



PUTTING ACCOUNTABILITY INTO PRACTICE IN REDD+ PROGRAMS

LAUREN WILLIAMS AND FREE DE KONING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International programs designed to compensate developing countries for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation or enhancing carbon stocks (referred to as REDD+) have catalyzed new interest and investment in forests in developing countries. REDD+ programs are regarded not only as an important tool for climate mitigation, but increasingly as a mechanism for improving governance of forests; promoting sustainable land-use planning; and enhancing biodiversity, environmental health, and rural livelihoods. In particular, donors, civil society, and REDD+ countries have all recognized the importance of ensuring that REDD+ programs address underlying governance challenges that contribute to deforestation and forest degradation.²

Currently, many REDD+ countries are receiving financing for planning, capacity-building, and development of legal and institutional frameworks to support REDD+ implementation. In this paper, we emphasize the need for these efforts to consider accountability as a key principle within the design of REDD+ programs,³ particularly to ensure that development of new institutions, strategies, and processes reinforces accountability between institutions as well as with other stakeholders involved in REDD+ planning and implementation. To advance the discussion on constructing accountable national REDD+ programs, we propose a framework and set of criteria that outline key supporting issues for accountability within these processes. In this paper, we draw from a review of 20 Emissions Reduction Program Idea Notes (ER-PINs) submitted to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility’s (FCPF’s) Carbon Fund, and evaluate current trends in how these programs are being designed in order to identify promising approaches and highlight critical gaps.

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The review finds that, in general, REDD+ countries have made progress in embedding national governance arrangements within existing institutions and acknowledging the importance of robust consultation processes and oversight mechanisms such as Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanisms (FGRM). However, important challenges remain. We highlight the following areas that require additional emphasis, both for countries whose ER-PINs were reviewed in this document, and for other countries seeking to develop national or subnational REDD+ programs.

Key findings:

- **POWER RELATIONSHIPS.** In general, the relationships between the myriad institutions involved in REDD+ processes are ill defined. There is a need to more explicitly define the specific accountability relationships among government institutions tasked with decision-making, implementation, consultation, monitoring, and grievance redress for REDD+ programs in order to promote clarity and ownership over different components of the REDD+ process and avoid institutional conflicts.
- **FORMALIZING RULES AND PROCEDURES.** Across the components of accountability, REDD+ countries rely heavily on “soft” accountability mechanisms that are largely informal in terms of their mandate or procedures. This is particularly true for discussions of participation and information. In the context of REDD+ programs, many of these processes lack a supportive legal framework or enabling structures for implementation, including clear performance standards or sanctions for noncompliance.
- **GRIEVANCE REDRESS.** Discussions of Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanisms⁴ (FGRM) are underdeveloped as compared to many other elements of REDD+ programs, such as monitoring or participation. A 2013 review of 32 readiness plans found that over 90 percent of REDD+ countries recognize the potential for REDD+ activities to create conflict and 63 percent stated the importance of conflict resolution for achieving REDD+ goals.⁵ Yet, to date, limited progress has been made on putting in place functional FGRM.

- **STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING FEEDBACK.** REDD+ readiness processes in general, including the discussions in ER-PINs, have emphasized information-sharing, awareness-raising, and general commitments to transparency as important elements of REDD+ planning, implementation, and monitoring. However, there is far less discussion of how to design consultation processes or monitoring systems that are responsive to feedback or findings.

