



SAFEGUARDS INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS) IN REDD+

WHAT SHOULD IT DELIVER FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

**AIPP Submission to the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)
on Safeguards Information System**

September 24, 2014



The decision of the Nineteenth Conference of Parties (COP 19) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requires that the Parties submit the most recent summary of information on how all social and environmental safeguards have been addressed and respected in order to be able to access results-based finance. However, it does not provide clarity on how effectively and to what extent these safeguards should be addressed. It also lacks information on ways to redress potential violation of indigenous peoples' rights resulting from REDD+ activities. In the upcoming 41st session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) at COP 20 in Lima, Peru, it is therefore vital that the Parties strengthen the global requirements on protecting the rights of indigenous peoples by anchoring the Safeguards Information System (SIS) to the international standards on human rights and indigenous peoples' rights, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and conventions relevant to indigenous peoples. Further, the 41st session of SBSTA should come out with a rights-based global guidance for REDD+ countries to design Safeguard Information Systems and to implement, monitor and report on REDD+ safeguards, with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities.

I. Cancun Safeguards: What do they mean to Indigenous Peoples?

Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the UN General Assembly has adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

This safeguard provides respect for the rights of indigenous peoples. These rights include the rights to land, territories and resources and the right to their culture, traditional livelihoods including shifting cultivation and their customary resource management systems, as enshrined in UNDRIP. This safeguard also provides a strong basis for indigenous peoples to assert the recognition and respect for their indigenous knowledge cultivated, nurtured and transferred through generations. With these provisions of the current REDD+ agreement, governments of REDD+ countries shall demonstrate their commitment and take concrete actions to implement this safeguard as a critical element in the success of REDD+.

The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular, indigenous peoples and local communities

This safeguard calls for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in REDD+ in all its phases and stages including in REDD+ bodies, mechanisms and processes at the local, national and global levels. It also entails providing an enabling environment and technical support and assistance to indigenous peoples' representatives especially from the grassroots level, such as translating documents to languages they understand and providing translation services, among others, to facilitate their effective participation and without any form of intimidation or conditions.



Conservation of natural forests and biological diversity and enhancement of other social and environmental benefits

This means REDD+ should not lead to the destruction of natural forests and biodiversity. Logging of natural forests or their conversion to plantations is therefore prohibited under REDD+. The multiple functions of forests including their cultural values to indigenous peoples are to be fully acknowledged and prioritized. Further, a fair and equitable benefit sharing mechanism and arrangement shall be negotiated with indigenous peoples, and their right to free prior and informed consent, ensured. The benefit-sharing incentives to conserve natural forests and ecosystem services shall be commensurate to the contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities as well as in meeting their needs and priorities without any form of discrimination.

Transparent and effective national forest governance structures

The indicator of an effective REDD+ is the establishment of transparent and effective national forest governance structures that strengthen local forest governance systems. This shall include respect, protection and fulfillment of indigenous peoples' territorial rights and customary forest management systems as well as institutions for self-governance. Further, the bodies and mechanisms to be set up for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of REDD+ shall include accountability measures at all levels and with the effective participation of indigenous peoples as rights holders and other relevant stakeholders. This safeguard also requires policies for transparency and for independent monitoring and verification. The other safeguards include actions to address the risks of reversals and to reduce the displacement of emissions. These safeguards are complementary to the conservation of natural forest and the need for clear measures and actions to address effectively the real causes and drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Unless this is done, REDD+ will not succeed. In this context, indigenous peoples who are practicing sustainable livelihoods, including shifting cultivation/rotational agriculture (7 to 10 years cycle) that is attached to their culture and identity and gathering of non-forest timber products (NTFP), shall not be penalized and demonized. These livelihoods contribute positively to carbon sequestration, biodiversity enhancement and food security rather than being a cause or driver of deforestation, carbon emission and forest degradation. Further, additional livelihood and technical support shall be provided to indigenous peoples to enable them to address their basic needs and wellbeing as they adapt to the changing climate.

II. What should the Safeguards Information System contain?

Specific indicators in upholding the Cancun Safeguards

Key indicators of all the elements of the Cancun agreement relating to the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities shall be developed and adopted by REDD+ countries as part of their monitoring and reporting tools under the Safeguards Information System. These key indicators shall be developed with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities including women. Further, these shall contain structural, process and outcome indicators relating to the respect for the rights and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities. These rights include but are not limited to the following:

- Legal recognition, protection and implementation of the collective rights of indigenous peoples over their lands, territories and resources
- Recognition, protection and promotion of the traditional sustainable livelihoods, including shifting cultivation (7-10 year cycle), and customary forest management systems of indigenous peoples
- Recognition and respect of the customary laws, traditional knowledge and forest governance systems of indigenous peoples including their own system of collective decision making
- Appropriate and equitable representation of indigenous peoples in the decision-making bodies and processes of REDD+
- Equitable benefit sharing mechanism and agreements with explicit collective consent of indigenous communities
- Accessible and effective grievance mechanisms at the local and national levels

