



UN-REDD workshop on the Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (SEPC)

Geneva, 8-9 February 2012

Background

The development of the Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (SEPC) and the related Benefits and Risks Tool (BeRT) started in 2010, as a response by the UN-REDD Programme to help enhance social and environmental benefits and reduce social and environmental risks in REDD+. The SEPC has been through two rounds of consultation with stakeholders, with the last round ending on 20 January 2012. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Present feedback from the latest consultation on the SEPC and BeRT
- Better understand countries' needs in relation to addressing social and environmental issues in UN-REDD national programme development and their approaches to safeguards more generally
- Receive inputs that will help to clarify the potential role of the UN-REDD Programme and the SEPC and BeRT in addressing these needs
- Better understand the possible links of the SEPC and BeRT to other initiatives that aim to address social and environmental issues arising in REDD+

The workshop agenda was broadly divided into two areas, with one focussing on the potential application of the SEPC/BeRT to UN-REDD Programme activities and the other focussing on the application in countries' REDD+ strategies more generally. The feedback received is being used by the UN-REDD programme to refine the instruments and to provide further guidance on their application.

All presentations may be found [online here](#).

Feedback from the public consultation

Feedback from the public consultation is available online [here](#). The opening workshop sessions presented an overview of the history and objectives of the SEPC and an overview of comments received.

There were many positive comments about the SEPC and BeRT, their content and the consultation process. However, the comments highlighted that there was particular confusion among respondents about how the SEPC and BeRT are supposed to be applied. This centred on six main issues:

1. What is the scope of the SEPC and BeRT? Is it meant to apply only to UN-REDD activities or country REDD+ strategies more generally?
2. How does the SEPC and BeRT link to other initiatives, such as the Cancun safeguards, REDD+ SES and the World Bank Safeguards, SESA and ESMF?



3. Is the SEPC just guidance or is it an assessment framework?
4. What is the link between the SEPC and BeRT (i.e. why does the BeRT only support objective one of the SEPC)?
5. Who is supposed to answer the questions?
6. The BeRT format is very heavy and may result in fatigue for those using the instruments

The application of SEPC and BeRT to UN-REDD Programme activities

The sessions on the application of the SEPC and BeRT to UN-REDD Programme activities began with a series of background presentations on the UN-REDD National Programme cycle, experiences from using the SEPC in Nigeria, links to the World Bank SESA process at the national level, drawing on experience in Congo and experience from the REDD+ SES process.

Four breakout sessions considered further questions surrounding the use and application of the SEPC and BeRT to UN-REDD activities. The overall message from was the need for further revisions to take into account two main issues:

- When it is applied and the scope of applicability in each stage (e.g. the different stages in UN-REDD programme development and implementation; and the different phases of REDD); and
- What is the function (guiding programme formulation vs assessing programmes vs assessing performance).

There was clear support for the use of the SEPC and BeRT as guidance in the formulation of national programmes and/or guidance to countries developing national safeguard systems. The SEPC is useful for this as it is but the BeRT format can be improved.

Useful suggestions were made in relation to specific areas where the SEPC could be applied. For example, the SEPC (and possibly a streamlined BeRT) could be used for screening in the review of National Programmes. This could possibly be achieved with integration into existing documentation. A number of participants stressed that while the SEPC might be useful at different stages of the UN-REDD programme cycle, the BeRT would look different at different stages.

While SEPC can provide guidance for design, tools for assessing UN-REDD Programme activities will look different. Participants noted that the existing instruments are too complex to be used for any form of compliance. There is a need for alterations that take into account existing UN agency policies (although there may be REDD-specific issues in the SEPC that are not covered by existing policies) and the incorporation of indicators that can be assessed (along with clarification of the nature of these indicators). Participants also stressed the need for an accountability framework for any of the criteria to be meaningful.

There is a need to coordinate with the FCPF SESA process both globally and particularly at national level. It was suggested that the SESA process could be improved with the content



from the SEPC and particularly the BeRT, while the SESA process provides a useful basis for applying the SEPC. This relationship needs to be better documented. UN-REDD could also use a similar approach to the World Bank's 'Environment and Social Management Framework' (ESMF) in National Programmes in order to manage risks during implementation. It was noted that there is a need to consider whether the same approach is appropriate in non-FCPF UN-REDD partner countries.

Discussion in the final Day One plenary highlighted the following issues:

- The need to endorse a version of SEPC, while recognising new versions are likely to be developed and will require endorsement.
- The need for a clear balance with processes that are already ongoing and the burden on countries.
- Piloting these instruments will help with clarification of many of the issues discussed.
- More clarity on how the instruments apply in countries that already have UN-REDD National Programmes. One suggestion was to use the BeRT as a checklist to review documents as programme strategies are developed.
- Collaboration with the REDD+ SES in a more structured way.

On Day Two, an additional breakout session was organised to explore some of these issues in more depth. The discussion focussed mainly on the accountability framework and a number of suggestions were made:

- There is a need for a review tool and a risk mitigation tool that are mandatory parts of the UN-REDD Programme cycle. The reporting framework could be used for this objective but more clarity is needed on what is being reported. The existing FPIC and Stakeholder Engagement Guidance are part of this, although it needs to be confirmed whether these are voluntary or mandatory.
- Agency policies are a starting point for mandatory policies, but the SEPC can be used as guiding framework to strengthen these where necessary. At present it is too broad with content that may not be relevant for the purpose.
- A grievance mechanism of some kind also has to be some part of this accountability framework.
- There is a need for a Policy Board decision on evaluation.
- The SEPC and BeRT are useful even though many National Programmes are up and running. Given that there are 14 fully funded countries and 42 partner countries, it can still make an important contribution to programme formulation in new countries.