INTRODUCTION

International programs designed to compensate developing countries for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation or enhancing carbon stocks (referred to as REDD+⁶) have catalyzed new interest and investment in forests in developing countries. REDD+ programs are regarded not only as an important tool for climate mitigation, but increasingly as a mechanism for improving governance of forests; promoting sustainable land-use planning; and enhancing biodiversity, environmental health, and rural livelihoods.⁷ Meeting this broad range of objectives will be a substantial challenge for many REDD+ countries with a history of weak natural resource governance.^{8,9}

Donors, civil society, and REDD+ countries have all recognized the importance of ensuring that REDD+ programs address underlying governance challenges that contribute to deforestation and forest degradation.¹⁰ As a result, substantial efforts and resources have been committed to helping REDD+ countries strengthen the enabling environment for REDD+ programs (e.g., legal and institutional frameworks, institutional capacity) and develop new systems and procedures (e.g., robust monitoring systems for carbon and safeguards) to manage REDD+ programs. Given the complexity of developing new REDD+ programs against a backdrop of existing governance challenges, it is critical that REDD+ countries evaluate how existing rules, procedures, and power relationships will impact REDD+ programs and vice versa. REDD+ countries should give particular emphasis to ensuring that development of new institutions, strategies, and processes reinforces accountability relationships among institutions as well as with other stakeholders involved in REDD+ planning and implementation.

This paper presents practical ideas for REDD+ countries to consider as they implement activities that establish or strengthen accountability mechanisms. It presents a general framework for evaluating the institutions, standards, and oversight mechanisms that most countries are developing as part of their REDD+ processes. Drawing from a review of 20 Emissions Reductions-Program Idea Notes (ER-PINs) submitted to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility's (FCPF's) Carbon Fund, we evaluate current trends in how these mechanisms are being designed in order to identify promising approaches and highlight areas requiring additional consideration.

BACKGROUND

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties in Bali in 2007, Parties to the Convention agreed to include development of policy approaches and positive incentives for implementation of REDD+ programs as part of a new global climate agreement.¹¹ Subsequent decisions, such as the Cancun Agreement, have set out agreed approaches for design and implementation of REDD+ programs.¹² Many of these decisions have been equally shaped by the numerous multilateral and bilateral initiatives that have provided financial and technical support to countries seeking to develop REDD+ programs. These include bilateral funding initiatives such as Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative and other overseas development assistance, as well as multilateral programs such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and Forest Investment Program—both administered by the World Bank—and the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (UN-REDD Programme).

REDD+ is designed to provide results-based financing; as such, it emphasizes development of systems to monitor and report on progress in ways that can be verified. Donors and implementing countries also recognized early on the critical importance of a phased approach focused on: (i) a readiness phase supporting the development of national strategies, policies and measures, and capacity-building; (ii) a policy implementation phase in which policies and measures, strategy, and action plans—including demonstration activities—are carried out in addition to technology development and capacity-building; and (iii) a phase in which results-based actions receive financing on the basis of measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) of emissions reductions.¹³

The phased approach was developed in recognition of the fact that many countries seeking to participate in REDD+ programs have historically weak systems for managing and conserving forests.¹⁴ The readiness phase in particular was designed to provide small amounts of up-front financing for countries to identify specific constraints related to institutional capacity or existing laws and policies and develop strategies to address them as part of their REDD+ planning. Activities typically funded by readiness grants include analysis, building capacity of relevant institutions, stakeholder consultations on preliminary strategies, and setting up systems to manage and oversee REDD+ programs (Table 1). These activities have generated significant learning in terms of the specific challenges that many countries face in developing REDD+ programs as well as potential strategies to address them by putting in place more robust systems for safeguards, monitoring, addressing grievances that arise as a result of REDD+ projects or programs, or other key elements of readiness.

Table 1 | **Overview of Readiness Components**

COMPONENTS OF READINESS	RELATED READINESS-PREPARATION ACTIVITIES	CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES
1. REDD+ Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop strategy options to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation ■ Consider the legal/institutional frameworks necessary to implement REDD+ and manage related revenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Define institutional roles and responsibilities for managing and coordinating REDD+ activities ■ Establish a process for stakeholder participation and consultation in all aspects of readiness preparation
2. Assessment of land use, forest law, policy and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assess the situation with respect to deforestation, forest degradation, conservation, and sustainable management of forests and relevant governance issues ■ Identify priority social and environmental issues associated with drivers of deforestation and forest degradation 	
3. Reference emission level and/or forest reference level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review historical data on forest-cover change and greenhouse gas emissions and removals, including national circumstances 	
4. Monitoring System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Design a system to measure, report, and verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Greenhouse gas emissions □ Multiple benefits of REDD+ □ Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation □ Other aspects of REDD+ implementation 	
5. Social and environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assess social and environmental risks and potential impacts of REDD+ strategy options and implementation framework ■ Prepare an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) to manage risks and impacts 	

Source: Derived from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). 2012. Readiness Preparation Proposal Template Version 6 (April 20, 2012).

