



Synergies among social safeguards in FLEGT and REDD + in Cameroon



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ABSTRACT

Two key international policy processes have been developed to combat illegal logging and promote the contribution of forests to climate change mitigation in developing countries: the European Union's Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and its Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change policy on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD +). The implementation of these policies raises concerns about unintended adverse effects on the environment and local peoples' livelihoods. To prevent such effects, both processes involve developing country-level safeguards, so that they 'do no harm'. This paper presents (i) a comparison of the social safeguards of the FLEGT-VPA and REDD + processes and an explanation of their commonalities and differences, and (ii) an exploration of the potential synergies and the challenges to realizing them. The three main research methods used in the study were semi-structured interviews, content analysis of policy documents, and focus group discussions with local communities and indigenous peoples in south and east Cameroon. Our analysis shows that whereas FLEGT-VPA includes legality-based safeguards with legally binding monitoring and reporting obligations, REDD + adopts a right-based approach to safeguards. Potential synergies between the two approaches were identified. The synergies lie in the participatory nature of the process of designing benefit sharing mechanisms, strengthening forest and land tenure, and defining the criteria and indicators in FLEGT-VPA and REDD + safeguards. However, realizing the synergies is challenging, given the existing political economy of Cameroon.

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1. Introduction

Deforestation and forest degradation are the key causes of an increasing reduction of the world's forest and important contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Achard et al., 2014), with illegal logging being an important cause of deforestation and forest degradation (e.g. through harvesting premature forest or harvesting more trees than legally allowed), thereby contributing to GHG emissions (Tacconi, 2007).

Two major international policy processes have been established to address the problem of illegal logging, and of deforestation and forest degradation: the European Union's (EU) Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and the United Nations policy on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD +). The FLEGT Action Plan focuses on the timber trade and the enforcement of forest laws and regulations as a way to combat illegal

logging (European Commission, 2003). Bilaterally negotiated Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with timber-producing countries that export to the EU are a major component of the Action Plan (European Commission, 2003). REDD + is a multilateral initiative under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, as a way to reduce GHG emissions from forest and land use. REDD + is based on the concept of incentivizing developing countries to reduce emissions in the forest and land-use sector (Angelsen et al., 2012). In parallel to the development of REDD + under the UNFCCC, the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the UN-REDD Programme have been supporting developing countries in their efforts to "get ready" for REDD +. FLEGT and REDD + are two distinct policy processes, operating under different design and implementation strategies. However, both aspire to bring about a positive change in governance (Angelsen et al., 2012; European Commission, 2003), and both face significant and similar challenges in implementation (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011; Ramcilovic-Suominen and Hansen, 2012; Visseren-Hamakers et al., 2012).

Despite the implementation challenges, there is a strong commitment to further the development and implementation of the processes

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at the global, national and subnational levels. This commitment of the two processes lie not only in the stated policy goals, but also in the anticipation that their effective implementation will promote sustainable forest management, generate non-carbon benefits, and address worries related to poor governance, land tenure, biodiversity conservation, effective participation, benefit sharing and poverty alleviation (McDermott et al., 2012; Ros-Tonen et al., 2013). This is why stakeholders have pushed for the incorporation in these policy processes of so-called safeguards, addressing both environmental and social issues (Jagger et al., 2014; McDermott et al., 2012). While an emerging body of literature has focused on the interactions between FLEGT and REDD + more generally (Broekhoven and Wit, 2014; Ochieng et al., 2013; Tegegne et al., 2014a, 2014b), a comparatively smaller amount of research has focused on the relationships among the social safeguards in those two processes (McDermott et al., 2012). This is important, because in order to ensure that a country safeguard system is developed and implemented efficiently, synergies with other safeguard systems of related processes in the country should be explored (Jagger et al., 2014; McDermott et al., 2012; Rey et al., 2013). Furthermore, consideration of the synergies among the safeguards of related processes can avoid duplication of efforts and enhance economies of scale. Against this backdrop, this study addressed the following questions:

- What are the commonalities and differences between the social safeguard approaches of FLEGT-VPA and REDD + in Cameroon, and how can these similarities and differences be explained?
- What are the potential synergies between the FLEGT-VPA and REDD + social safeguards, and what challenges stand in the way of realizing these synergies?

It is hoped that the comparison of safeguard approaches will contribute to learning, improvements and further guidance on the development and implementation of safeguards in the FLEGT-VPA and REDD + processes. Moreover, before one is able to develop synergies between related policies, understanding commonalities and differences and the reasons for the overlaps are necessary (Duguma et al., 2014a, 2014b; Gehring and Oberthür, 2009; McDermott et al., 2012). Such analysis is particular necessary to identify and inform relevant stakeholders about aspects of environmental and social challenges where the processes can (not) work together and why (Rey et al., 2013). The early lessons learnt in Cameroon can be beneficial to the 15 countries that are currently negotiating or implementing a FLEGT-VPA and participating in REDD +, and help in the development of the theoretical debate on social safeguards.

