

REDD+ AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION: APPROACHES, EXPERIENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED OUTCOMES

REPORT BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) has the potential to deliver significant benefits to biodiversity by protecting and restoring large areas of tropical forests. Whether or not REDD+ will benefit rather than harm biodiversity will depend on a variety of factors, including how REDD+ policies are designed and implemented. As experiences with implementation of REDD+ are still relatively new, mostly small-scale, and with few initiatives fully operational, there is minimal empirical research on impacts to date.

Nonetheless, experience in three key areas provide insights into the potential long-term impacts of REDD+ on biodiversity conservation and potential best practices for ensuring positive biodiversity outcomes: 1) the safeguard frameworks that guide the biodiversity aspects of REDD+; 2) the development of national REDD+ programs; and 3) the development and implementation of numerous forest carbon projects. The report [*REDD+ and Biodiversity Conservation: Approaches, Experiences and Opportunities for Improved Outcomes*](#) aims to summarize how biodiversity issues are addressed in these key areas and provides recommendations of how future REDD+ activities could be designed and managed to create positive biodiversity impacts.



BACKGROUND

Safeguards for Biodiversity in REDD+. REDD+ activities are being designed to meet an array of international policies, funder requirements and voluntary REDD+ guidelines, all of which are shaping the way biodiversity issues are addressed. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) contains a list of safeguards that REDD+ activities need to address and respect, as well as the systems that need to be set up to report on safeguard implementation. These safeguards include a number of requirements relevant for biodiversity. For example, the UNFCCC safeguards state that REDD+ should; not lead to the conversion of natural forest and should be consistent with the conservation of biodiversity; be used to incentivize conservation and enhance other environmental benefits; not only avoid negative impacts but also enhance social and environmental benefits; and complement or be consistent with national forest programs and other relevant conventions, which includes the Convention on Biodiversity Diversity (CBD). Recent UNFCCC decisions also require that information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected is submitted in order for countries to receive results-based payments.

The CBD has made a number of efforts to link progress on forest carbon and biodiversity standards. For example, the CBD adopted a decision that urged Parties to ensure that actions for REDD+ do not run counter to the objectives of the CBD, and called on its Secretariat to collaborate with various organizations to develop recommendations for REDD+ safeguards that address the importance of preserving biodiversity in forest habitats. Voluntary REDD+ guidelines/standards that promote biodiversity conservation – such as the UN-REDD Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (UN-REDD SEPC) and the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (REDD+ SES) – have also been developed for government-led REDD+ initiatives. Similar project level standards – such as the Climate,

Community, and Biodiversity (CCB) Standard and the Plan Vivo Standard – promote biodiversity conservation in forest carbon projects. Finally, some of the key funders and funding mechanisms that support REDD+ activities, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the World Bank, have their own safeguard mechanisms that consider biodiversity.

These safeguard mechanisms were analyzed to assess how they address biodiversity issues, focusing on the following key questions:

1. What guidance does the UNFCCC provide on how REDD+ should address biodiversity?
2. What additional guidance on REDD Safeguards does the CBD provide?
3. What other safeguard frameworks provide guidance for REDD+?
4. What funder policies are informing how REDD+ programs or projects address biodiversity issues?

National REDD+ Programs and Biodiversity Conservation. To date, more than 50 countries are in the process of developing national REDD+ programs. A review of 14 countries' Readiness Preparation Proposals (R-PPs) developed for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and/or the UN-REDD program – including Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Vietnam – provide insight into the ways in which countries are addressing biodiversity conservation in the development of their national REDD+ strategies. For countries seeking to be compensated for emission reductions through the FCPF Carbon Fund their Emission Reduction Program Idea Note (ER-PIN) – which provides greater description of the planned REDD+ activities - was also reviewed. The reporting requirements for the CBD along with countries' National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) for the CBD were reviewed when available, though many of these are being revised.

