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Title: Safeguards and Safeguards Information System:
Cambodia

Name of Author Nguon Pheakkdey, Chhun Delux

Name of University Clark University

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Overview

The Royal Government of Cambodia recognizes REDD+ as an important strategy to help address deforestation and forest degradation in the country. Similar to other REDD+ countries, Cambodia follows the three-phased approach to REDD+ implementation, namely: 1) readiness, 2) implementation, and 3) results-based payment. Currently Cambodia is at the end of its readiness phase, and in order to proceed to phase two, Cambodia is finalizing its national REDD+ strategy, which is to be completed by the end of 2015. According to the UNFCCC decisions (1/CP.16, 12/CP.19), safeguards shall be addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities. Since 2011, developing a national approach to REDD+ safeguards and safeguards information systems has been one of the key components of the national REDD+ readiness activities. The safeguards technical team, established in 2013, has been leading this process with support from staff of the Cambodia REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat, UNDP Cambodia, the Technical Advisor to the Director General of the Forestry Administration Office, UNEP, and a PhD Candidate at Clark University. Cambodia has made progress on the following aspects:

1. Matching Policies, Laws and Regulations to the Cancun Safeguards

The safeguards technical team reviewed key national level policies, laws and regulations (PLR) that are potentially relevant to the implementation of REDD+ activities, including those developed by the Forestry Administration, the Ministry of Environment, the Fisheries Administration, and the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction. Other PLR covered included: the Constitution, major international conventions/agreements, national development plans and policies, royal decrees, sub-decrees, decisions and circulars. Each PLR was examined to check if clauses addressed any of the safeguards principles proposed for Cambodia. Results of this gap analysis indicate that a set of PLRs exists that can “address” proposed sets of safeguards principles and criteria. However, the results from the analysis also suggested that Cambodia may need to consider developing an additional PLRs or amending existing PLRs to address the following concerns: ensure REDD+ will not be used for conversion of natural forests into planted forest; address risk of reversals; and address risk of displacement.

2. Safeguards Criteria and Indicators

Cambodia proposed its safeguards criteria and indicators based on a systematic review of the Cancun safeguards. The process also included a series of consultations with relevant key institutions and stakeholders at national and sub-national levels. . For example, four sub-national consultative meetings were organised. The meetings were attended by 249 participants from 22 out of a total of 25 provinces. Participants included representatives from government agencies, local civil society organizations, local communities, and indigenous peoples. Inputs from these meetings were recently discussed at a national consultative meeting, held on 17 December 2014, with approximately 70 participants.

These consultations led to the identification of key sets of principles, criteria and indicators to be used for REDD+ social and environmental safeguards that closely build on the Cancun safeguards. As one of the

countries that is supported by the UN-REDD Programme and the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, Cambodia also took into consideration principles embedded in the Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria of the UN-REDD Programme, and the World Bank's Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment. In total, 15 criteria and 31 indicators have been proposed for Cambodia's REDD+ safeguards. The final number and nature for both criteria and indicators are to be finalized subject to further stakeholder inputs.

3. Approach to Developing a SIS

Cambodia is currently discussing how to develop its safeguards information system (SIS). Conversations focus on three issues: indicators to demonstrate how safeguards are addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities; description of the types of information and methods for collection and analysis; and mechanism(s) to store and disseminate safeguards information.

Key Challenges

The PLR gap analysis basically faced three main challenges. First, in addition to the challenges in terms of working with documents that are either in Khmer or English, there are specific REDD+ terms (e.g. reversal) for which no equivalent term exist in Khmer, making it difficult to ensure consistency in the consultation processes. Second, the process to conduct the gap analysis was very inclusive where inputs were solicited and considered from various stakeholder groups as the work progressed. The downside of this approach was the amount of time it took to complete the analysis. That was because before the team accepts or disregards the suggested PLR to be reviewed by stakeholders, the team needs to review the documents and discuss its relevance for the task. Finally, as each team member was given different PLR to analyze, ensuring consistency in reviewing the PLR among the team members was difficult. As an immediate next step, a legal expert will be hired to help review the comprehensiveness of the gap analysis.

The main challenge for proposing safeguards criteria and principles was the diversity of views among team members and/or stakeholders on the suitability and measurability of proposed criteria and indicators for addressing and respecting Cancun safeguards; proposed methods to collect, analyze, store, and disseminate information on proposed criteria and indicators; and how institutional arrangements should be established to oversee this work. Finally, another challenge was the lack of experience from other countries on how a SIS should be developed, and the relations between National Forest Monitoring System and SIS, especially those countries sharing similar ecological and socio-economic circumstances.

For more information, please contact the contributors and the Cambodia Team:

Mr. Delux Chhun

E-mail: chhundelux83@gmail.com

Mr. Pheakkdey Nguon

Email: pheakkdey.nguon@gmail.com