Governance, Accountability, and REDD+

Major REDD+ readiness initiatives such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Readiness Fund and the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (UN-REDD Programme) have been supporting development of country plans and programs. Building on these readiness processes, countries including Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and others are developing ideas for larger-scale emissions reductions programs that encompass on-the-ground activities. Most of these efforts are occurring in parallel with efforts to continue designing REDD+ programs and strengthening existing institutions and policies. That many REDD+ programs are still defining necessary reforms and developing strategies to address systemic governance issues highlights the fact that many REDD+ countries face significant challenges with respect to implementing effective planning processes, policy reforms, or institutional capacity-building.

REDD+ readiness discussions have particularly emphasized the need for transparent and inclusive decision-making processes that consult forest communities and Indigenous Peoples.^{15,16,17} While efforts to share information and consult these groups are an important starting point, these processes must promote responsive and accountable decision-making that ensures that priorities of these groups are reflected in decisions about REDD+ strategies. Furthermore, addressing longstanding forest governance challenges should include exploring how REDD+ initiatives can more effectively strengthen existing systems of forest and land governance, including legal and institutional frameworks, to ensure that REDD+ has sustainable impacts on governance systems. However, such an approach requires a deeper understanding of power dynamics and the interests of the various institutions tasked with managing forest lands at national and subnational scales.

We argue that REDD+ programs should prioritize tools and approaches that promote accountability on the part of institutions responsible for carrying out REDD+ programs to ensure that proposed strategies to strengthen policies and procedures governing forests and land use achieve the desired results. This will require efforts to address existing challenges that often limit both governments' efforts to fulfill their responsibilities to citizens and the capacity of citizens to demand accountability from forest decision-makers. These challenges include:

- **LACK OF LAWS AND POLICIES.** Countries may lack strong legal frameworks for ensuring accountability (e.g., freedom of information laws, participation requirements and procedures, laws guaranteeing citizen access to justice and redress). Strong legal requirements can provide a powerful lever for strengthening transparency and accountability of government actions (Box 1).
- **OVERLAPPING ROLES AND POWER DISPARITIES.** Lack of clarity regarding institutional roles and responsibilities—both vertically among levels of government and horizontally across land-use sectors—can have significant impacts on forest resources. For example, overlaps in allocation of concessions and permits for activities such as logging, agriculture, oil and mining, and protected areas are well documented.¹⁸ Furthermore, where roles are not clearly defined, power disparities among agencies responsible for forest protection and those overseeing more economically lucrative activities often ensure that economic returns take precedence over forest protection.
- **POOR VERTICAL COORDINATION AND INCOMPLETE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESSES.** As countries develop REDD+ programs that are national in scope, incorporating and coordinating subnational actors remains a challenge. Researchers have expressed concerns that REDD+ could reverse progress made in decentralizing natural resource management roles to local decision-makers.¹⁹
- **WEAK INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY.** Even when laws exist, government agencies may lack capacity, finance, and expertise to enforce rules, carry out effective public participation processes, collect and share information with the public, or address and respond to stakeholder input.
- **LACK OF ADEQUATE OVERSIGHT.** Administrative checks and balances to prevent government corruption and inappropriate use of powers may not exist or may be routinely ignored. While REDD+ countries have broadly recognized the importance of accountability mechanisms such as feedback and grievance redress

mechanisms or monitoring systems for REDD+, additional effort is needed to ensure that such tools are designed and applied effectively.