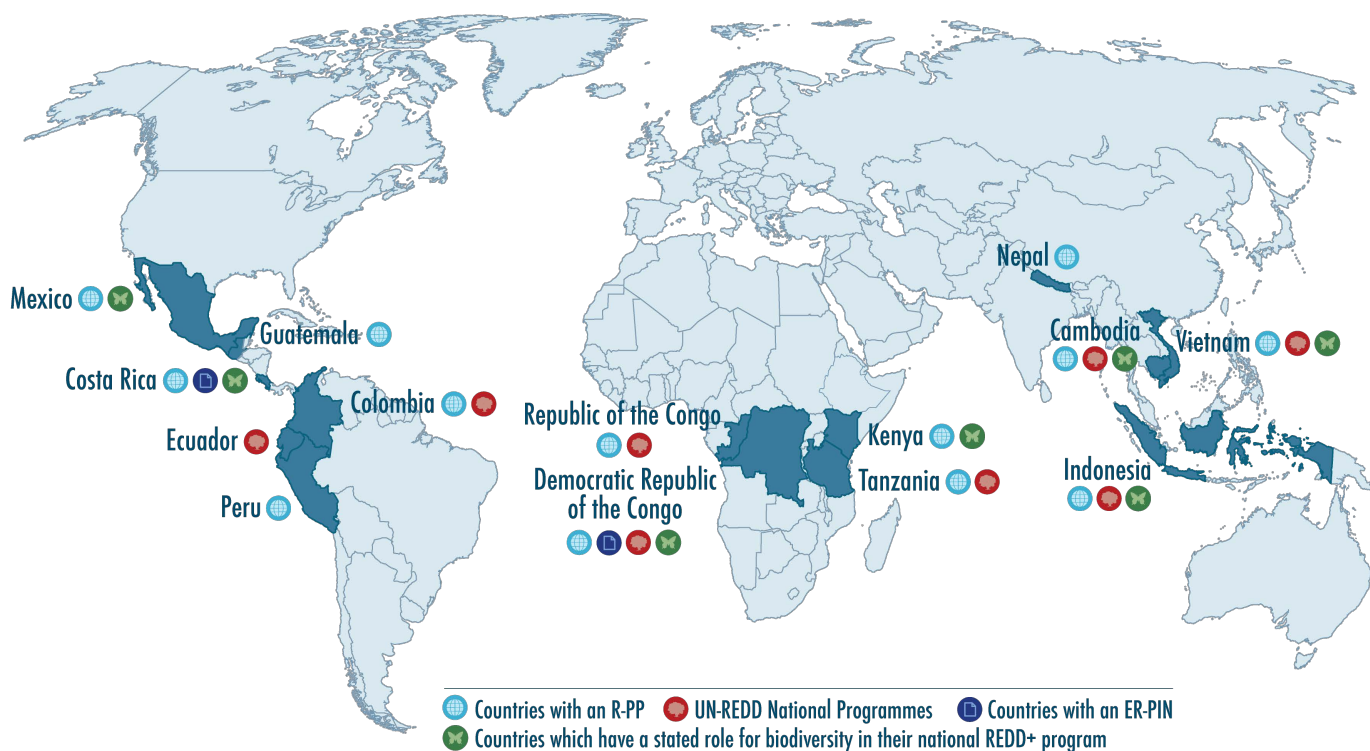


Figure 1. Countries Studied

To determine the extent to which national-level REDD+ programs will deliver positive biodiversity impacts from REDD+, the study focused on the following key questions:

1. What types of biodiversity benefits do national REDD+ programs seek to provide?
2. Are biodiversity-friendly policies and measures being considered in national REDD+ programs?
3. Do national REDD+ programs link to national biodiversity objectives, and do the national biodiversity documents indicate coordination with the REDD+ program?
4. Are biodiversity monitoring methods described, and are these coordinated with other national monitoring programs?
5. If a nested system is planned, is a system described in which sub-national activities contribute to national biodiversity goals and monitoring?