Section 2 introduces the conceptual dimensions of social safeguards and Section 3 presents overview of the FLEGT-VPA and REDD + processes in Cameroon and the research methods. Section 4 presents the research findings and Section 5 discusses the key findings of the study. Finally, Section 6 outlines the main concluding remarks.

2. Conceptual framework: approaches to social safeguards

The concept of social safeguards in general has its origins in the World Bank's safeguards policies and in the United Nations (UN) system in the 1980s (Hall, 2007). The World Bank's approach – which was later also adopted by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) – focuses on *doing no harm*. This approach is also known as the *mitigation approach* (McDermott et al., 2012), so as to indicate its reactive – as opposed to proactive – nature. It focuses on addressing adverse impacts resulting from investment and development activities (EMG-UNEP, 2010), and encompasses aspects such as working conditions, pollution, health and security (Ros-Tonen et al., 2013). The UN's approach to social safeguards pursues the idea of *preventing undue harm* (EMG-UNEP, 2010), thus taking a proactive stand. It puts greater emphasis on the promotion

of rights and social benefits, and is thus also referred as the *right-based approach* (McDermott et al., 2012; Ros-Tonen et al., 2013).

In addition to these two approaches, social safeguards have recently been revisited in the policy discourse surrounding REDD +. Countries undertaking REDD + activities are requested to develop country-level approaches that enable them to respond to the requirements outlined in the recent UNFCCC agreements concerning social and environmental risks. The provisions of social and environmental safeguards in REDD + are explained in a number of decisions. First, the Cancun Agreement (1/CP.16) acknowledges the need to address national forest governance shortcomings and mitigate any potential adverse social and environmental effects that could prevent REDD + from achieving its long-term goals (UNFCCC, 2011). Second, in 2011, the UNFCCC COP 17 in Durban set up a Safeguard Information System (SIS) for Parties to provide information about how all safeguards, as referred to in the Cancun Agreement (appendix I), are being addressed and respected. Third, in 2013, UNFCCC COP 19 in Warsaw included the safeguards in the Warsaw Framework for REDD +. Finally, two years later, COP 21 in Paris (Decision 17/CP.21) referred to the need for further guidance when communicating how safeguards are being addressed and respected by REDD + countries. The SIS will make countries eligible for result-based payments, based on reporting on the delivery of social and environmental safeguards.

Our conceptual framework consists of three parts. For the first part, namely our analysis of the character of the various safeguards, we use the following typology by Arhin (2014), which is more specific than other categorizations:

- Preventive safeguards – refer to 'doing no harm' to local communities.
- Mitigative safeguards – refer to minimizing the negative distributional impact of measures on local communities and their livelihoods.
- Promotive safeguards – refer to 'doing something better' to provide opportunities and spaces for forest-dependent communities to contribute to decision making, improve their livelihoods and benefit from the measures.
- Transformative safeguards – aim to pursue a radical shift in underlying assumptions and narratives to increase indigenous peoples' (IPs) and communities' access to and control of benefits.

The second part of our conceptual framework was developed based on the following bodies of literature that analyse key social issues and risks in the context of natural resource governance, including decentralization reforms, payment for ecosystem services (PES) and community-based conservation (e.g. Awono et al., 2013; Blom et al., 2010; Chhatre et al., 2012; Chomba et al., 2016; Dunlop and Corbera, 2016; Hayes and Persha, 2010; Sunderlin et al., 2014). The following are the most prominent social risks and concerns associated with the implementation of forest policies: (i) tenure insecurity (Awono et al., 2013; Cerbu, Sonwa, & Pokorny, 2013; Hajjar, 2014; Mbatu, 2015; Nkemnyi et al., 2016; Sunderlin et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2016), (ii) inadequate avenues for local participation (Awono et al., 2013; Lawlor et al., 2013; Lesniewska and McDermott, 2014; Wodschow et al., 2016), (iii) inequitable benefit sharing (Cerbu et al., 2013; Lawlor et al., 2013; Lesniewska and McDermott, 2014; Mbatu, 2015; Sunderlin et al., 2014) and (iv) adverse impacts on local livelihoods (Eba'a Atyi et al., 2013; Lesniewska and McDermott, 2014; van Heeswijk and Turnhout, 2013; Wiersum and Elands, 2013).

Furthermore, based on the works of one of the authors of this paper (Fobissie et al., 2012; Fobissie, 2014), which focus on forest governance and social safeguards in Cameroon – we introduced an additional, important aspect to be considered in the context of social safeguards in REDD +: free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). Building on these literatures, we distilled the following core aspects of social safeguards:

- *Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and participation*: FPIC lays down the principle to secure the full and effective participation of

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