- **LOW CITIZEN CAPACITY.** Civil society organizations may lack capacity and finance to collect information on government performance or use it effectively to hold governments accountable. Citizens may also lack awareness of their rights or have insufficient capacity to use available accountability and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that REDD+ programs respect land and resource rights, implement fair benefit sharing, and effectively protect forests.

Box 1 | Strengthening Governance of Indonesia's Forest Sector through Civil Society Action

The work of WRI partner organizations in Indonesia highlights the importance of combining robust legal requirements, institutions dedicated to oversight and monitoring, and civil society action to improve government accountability. Since 2009, WRI has worked with Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI) and the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law (ICEEL) to carry out research, capacity building, and outreach to improve transparency in Indonesia's forest sector. Project activities included first assessing the degree of implementation of the 2008 Public Information Disclosure Law and the Forestry Law at both national and district levels, followed by development of policy advocacy and training programs based on the evaluation. For example, training programs were subsequently developed for district-level information officers in South Barito in Central Kalimantan and Lombok in West Nusa Tenggara to help them comply with the law through development of Standard Operation Procedures, internet portals, and lists of priority information for proactive disclosure.

Building on the research finding that the Ministry was not complying with its obligations to disclose information to the public, FWI brought the case to Indonesia's Central Information Commission. In June 2015, the Central Information Commission ruled that the Ministry of Environment and Forestry is obligated to release public information about logging permits and commercial logging plans. In August 2015, the Jakarta State Administration Court denied an appeal of the Ministry and upheld the decision, thus reaffirming the Ministry's obligation as a public institution to disclose forestry information as required by the Public Information Disclosure Law and Forestry Law. This example highlights the role that clear requirements can play in strengthening public sector accountability. Legal obligations to disclose information and the presence of an information commission with the power to enforce these laws were central to the actions taken by civil society.

Countries that are still defining their legal and institutional frameworks for REDD+ have an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of existing rules and institutions and address gaps. While many countries have committed to developing REDD+ programs and institutions that promote good governance as a means of achieving social and environmental objectives of REDD+, in many instances these commitments lack a clear strategy, associated work plan, and dedicated budget.²⁰

Understanding Accountability

The concept of accountability has been the focus of significant academic and theoretical research, but there has been limited discussion of its practical applications, particularly in the emerging literature on governance and REDD+. This analysis builds on previous attempts in the literature to explore key elements of accountability, and applies these concepts to the design of national REDD+ programs. Discussions of accountability in the literature often focus on a specific element, such as power relationships, decentralization, enforcement practices, or responsiveness to citizens.²¹ In the context of REDD+ programs, we take a broad approach to accountability that incorporates elements from these different discussions. In particular, we emphasize the importance of institutional frameworks, answerability, and oversight.

We define accountability as the relationship in which an actor or set of actors is held responsible for meeting a particular goal or adhering to a certain standard.²² For example, accountability is said to exist when the actions and decisions made by public officials are subject to oversight in order to ensure that they comply with laws and regulations, meet stated objectives, and respond to the needs of citizens. Oversight may come from citizens themselves, other government bodies tasked with enforcing the law, or external actors such as international donors (Table 2). Furthermore, accountability is often described in the governance literature as comprising two dimensions: answerability and enforcement.²³ Answerability requires accountable actors to provide information and justification for decisions made or actions taken. Enforcement focuses on the ability of oversight actors to oversee and, if necessary, sanction actors who fail to meet their obligations and take corrective action.

Table 2 | **Examples of Oversight Actors**

WITHIN GOVERNMENT	OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supreme audit institutions ■ Courts ■ Comptrollers general ■ Law enforcement agencies ■ Central oversight of local governments ■ Parliamentary hearings ■ Legislative committees ■ Administrative review councils ■ Anticorruption agencies ■ Advisory boards ■ Interministerial committees ■ Ombudsman offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Members of the public ■ Experts in national or international standard-setting bodies ■ Donors ■ Citizen oversight committees ■ Civil society watchdog organizations ■ Think tanks or universities ■ Journalists ■ Associations or associative movements

Source: Daviet, F. 2014. "Using Accountability: Why REDD+ Needs to be More than an Economic Incentive." Issue Brief. Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute. http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/WRI14_IssueBrief_REDD_FINAL.pdf.