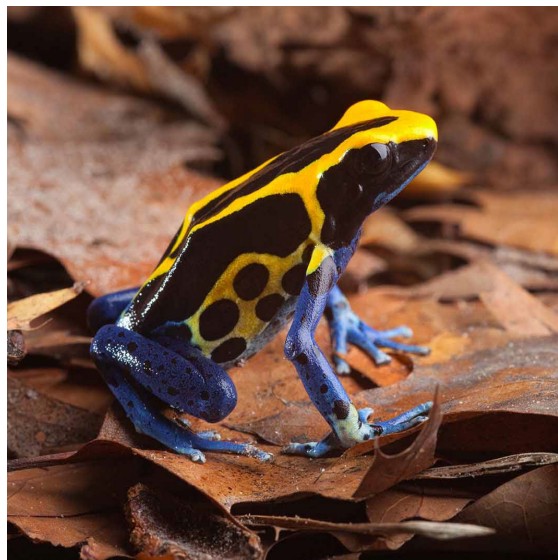


Biodiversity Conservation in Forest Carbon Projects. There are hundreds of forest carbon projects being designed around the world, most of which aim to generate multiple benefits including benefits for local communities and biodiversity. To assess how existing forest carbon projects are addressing biodiversity issues 17 advanced forest carbon projects (11 afforestation/reforestation (A/R) projects and six REDD projects) which have been operational for 2-15 years were reviewed. For each of these projects, the review included publically available project design documents and other reports that describe the results of project implementation.

To assess how these projects address biodiversity issues, the analysis focused on the following key questions:

1. What are the biodiversity objectives of forest carbon projects? And what actions are projects taking to enhance biodiversity conservation?
2. Are forest carbon projects contributing to national biodiversity objectives?
3. How are forest carbon projects monitoring their impacts on biodiversity?
4. Are forest carbon projects benefiting biodiversity?

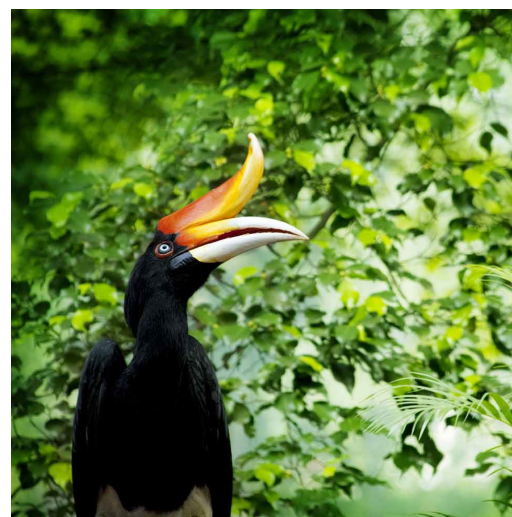
KEY FINDINGS



Safeguards for Biodiversity in REDD+

- **The UNFCCC safeguards, which include avoidance of harm and incentivizing positive impacts,** represent an important opportunity for biodiversity conservation as REDD+ could stimulate new policies and measures and previously unavailable finance. However, the UNFCCC requirements are presented at a high level and provide little guidance on the types of biodiversity goals, conservation actions, or monitoring methods that countries could use.
- **The CBD advice on REDD+ is more detailed than the UNFCCC.** For example, the CBD provides advice on prioritizing the use of native species in reforestation activities, and the use of strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments when designing climate change mitigation activities. Additionally, the CBD shows continued dedication to collaboration with other forest related climate change efforts including upcoming plans to discuss opportunities for joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for sustainable forest management.

- **Safeguard frameworks outside of the UNFCCC have been established specifically to help governments and project developers implement REDD+ activities that achieve strong social and environmental performance.** These include the SEPC, REDD+ SES, CCB and Plan Vivo. These REDD+ specific safeguard frameworks are voluntary but provide much needed guidance and are being used widely.
- **The implementation of REDD+ programs or projects is often shaped by the policies of funders, including USAID, GEF, IFC and the World Bank.** The safeguards requirements of funding agencies are often not REDD+ specific, and frequently do not include a requirement to generate positive biodiversity impacts. Recipients must therefore satisfy the funder requirements and simultaneously consider ways to meet the goals of generating positive impacts as described in the UNFCCC safeguards and any voluntary REDD+ specific safeguard frameworks they chose to apply.



