropriateness of these incentive types will depend on the specific institutional context of each country. They are not mutually exclusive and could be applied in combination. Some countries already have national or sub national PES schemes in operation to promote forest conservation and sustainable management; governments can build on these to promote REDD+ co-benefits.
- A domestic PES scheme that incorporates forest carbon with other ecosystem services provides an indication that national efforts go beyond carbon sequestration. This may serve as a lever for international-level financing for delivering multiple benefits from REDD+-oriented forest protection and management actions. Adding REDD+ credits to other domestic and foreign ecosystem service revenues may make PES schemes more economically viable forest financing options.

## **6. Monitoring and reporting**

- Monitoring of REDD+ actions and their impacts will be required to demonstrate tangible net gains in environmental co-benefit performance from REDD+. The safeguards agreed upon at Cancun do not commit developing countries to co-benefit impact monitoring programmes, but instead to developing “a system for providing information on how the safeguards...are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of [REDD+ activities]”. Monitoring of biodiversity outcomes, however, is required under renewed CBD commitments and the Aichi Targets, in addition to existing national policy commitments in many developing countries.
- The value of co-benefit standards can only be fully realised through (ideally, independent third party) verification of measured performance. To be effective, regulatory standards implementation requires monitoring of compliance with the standards and of biodiversity outcomes. A crucial first step for any country preparing for REDD+ will be to undertake an in-country process of identifying a set of national framework indicators based on emerging international guidance.
- Potentially reduce costs for measuring REDD+ co-benefit performance, and engage local stakeholders, through participatory forest monitoring (PFM). Depending on the forestland tenure situation, PFM could be applied as a “community-based” monitoring approach, where local people hold statutory and/or customary land title in a community forestry management model. In cases where forests are under public or private ownership, local people could be contracted to provide the monitoring services for State or private land owner.

## FCA-SNV Biodiversity and REDD+ Updates

Biodiversity & REDD+ reviews and updates are brought to you by Forest Carbon Asia and SNV Netherlands Development Organization with funding support from the BMU International Climate Initiative.

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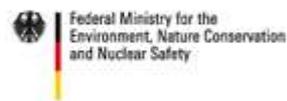
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