

Communities, indigenous peoples and decision-makers, key players in Ecuador's first summary of safeguards information

11 Aug 2017 | [Victoria Suárez Dávalos](#), [Judith Walcott](#) y [Shaenandhoa García Rangel](#)

Ecuador has established an approach to REDD+ social and environmental safeguards as a fundamental pillar of the construction of its REDD+ Action Plan, Bosques para el Buen Vivir 2016-2025.

Ecuador's safeguards approach is compatible with its legal, political and institutional framework and is aligned with the achievement of national goals on sustainable development.

One of the country's most important advances in the development of this approach was the publication in March 2017 of its first summary of information on addressing and respecting REDD+ safeguards. Ecuador is the second country in the world, after Brazil, to publish its safeguards information summary on the UNFCCC Web Platform.

Two key factors of success in the preparation of this national report were that Ecuador's Ministry of the Environment (MAE) assumed an important leadership role, giving great impetus to the promotion of safeguards, and that the process had the collaboration of other governmental institutions and multiple civil society actors.

The development of Ecuador's first summary of information places the country as "an international model in the fight against climate change", according to Valeria Enríquez, of the Network of Youth Organizations of Loja Province.

It should be mentioned that Ecuador began planning its first summary in early 2014. MAE was supported by the UN-REDD Programme and the Safeguards Facilitation Team (made up of MAE, Conservation International - Ecuador and the country's UN-REDD National Programme).

The engagement of multiple actors engagement was fundamental for legitimacy

Ecuador's safeguards approach promotes the legitimacy and sustainability of REDD+ implementation, as it includes the participation of local communities, peoples and nationalities, as well as women and other priority groups.

The content of the first summary was built upon discussions and technical studies that were developed through a participatory process. This included consultation workshops held with representatives of local communities and civil society to identify most relevant social and environmental benefits as well as risks for REDD+ implementation in the country.

In addition, the REDD+ Working Group, which was established in 2013 served to strengthen transparency in the process of developing the summary, to involve different actors, to include ancestral knowledge, and to promote the incorporation of a gendered and generational approach. This area of stakeholder engagement also helped to "raise awareness among indigenous representatives of several relevant elements of the country's legal framework," says Manuel Shiguango, of the Kichwa Wamani Community Indigenous Organization (COKIWA).

Montserrat Albán, of Conservation International Ecuador, highlighted that "the promotion of mechanisms for participation and capacity-building fostered collaboration with various actors and contributed to the dissemination of information on the country's REDD+ progress. These advances were also shared in international events and spaces to exchange experience." The summary of information is the result of a dynamic, participatory process, in which the involvement of non-governmental actors was key, concludes Albán.

The REDD+ Working Group will continue its role of linking stakeholders in future safeguards reporting processes. This initiative, says Montserrat Albán, "evidences the openness of MAE to have a REDD+ participatory platform."

The inclusion of a recommendations and next steps section in the first summary shows the national commitment to continue strengthening the addressing and respecting of safeguards, as well as to keep improving the development process for the summaries of information, according to Patricia Serrano, Technical Advisor of Targeted Support UN-REDD / SCC-MAE.



Lessons learned

1. Involving local actors, such as communities and indigenous peoples, in developing the summary of information is essential.

According to Montserrat Albán, "the lack of knowledge about safeguards and their relevance to the REDD+ implementation" was an initial challenge. In the future, it is important to design specific strategies to involve local actors, to extend the scope of the discussions to different territories and to develop learning materials that are easy to disseminate and adapted to the local language.

Deepening "the articulation of social and indigenous organizations and strengthening regional coordination" is also necessary, explains Manuel Shiguango, of COKIWA. He adds that "we must work with each nationality and community representative, not only with representatives of regional organizations, so we have information on different experiences and learning." This is also a way to connect with "the indigenous worldview and the interaction they have with nature."

2. Ownership of the process by decision-makers is required.

One of the major challenges associated with the development of the national approach to safeguards is the appropriation of the process and its results by decision-makers (e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Environment). "This requires continuous involvement and close monitoring," according to Montserrat Albán. The recommendations outlined in the summary of information should be communicated at high levels of the governmental organizations so that they can influence decision-

making processes and promote the development of summaries of information for the national level, and not just for the UNFCCC.

3. The national interpretation of the Cancun safeguards is a key element for the development of the summary of information.

The process of development Ecuador's first summary of information showed that it is essential to have an approach to safeguards that encompasses the national definition or interpretation of the seven Cancun safeguards, to help determine the information to be included in the report, says Victoria Suárez Dávalos, of Targeted Support UN-REDD / SCC-MAE.

4. The development of safeguards reports requires the investment of time and resources.

The development of a national safeguards approach and the generation of the first summary of information require considerable investment in time and funds. Therefore, for the production of future summaries, it would be useful to reflect on the development and implementation process, with the aim of reducing demands. It is also important to have a team or person to support the development of the entire summary, according to Cristina García, MAE's REDD+ focal point.

5. It is important to promote more institutional coordination with implementing partners and other entities.

Topics included in summaries of safeguards information go beyond the Ministry of the Environment competencies as the National REDD+ Authority. Significant efforts must be made to achieve effective institutional coordination with implementing partners and other relevant entities, in order to collect information from different sources for future reports on a regular basis. This can be more effectively addressed once the safeguards information system is operational and links are established with other key actors, says Patricia Serrano, Senior Technical Adviser at UN-REDD / SCC-MAE Targeted Support.

Considerations for future summaries

"It is important to include a section on opportunities for improvement in the safeguards information summary in order to address those aspects during next reporting period and to enhance the safeguards application," according to Patricia Serrano.

In the future, it is crucial to think about mechanisms to disseminate the summary and generate products adapted to different actors, Montserrat Albán explains.

In addition, it is necessary to keep a record of the formats used in the report, as well as the methodologies used for managing the information and the guidance given for its development, in order to ensure compatibility between editions, mentions Victoria Suárez Dávalos. In fact, maintaining the structure of the report and laying out a roadmap for new summaries of information can help ensure continuity in the future development of these reports, says Cristina García.

Towards the development of the safeguards information system

Ecuador is developing a system to provide information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected during the REDD+ actions implementation process.

Further summaries of safeguards information are expected to provide additional information on REDD+ activities being implemented, and strengthen reporting on “respecting” safeguards, with important inputs from the safeguards information system, and according to the capacities and advances in REDD+ implementation in the country.

Authors:

Victoria Suárez Dávalos is working for the Targeted Support ONU-REDD / SCC-MAE. Judith Walcott and Shaenandhoa García Rangel work at UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Center.

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