National REDD+ Programs and Biodiversity Conservation

- **Most national-level REDD+ R-PPs and UN-REDD documents contain only preliminary (and high-level) information on how they will address biodiversity issues.** Detailed information on biodiversity is expected to be developed as programs evolve. About half of the programs reviewed had a general statement about the role of biodiversity and half did not include biodiversity as a major objective. Costa Rica and DRC, which both submitted ER-PINS to the FCPF, had progressed the furthest and appear to be promising for biodiversity conservation.
- **Specific policies and measures to conserve biodiversity through REDD+,** such as reducing hunting, or conserving areas that are important to key species, were not mentioned in most of the R-PPs or UN-REDD documents reviewed (with the exception of Costa Rica and DRC). This likely represents the preliminary nature of these programs, as specific policies and measures that affect biodiversity will be developed when countries begin the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment Process (a requirement for receiving FCPF funding).



- **There are clear synergies between REDD+, CBD monitoring and several of the CBD Aichi targets, yet few countries indicate they are taking advantage of these synergies.** Of the 20 Aichi targets adopted at the CBD COP in 2010, five targets have clear potential links to REDD+. For example, Target 5 is to halve the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests by 2020, and Target 15 includes enhancing the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks through conservation and restoration of at least 15 percent of degraded ecosystems. Despite clear synergies with REDD+, only a handful of R-PPs mention the ability of REDD+ to contribute to national biodiversity goals. Similarly, most early NBSAPs do not explicitly mention links to REDD+, though at the Parties at CBD COP 10 called on its Secretariat to collaborate with the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), the FCPF, UN-REDD and other related organizations to develop recommendations for REDD+ safeguards that help address the importance of preserving biodiversity in forest habitats.
- **Shared monitoring of biodiversity for both REDD+ and NBSAPs is an opportunity** that could benefit both the safeguards information systems that are being developed for REDD+ and the monitoring that is done for the CBD. An Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators has generated a set of 12 headline indicators, with more detailed operational indicators under each, for countries to use to measure implementation of the CBD's strategic goals and objectives.

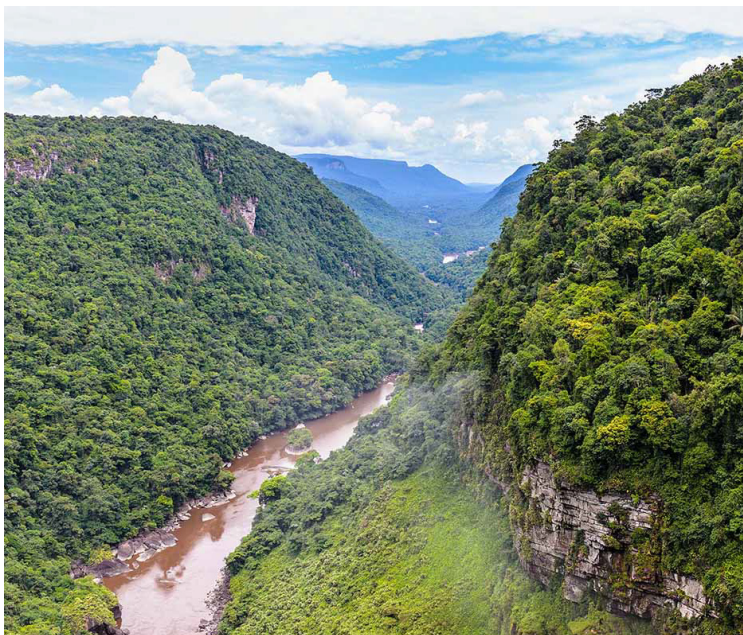


The CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) has, however, acknowledged challenges in biodiversity monitoring and the need for more work and support to apply all these indicators – particularly in countries with lower capacity. Many of the indicators used for CBD national reports are also relevant for REDD+, though there appears to be little coordination between the two. With the exception of Guatemala, none of the R-PPs or national program documents explicitly indicated that the biodiversity monitoring for REDD+ will make use of monitoring done for the country's biodiversity strategy.