FRAMEWORK AND METHODS FOR ANALYSIS OF REDD+ ACCOUNTABILITY

To advance the discussion on implementing accountable national REDD+ programs, we propose a framework and set of criteria that outline key issues involved in designing REDD+ programs that strengthen accountability. In constructing this approach, we identified the following as important themes:

- **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS.** The development of institutional frameworks to manage and administer REDD+ programs has been central to discussions about REDD+ readiness. However, there are concerns that new REDD+ committees and institutions could undermine existing governance arrangements by creating parallel structures that drain resources or create new coordination challenges. This challenge is exacerbated by the need for coordination across sectors, for example between ministries of forests, environment, agriculture, transportation, oil, mining, and Indigenous Peoples.²⁴ Since many countries are still developing REDD+ programs, design of legal and institutional frameworks is a critical starting point for ensuring accountable REDD+ programs, although we recognize that strong implementation is equally necessary to support accountability.
- **COUNTRY-LEVEL SYSTEMS.** While we acknowledge the critical importance of tools to promote accountability between REDD+ countries and international donor programs, our criteria are based on the need for national and subnational accountability mechanisms. In developing robust systems at the country level, we believe that REDD+ countries can simultaneously make efforts to strengthen the enabling environment for REDD+ and meet obligations to international REDD+ programs.
- **RESULTS BEYOND CARBON.** While reducing emissions from forest loss remains the central goal of REDD+, most REDD+ countries have identified additional social and environmental objectives of REDD+ programs. Our approach to accountability therefore extends beyond whether activities are successfully reducing emissions to examine how to put in place institutions, rules, and procedures that promote broader social and governance goals.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to designing accountable and effective REDD+ programs. By proposing a flexible framework, we emphasize the need for REDD+ countries to evaluate their existing governance situations and develop accountability mechanisms that are appropriate to the national context. We aim to help REDD+ practitioners think through these issues in a systematic way that enables tailoring of solutions, rather than importing models that may not fit the local conditions.

Table 3 presents a list of key components and criteria used to evaluate accountability in the context of REDD+ programs. We note that the components and criteria identified in the framework are not intended to be a blueprint for achieving accountability in all situations, but to provide a simple and systematic set of criteria to evaluate accountability in design and implementation of REDD+ programs.

Table 3 | **Components and Criteria for REDD+ Accountability**

ACCOUNTABILITY COMPONENTS	KEY CRITERIA
Clear and coherent institutional framework	Clear institutional mandates
	Clearly defined and appropriate powers
	Vertical and horizontal institutional coordination
	Legitimacy of institutions
Clear standards for answerability	Transparency and access to information
	Participatory decision-making
	Legitimate and representative platforms
	Responsiveness to stakeholder feedback
Oversight: Monitoring	Clear mandate and reporting procedures
	Integration with existing monitoring systems
	Comprehensive and responsive monitoring systems
Oversight: Feedback and grievance redress mechanisms	Clearly defined and appropriate powers
	Integration with existing systems of access to justice
	Transparent and responsive procedures

Methods

In order to examine trends in how these criteria are being incorporated into the design of REDD+ programs, we assessed proposals submitted to one of the most significant multilateral readiness programs, the Carbon Fund of the FCPF. The FCPF is a multilateral REDD+ readiness initiative that is administered by the World Bank and governed by a Participants Committee of government representatives from REDD+ donor countries and implementing countries. The FCPF comprises two separate funding windows: the Readiness Fund and the Carbon Fund. The Readiness Fund supports capacity building, studies, and development of reforms to support REDD+ implementation, while the Carbon Fund is designed to support implementation of REDD+ policies and measures that will result in performance-based payments for emissions reductions.