Integration of traditional knowledge and monitoring systems of indigenous communities

Indigenous peoples are the real stewards of much of the world's remaining forests. They have deep historical and socio-cultural connections to their land, territories and resources. In their own ways, they have been monitoring the biodiversity of their forests and territories, as it is integral to their sustainable livelihoods. Indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women, know the forests and all the changes happening within and can better manage them at low cost than states. However, there is a disconnection between communities' monitoring systems and that of states including on conservation measures and approaches. Evidence-based studies have shown that community data based on their forest monitoring are as accurate as the data gathered by trained technical experts. Therefore, REDD+ countries should ensure the integration of community monitoring systems while designing a Safeguards Information System. Further, the effective participation of communities in generating, monitoring and validating data for SIS should be guaranteed.

Full recognition and respect for human rights and establishment of grievance mechanisms

It is essential that REDD+ countries undertake necessary national and local measures to prevent violations of the human rights of indigenous peoples. REDD+ plans and programmes should be fully aligned with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as with other international human rights obligations of states. Human rights violations committed against indigenous peoples under REDD+ shall be included in the SIS report, as well as actions taken in response to these. The SIS report shall also cover the establishment of grievance mechanisms at the local and national levels, including their mandate, composition, budget allocation and actions taken in response to complaints and grievances.



Capacity building initiatives on indigenous peoples' rights

Many indigenous people are not aware of their collective rights to land, territories and resources. In this case, communities cannot assert their rights, including in their engagements in any plans relating to REDD+ and programmes of government and others that affect them. It is thereby a prerequisite for indigenous peoples to have full knowledge and understanding of their rights as well as the implications of REDD+ in relation to respect and protection of their rights, wellbeing and aspirations. It is also pertinent to sensitize government officials and agencies working on REDD+ about indigenous peoples' rights and their diverse cultures, customs, institutions, forms of collective decision-making and legitimate leaders and representatives.

Appropriate budget shall be provided, and partnerships with indigenous peoples and other relevant actors developed, for the appropriate planning and implementation of information and education campaigns on REDD+ and the rights and concerns of indigenous peoples, taking into account their diverse languages and levels of literacy. These key steps are critical in facilitating better understanding and constructive engagements. Hence, it is very important that SIS should contain information on the capacity building activities conducted by the states based on the above.

Recognition and enhancement of multiple functions of forests

The Parties to the UNFCCC have recognized the importance of incentivizing non-carbon benefits for the long-term sustainability of REDD+. Forests have multiple functions including social, cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic values, which are integral to indigenous peoples' territorial governance, livelihoods, identity, culture and wellbeing. Hence it is essential that SIS provide how REDD+ countries are recognizing, protecting and enhancing the multiple functions of forests to indigenous peoples as well as in enhancing biodiversity, watershed protection to enhance water supply and other non-carbon benefits of forest management and protection.



III. Mechanisms and processes in preparing the summary of information

In order to get their confidence and their ownership over the system, it is essential to have the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in designing, implementing, monitoring and reporting of the system. This means not only ensuring their representation in the Safeguards Information System but also listening, respecting and fulfilling their

voices and rights and, if needed, building their capacity for their effective engagement throughout the SIS process. Also, the mechanisms of the preparation should include but not be limited to the following:

- The national team to prepare the report shall be inclusive with representatives from government agencies, relevant stakeholders and at least two indigenous persons
- The views, reports and recommendations of indigenous peoples should be duly acknowledged and reflected in the report
- The team should be given sufficient time to collect the information. Fast tracking of the process should be avoided
- The collection of data should be participatory and transparent to include members and leaders of indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities

IV. Validation of information collected for Safeguards Information System

Validating the information collected for the Safeguards Information System is highly important to avoid inconsistency of data and to ensure accuracy and credibility. The validation process should include but not be limited to the following:

- An independent validation team shall be formed with representatives of indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities
- The team should undertake public reviews and consultations at the national and local levels
- There should be sufficient time for public review and consultations
- The data should be made accessible in indigenous and local languages so that a larger population can give inputs in the validation process
- The final summary of information should reflect the inputs received in the public review and consultations

V. Is a Safeguards Information System relevant only for the final phase of REDD+?

The SIS is relevant and crucial in all the phases and stages of REDD+ including in the preparatory phase. This is to ensure that the overall framework, plan and strategies of REDD+ are fully aligned with the Cancun agreement including international human rights instruments and measures to address the real drivers of deforestation and forest degradation at the outset. At the preparatory phase, the key elements of Safeguards Information System shall include policy reforms and actions in the recognition and protection of the rights and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples with key indicators recommended above. These should include: a moratorium on penalizing and criminalizing of indigenous peoples' livelihood practices, mechanisms

for effective participation and representation of indigenous peoples, and actions to address and stop the real drivers of forest degradation and deforestation that are compatible with the protection of their rights, including programmes to enhance and support their livelihoods, among others.