Support to national approaches to safeguards

- Dr Dzung (Viet Nam) talked about the existing national safeguards which provide a good basis but may need to be updated for REDD+. He recommended that early endorsement of the SEPC would be useful in Viet Nam so that it can be used to revise their Phase II planning. He also stressed the need for further technical assistance with tools like the SEPC.
- Alejandra Saenz Ferron (Costa Rica) summarized the REDD+ process in Costa Rica and highlighted the need for constant revision – as they are just at the beginning of the RPP, the Cancun safeguards were not taken into account. She said that there is a need for an information system with indicators to demonstrate compliance. This may be something to develop if they do the SESA with the SEPC/BeRT.
- Rubin Rashidi (DRC) outlined the different steps the country has been through to develop national safeguards. He stressed that DRC believes that SEPC must assist countries in the development of their own tools. It can be used as a transition tool at first, but during the implementation of the UN-REDD Programme, UN-REDD should recognize the national tool developed on the basis of the SEPC (principle of reciprocity).
- Maria del Carmen Garcia (Ecuador) described their process in developing national safeguards, which aims to build an information system for reporting on the Cancun safeguards. Information is provided against three pillars (social, environmental and governance). They are using elements of the SEPC/BeRT, REDD+ SES and PGAs to build this system.
- Juan Carlos Ortiz (Paraguay) summarized the country's initial work on building safeguards. He highlighted that Paraguay still needs harmonization of the legal framework and a definition and clarification of carbon rights.
- Marlea Munez (Philippines) summarized the national process to develop safeguards which is being led mainly by civil society organisations. She highlighted that further technical assistance is needed to support the development of national systems.

Two breakout groups discussed the utility of the SEPC and BeRT for supporting national approaches to REDD+ safeguards. The groups highlighted that:

- The instruments provide useful guidance and a theoretical framework for starting to develop safeguards in accordance with UNFCCC. However, each country should adapt these instruments to their national context, although the UN needs to establish the limits of what can be changed.
- To improve their application it will be important to clarify certain definitions and to include a better description of the scope of the principles and criteria.
- The BERT as it stands may be more useful for support to REDD+ safeguards in line with the UNFCCC but it could be improved for use in this way through better guidance and on linking content to the different phases of REDD+.



Breakout groups on the content of the SEPC and BeRT

Social: The group discussing social principles and criteria agreed the following:

- That it would be useful to have an extended version of the SEPC explaining criteria and making criteria shorter
- That gender is cross-cutting, but should stay as a criterion
- Inclusion of more links to relevant articles of multilateral agreements
- Introductory text should specify whether the SEPC is voluntary/mandatory
- Specifying which criteria apply to which phase(s) of REDD+ would be useful

The group discussed but did not reach consensus on:

- Whether the SEPC should serve to guide and evaluate UN-REDD engagement
- To what extent it should be imposed on UN-REDD partner countries versus encouraging countries to use it
- Refining criteria to make them more specific to REDD+
- The possibility of establishing an expert commission to look at the SEPC

Environmental: The group discussing the environmental principles and criteria principally discussed two aspects of principle 7 – “Minimize adverse impacts (direct and indirect) on non-forest ecosystem services and biodiversity”:

- Whether this principle should also address enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services (rather than simply avoiding adverse impacts) – some participants thought this was very important while others argued it is beyond the scope of REDD+ and is addressed to some degree in criterion 21
- They agreed that criteria 24 and 25 should be merged as proposed to give a single criterion on indirect impacts

Other related issues raised included:

- Peatlands are not explicitly addressed included in the SEPC/BeRT
- Transboundary concerns, including leakage, which are not treated explicitly in the SEPC – agreed emphasising regional collaboration in BeRT would be helpful
- Challenges of achieving policy coherence in REDD+ when other existing policies may lack coherence themselves



Workshop outputs and next steps

Thais Linhares-Juvenal (UN-REDD) summarised the points made during wrap up sessions earlier in the workshop: agreement on the SEPC as a guiding framework for UN-REDD's activities on social and environmental issues; some consensus on the use of the SEPC and BeRT (with revisions) as guidance for countries in establishing safeguards; the need to clarify how the SEPC is applied to the UN-REDD Programme Cycle; and the demand for a clear accountability mechanism. She then described how the workshop outputs will be used and next steps, highlighting four main activities:

- Promote internal UN-REDD discussion on the conclusions and recommendations of this workshop and review and revise the SEPC/BeRT along those lines.
- Take a revised version of the SEPC to the Policy Board in March, presenting it as a guiding framework for UN-REDD's work on social/environmental issues (whether a draft for information or submission for approval to be decided).
- Present the recommendations made at this workshop to the Policy Board in March and propose an agenda for further developments, especially related to application.

She noted that the SEPC and BeRT can have different paths and timelines for development. Clarifying comments and questions covered the following issues:

- Twin tracks of work on guidance and accountability. It was suggested that the SEPC could be developed as guidance on one track, whilst at the same time further work can be carried out on the development of evaluation and accountability systems. UN-REDD needs to clearly articulate how these two areas will be developed, particularly the accountability framework.
- Language: Some of the language would need to be adjusted for SEPC to act as a guiding framework. That intent needs to be made clear in explanatory text.
- Nature of the report to the Policy Board: This should highlight that this process has been a positive collaboration between the agencies and is supported by countries. It will need to give a clear description of options going forward.