The Emission Reductions Program Idea Note (ER-PIN) is submitted by countries interested in participating in the Carbon Fund to communicate early ideas on specific activities and strategies that could be developed into a full Emissions Reductions Program. While ER-PINs are not fully fleshed-out program documents, the

template requires that countries provide a wide range of information on institutional arrangements, stakeholder participation processes, monitoring approaches, grievance redress, and progress made on REDD+ readiness activities.²⁵ Once approved by the Participants Committee of the Carbon Fund, countries are then asked to develop a full Emission Reductions Program Document (ERPD) and subsequently to enter into negotiations for Carbon Fund financing. Choice of final pilots will depend on a range of factors including the technical quality of the ERPD, level of progress on REDD+ readiness, and anticipated learning value.²⁶

To date, 20 countries have submitted ER-PINs to the Carbon Fund. We reviewed each document that was available in English and had been submitted as of February 2016 (Table 4). We evaluated each ER-PIN document against key criteria for accountability in relation to the four core components of the framework presented in the previous section. This review aimed at detailing the types of approaches countries are using to develop institutional frameworks and standards for REDD+ programs in order to present an overview of trends and findings.

Table 4 | **Countries that have Submitted ER-PINs**

	REGION		
	Africa	Asia-Pacific	Latin America & Caribbean
ER-PINs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cameroon ■ Democratic Republic of the Congo ■ Ghana ■ Ivory Coast ■ Madagascar ■ Mozambique ■ Republic of Congo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fiji ■ Indonesia ■ Lao PDR ■ Nepal ■ Vietnam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Chile ■ Costa Rica ■ Dominican Republic ■ Guatemala ■ Guyana ■ Nicaragua ■ Mexico ■ Peru
Total	7	5	8

It is critical to note that this paper presents results of a desktop study and does not include in-country interviews or data collection. Therefore, it focuses on overall trends in design of performance-based REDD+ programs and does not provide insight into the quality of country-level REDD+ implementation. We also acknowledge that the information included in an ER-PIN is not a comprehensive account of all work done on REDD+ in each country, but the ER-PINs nonetheless provide a consistent format and a relatively recent timeframe from which to examine how REDD+ program designs are evolving. The ER-PIN template requires a broad range of information on national program progress including a summary of results of readiness activities, a description of consistency of the ER program with the overall national REDD+ strategy, and background discussions of drivers of deforestation. In addition, key elements of program design for the ER program include arrangements that should necessarily be guided by national-level REDD+ planning; examples include institutional arrangements, stakeholder engagement, benefit sharing, and feedback and grievance redress mechanisms.

ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNTABILITY TRENDS IN THE ER-PINS

In each section we discuss major trends observed across the ER-PINs while also noting potential challenges that should be factored into future development of REDD+ programs, including development of full emission reductions program documents submitted to the FCPF Carbon Fund.

Clear and Coherent Institutional Framework

REDD+ programs involve a range of actors responsible for carrying out activities. When referring to REDD+ institutions, we use the term to apply broadly to government bodies that may play a role in management or implementation of REDD+ programs, including executive agencies, committees, legislatures, judicial bodies, or subnational government structures. Developing an institutional architecture that clearly defines which institutions should be held accountable for program objectives involves an important set of choices that face any REDD+ country. Choices should be informed by criteria that evaluate the roles, capacity, and legitimacy of relevant institutions engaged in forest governance, in order to ensure that all institutions have a clear understanding of the actions for which they are responsible and their powers and capacity to achieve results.

Assigning responsibilities and powers for REDD+ programs may be complicated by existing institutional arrangements for governing forest lands. For example, in many REDD+ countries, the agency in charge of REDD+ and climate change issues is not in charge of forest activities. In addition, responsibilities and powers for forest-related activities may be decentralized to local governments, forest communities, or other actors. Ensuring that REDD+ roles are consistent with existing institutional roles and capacities is essential to avoid conflict caused by overlapping mandates or unclear hierarchies. In order to achieve this, institutions require clear and consistent responsibilities that promote coordination and define clear lines of accountability between government institutions.