The following Indigenous Peoples Organizations/Institutions and Civil Society Organizations have endorsed this submission of AIPP:

- 1) Association for Law and Advocacy for Pastoralists (ALAPA) –Tanzania
- 2) Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), Indonesia
- 3) Asamblea Mixe para el Desarrollo Sostenible A.C., Mexico
- 4) Borok Indigenous/Tribal Peoples Development Centre (BITPDC), Northeast India
- 5) Borok Peoples' Human Rights Organization (BPHRO), Northeast India
- 6) Centro para la autonomía y desarrollo de los pueblos indígenas (CADPI) – Nicaragua
- 7) Chirapaq, Center of Indigenous Cultures of Peru
- 8) Chin Human Rights Organization, Myanmar
- 9) Centre for International Environment Law (CIEL), USA
- 10) Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA), Cambodia
- 11) Climate Justice Programme, Australia
- 12) Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas – ECMIA
- 13) Centre of Research & Development in Upland Area (CERDA), Viet Nam
- 14) Center for Sustainable Development in the Mountainous Areas (CSDM), Viet Nam
- 15) Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), UK
- 16) Gender Development Association (GDA), Lao PDR
- 17) Indigenous Nationalities Women Youth Network (INWYN), Nepal
- 18) Inter Mountain Peoples' Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT), Thailand
- 19) Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF), Thailand
- 20) Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education (TEBTEBBA), Philippines
- 21) Indigenous Peoples Working Group on REDD+, Cambodia
- 22) International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Denmark
- 23) Kapaeeng Foundation, Bangladesh
- 24) Kirat Chamling Language Culture Development Association (KCLCDA), Nepal
- 25) Kirat Youth Society (KYS), Nepal
- 26) Maleya Foundation, Bangladesh
- 27) Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Nepal
- 28) NGO Federation Of Nepalese Indigenous Nationalities (NGO FONIN), Nepal
- 29) Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (NIPT), Thailand
- 30) National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF), Nepal
- 31) Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), Northeast India
- 32) Non-Timber Forest Products-Exchange Programme Asia (NTFP-EP Asia), Philippines
- 33) PNG Eco-Forestry Forum, Papua New Guinea
- 34) Promotion of Indigenous and Nature Together (POINT), Myanmar
- 35) People Unity Young Society, Nepal
- 36) Srae Chhouk Community Alliance (SCA), Cambodia
- 37) SONIA (SOciety for New Initiatives and Activities" for a Just New World), Italy
- 38) Youth Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, Nepal (YFIN), Nepal
- 39) Zo Indigenous Forum (ZIF), Northeast India

AIPP at a glance

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) is a regional organization founded in 1988 by indigenous peoples' movements as a platform for solidarity and cooperation. AIPP is actively promoting and defending indigenous peoples' rights and human rights; sustainable development and management of resources and environment protection. Through the years, AIPP has developed its expertise on grassroots capacity building, advocacy and networking from local to global levels and strengthening partnerships with indigenous organizations, support NGOs, UN agencies and other institutions. At present, AIPP has 47 members from 14 countries in Asia with 7 indigenous peoples' national alliances/networks and 35 local and sub-national organizations including 16 are ethnic-based organizations, five (5) indigenous women and four (4) are indigenous youth organizations.

Through our Indigenous Women (IW) programme, AIPP aims to empower indigenous women through networking, education and capacity building activities with the overall goal for indigenous women to assert, promote and protect their rights as women and as indigenous peoples.

Our Vision

Indigenous peoples in Asia are living with dignity and fully exercising their rights, distinct cultures and identity, and enhancing their sustainable management systems on lands, territories and resources for their own future and development in an environment of peace, justice and equality.

Our Mission

AIPP strengthen the solidarity, cooperation and capacities of indigenous peoples in Asia to promote and protect their rights, cultures and identities, and their sustainable resource management system for their development and self-determination.

Our Programmes

Our main areas of work among the different programmes are information dissemination, awareness raising, capacity building, advocacy and networking from local to global. Our programmes are:

- Human Rights Campaign and Policy Advocacy
- Regional Capacity Building
- Environment
- Indigenous Women
- Communication and Development
- Organizational Strengthening

AIPP is accredited as an NGO in special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and as observer organization with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). AIPP is a member of the International Land Coalition (ILC).



Published by Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

This briefing paper was printed with support from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DANIDA)

AIPP: www.aippnet.org IWGIA: www.iwgia.org

Text: Joan Carling and Lakpa Nuri Sherpa

Layout: Kedsarin Sinlapapaisan : AIPP Printing Press

Photos: AIPP Archives, Puah Sze Ning and Vaing Samrith

Disclaimer: The contents of this briefing paper are the sole responsibility of Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of donor mentioned above.



Printed in Chiang Mai, Thailand
by AIPP Printing Press