

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMMON APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS FOR MULTIPLE DELIVERY PARTNERS

1. What is the Common Approach?

The “Common Approach to Environmental and Social Safeguards for Multiple Delivery Partners” (hereafter, the “Common Approach”) is the product of a Task Force on Environmental and Social Standards for the FCPF Readiness Fund, which was established by the FCPF Participants Committee. The Common Approach was developed recently, with formal approval coming as part of the FCPF’s 9th Participants Committee meeting in Oslo, Norway in June 2011.

2. What does the Common Approach do?

The Common Approach is designed to provide the World Bank (WB) and other FCPF Delivery Partners (DPs) with a common platform for risk management and quality assurance in the REDD+ readiness preparation process, using the safeguard policies of the WB as a minimum acceptable standard.

3. Why is a Common Approach needed?

Under the FCPF Charter, the World Bank is the only eligible Delivery Partner for the FCPF Readiness Fund. However, a number of other organizations—the IADB as a leading regional development bank, and the UNDP and FAO as two of the agencies constituting UN-REDD—have been approved by the Participants Committee to become DPs. Each of these organizations (and the WB) has its own sustainability policies. In opening up the FCPF to DPs other than the WB, it was agreed among the Participants that there should be a uniform set of safeguard standards that all DPs would be responsible for helping REDD+ Country Participants to uphold.

4. How does the Common Approach work?

DPs will be required to achieve “substantial equivalence” to the “material elements” of the World Bank’s existing social and environmental safeguard policies. Equivalence to said material elements will apply to the relevant aspects of a DP’s administration of the Readiness Preparation grant agreement in each country where the DP is in the lead. This will be specified in legally binding Transfer Agreements between the WB, as Trustee of the FCPF Readiness Fund, and the respective DPs.

5. As of when is the Common Approach effective?

The Common Approach, formally approved in June 2011, becomes effective as soon as the World Bank and a DP sign a Transfer Agreement in relation to the countries where that DP is in the lead. Currently, Transfer Agreements are being negotiated between the WB and the IADB, on one hand, and the WB and the UNDP, on the other, in relation to a total of nine countries that have been approved by the Participants Committee to serve as pilots.

6. To whom does the Common Approach apply?

The Common Approach applies to all FCPF DPs, of which the World Bank is one. However, since the WB’s own safeguard policies serve as the basis for the material elements, for those countries where the WB is in the lead, application of the Common Approach simply means that the WB should apply its own safeguards.

7. What do the terms “substantial equivalence” and “material elements” mean?

“Material elements” are those procedural and substantive elements of the WB’s environmental and social safeguard policies and procedures that are particularly relevant to the strategic planning and capacity building actions that are supported by the FCPF Readiness Fund, with a view toward support for future REDD+ investments and results-based activities in a country. “Substantial equivalence” means equivalence with the material elements in the course of the administration of the Readiness Preparation grant agreement in that country.

8. What elements of the WB’s safeguard policies and procedures are considered to be particularly relevant to REDD+ Readiness?

The Common Approach takes as a starting point the elements listed in Table A1 of the World Bank’s Operational Policy (OP) 4.00, but for only six of the eight safeguard policies included there: OP 4.01 on Environmental Assessment; OP 4.04 on Natural Habitats; OP 4.12 on Involuntary Resettlement; OP 4.10 on Indigenous Peoples; OP 4.36 on Forests; and OP 4.11 on Physical Cultural Resources.

9. Who determines whether the policies of a DP other than the World Bank are substantially equivalent to the material elements?

The determination of substantial equivalence is done ex-ante, before an organization’s proposal to become a DP is considered by the FCPF Participants Committee (PC). The candidate organization submits its proposal, together with a safeguards gap analysis prepared by an independent analyst. Both are then reviewed by a specially designated group (the Task Force on Environmental and Social Standards did this for the UNDP and IADB). The proposal, analyst’s report, and review group’s report are then submitted to the PC for a decision on whether to approve the organization as a DP.

10. Is the Common Approach supposed to substitute for a DP’s application of its own internal sustainability policies?

No. Under the Common Approach, whichever FCPF DP is in the lead in a particular country would continue to apply its own policies and procedures. The Common Approach provides a DP whose sustainability policies may not be as stringent or protective as those of the WB with a mechanism for selective “gap filling” in its policy framework, in line with the particular requirements of the material elements.

11. What happens when a sustainability provision in another DP’s policy is stronger than a similar provision in a World Bank safeguard policy?

If certain policy or procedural provisions in the safeguard policy framework of another DP are more stringent and/or protective than those of the WB, then those stronger provisions are the ones that shall apply to activities undertaken under the FCPF Readiness Fund for that particular DP.

12. What other requirements are involved with applying the Common Approach?

In addition to complying with the material elements, proper application of the Common Approach involves adherence to four sets of guidelines:

- FCPF Guidelines and generic Terms of Reference for Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) and the associated Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), compliant with the relevant safeguard policies and procedures (see the box for more details);

- FCPF/UN-REDD Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ Readiness;
- FCPF Guidelines on the Disclosure of Information; and
- FCPF Guidelines for Establishing Grievance and Redress Mechanisms at the Country Level.

13. What arrangements have been made for institutional accountability in the application of the Common Approach?

Under the Common Approach, each DP needs to show that it has an accountability mechanism available for Readiness Preparation grant agreements which is independent, transparent, effective, accessible to affected people, and ready to address claims related to the Common Approach or its implementation. Where a mechanism having these types of features does not exist, the Common Approach provides for its creation. Currently, these features are under development at the UNDP and FAO.

14. How will safeguards compliance be monitored and assessed under the Common Approach?

The final Common Approach document, which is available on the FCPF website, outlines compliance supervision and monitoring responsibilities for both the DP and the REDD+ Country Participant. For example, whereas the DP is charged with continuous supervision of compliance with the relevant safeguards, the country is responsible for summarizing the results of its compliance monitoring efforts in the Mid-Term Progress Report that it has to submit to the FCPF Participants Committee. All reports and assessments dealing with application of safeguards under the Common Approach must be publicly disclosed.

BOX 1: ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH RELEVANT SAFEGUARDS THROUGH THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL ASSESSMENT (SESA) AND THE ASSOCIATED ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (ESMF)

The Common Approach centers on the use of a **strategic environmental and social assessment (SESA)**, particularly in relation to the upstream development of a country's REDD+ strategy. SESA helps to ensure compliance with relevant safeguards by integrating key environmental and social considerations covered by the relevant safeguard policies and procedures at the earliest stage of decision making. It also creates a platform for the participation of key stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities that depend on forest resources, in the Readiness Preparation process.

SESA has as a key output the preparation of an **environmental and social management framework (ESMF)**. The ESMF is a framework for managing and mitigating the environmental and social risks and impacts of future investments (projects, activities, and/or policies and regulations) associated with implementing a country's REDD+ strategy. The ESMF provides a direct link to the relevant safeguard standards.

In cases where REDD+ programs or projects are being developed and implemented, whether as part of the upstream strategy development or in parallel, other instruments—specifically, full safeguards management plans that include more concrete actions to address site-specific risks and impacts—may be called for.