- **All of the countries reviewed describe sub-national activities as part of their REDD+ programs, but only Peru provides details on how they could use sub-national activities to contribute to national biodiversity goals or monitoring.** The lack of integration of biodiversity monitoring efforts across scales is an important missed opportunity for projects and sub-national jurisdictional REDD+ to contribute to the biodiversity objectives of the national REDD+ program.

Biodiversity Conservation in Forest Carbon Projects

- **All of the projects reviewed described biodiversity goals but the types of goals and level of specificity differed substantially across projects.** Most A/R projects stated they would enhance biodiversity by reforesting degraded areas with native trees, but provided little information on which species would benefit from reforested areas. REDD projects provided clearer links to biodiversity goals by preventing habitat loss, reducing illegal logging, hunting and fishing, and expanding the area under national park.
- **Forest carbon projects could play an important role to support national biodiversity goals and help countries meet their CBD commitments.** The time is ripe for this as many NBSAPs are currently being revised to show how countries will meet the Aichi targets. Despite the potential contribution of forest carbon projects to national biodiversity goals none of the 17 projects studied explicitly acknowledged the contribution of the project to national biodiversity goals.



- **Most of the projects reviewed claimed that biodiversity benefits had been achieved, though monitoring methods varied substantially.** Most claims were based primarily on the increase in the area reforested or in the forest conserved. The monitoring methods described for the REDD projects were generally more comprehensive and included monitoring of threats to biodiversity, as well direct monitoring of populations of high conservation value species. Monitoring based on the number or area of planted trees has limited ability to detect other changes in biodiversity. While tree cover can be used as a proxy for biodiversity it does not provide information to substantiate biodiversity benefits (e.g., vegetation composition or animal diversity). Additional long-term monitoring will be needed to identify the full extent of biodiversity impacts.

Recommendations

- Understand the key threats to biodiversity.
- Consider biodiversity issues throughout the design and implementation of REDD+ and include biodiversity as an integral component of REDD+.
- Develop very clear, specific and measurable biodiversity goals for REDD+ activities over both the short and long-term and over different spatial scales.
- Identify and implement a clear set of activities that will enable biodiversity goals to be attained, including actions specifically aimed at addressing threats to biodiversity and providing biodiversity benefits.
- Explicitly consider potential biodiversity benefits when prioritizing sites for REDD+ activities, including selecting sites that have high biodiversity value (such as key biodiversity areas, areas of high endemism, areas with many vulnerable, threatened or endangered species, or critical biological corridors) and are aligned with national biodiversity priorities (e.g., in NBSAPs).
- Develop a detailed and comprehensive monitoring plan for biodiversity, including the establishment of a biodiversity baseline, clear biodiversity indicators, monitoring threats, and rigorous monitoring methods.
- Develop a national scale framework for biodiversity monitoring that addresses multiple objectives, includes REDD+ safeguards, CBD, and donor requirements, and provides guidance to sub-national REDD+ initiatives for biodiversity monitoring. This national framework should build upon the biodiversity indicators and monitoring required under the CBD to streamline biodiversity monitoring and reporting within a country as much as possible. This guidance would be designed to standardize monitoring methods between the CBD and UNFCCC, and domestically within a country. It should promote the assimilation of data collected by sub-national initiatives into the national system. Sub-national initiatives could benefit from the application of standardized methods and from data generated by the national system.
- Explicitly link the biodiversity goals of REDD+ to national biodiversity objectives, including commitments under the CBD, and seek potential synergies between monitoring systems established for REDD+ and those established under NBSAPS.
- Enhance synergies between the UNFCCC and the CBD, among other conservation-related international agreements, on biodiversity-related mitigation efforts including in particular REDD+.
- Establish an explicit adaptive management process in which the results from biodiversity monitoring (whether at the project or program scale) are reviewed and used to modify REDD+ activities to meet biodiversity objectives. The timing of this review will depend on the frequency of biodiversity data collection, but could be combined with other reviews of emissions reductions data and social monitoring data so that project interventions can be adjusted in response to project impacts in each of these areas.



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