All of the ER-PINs discuss institutional arrangements for REDD+ as required by the ER-PIN template. Fourteen of the 20 countries in the review assign primary program management responsibilities to a new REDD+-specific entity, typically a national steering committee or advisory board housed within a government agency; the other six ER-PINs establish a dedicated REDD+ committee or institution but do not specify whether these entities are part of another government body. Regardless of the institutional approach, nearly every ER-PIN lists a wide range of institutions with roles for REDD+. While there is some effort to describe the roles of each group, the terminology used often focuses on functions such as coordinating, implementing, or facilitating rather than clearly describing which institutions have decision-making power. Several countries, such as Cameroon, Lao PDR, Republic of Congo, and Vietnam, have passed decrees that set out composition and mandates of new REDD+ steering committees.

The institutional arrangements described in the ER-PINs are generally complex; many of the steering committees and advisory boards are composed of representatives from a broad range of sectoral government agencies, such as those in charge of forests, environment, land, agriculture, and other land-related sectors. While efforts to be inclusive of sectors beyond forests and environment are promising, several other critical stakeholder groups are underrepresented. For example, subnational government actors are largely not described as members of decision-making bodies despite the efforts of many REDD+ countries to decentralize natural resource management.²⁷ Regional and local governments are described as critical to REDD+ implementation, but their assigned roles focus on facilitating consultations, implementing activities, or contributing to monitoring.

Similarly, only three ER-PINs describe any formally elected officials, such as members of legislatures, as having a role in the REDD+ process. For example, Ghana's ER-PIN identifies the National House of Chiefs, a constitutionally recognized body of elected chiefs, as having an important role to play in relation to the ER Program.²⁸ Finally, only five ER-PINs proposed to include civil society, Indigenous Peoples, or other non-government stakeholders in REDD+ decision-making bodies, with another four ensuring participation of these groups in technical or advisory bodies. There is no discussion of how civil society representatives to these multi-stakeholder bodies are selected.

The institutional arrangements summarized in the ER-PINs present a complex array of relationships. In general, management arrangements concentrate formal decision-making power at the national level, with subnational and non-government stakeholders more likely to play consultative, technical support, or coordinating roles. In general, the delineation of roles and responsibilities across government actors, both at national and subnational levels, is weak. Furthermore, development of institutional arrangements in most REDD+ countries indicates limited consideration of accountability relationships or power dynamics in assigning roles or creating new structures.

In the absence of clear legal mandates or specific rules for operation, the accountability relationships between these entities are largely uncertain. For example, there is limited description of how information will flow between actors, or which institutions are responsible for reporting on or monitoring others. Particularly for national committees and other high-level governance structures, the lack of legal mandates suggests that these institutions may lack specific guidance or rules of procedure that could help promote transparency and inclusiveness in their operations. The example of Indonesia's REDD+ Agency (Box 2) underscores the challenges of creating new institutions for REDD+ and the importance of considering power dynamics. Finally, the creation of new institutions or departments may exacerbate the significant challenges that many forest and environment agencies in REDD+ countries already face with respect to human, financial, and technical resources.

Clear Standards for Answerability

The UNFCCC safeguards aim to ensure that REDD+ programs support transparent and effective governance structures while taking into account national legislation and sovereignty, as well as support full and effective stakeholder participation in REDD+ programs.³⁰ Rules that govern public access to information, enable public participation in planning processes, and promote responsiveness to stakeholder inputs can support country efforts to demonstrate how they are respecting REDD+ safeguards; they can also ensure that the public has the information and public space for dialogue necessary to effectively engage in REDD+ programs or hold policymakers to account. Comparative research on how rights of access to information, participation, and justice are operationalized in national legal frameworks suggests that many REDD+ countries will need to make substantive improvements to existing rules and procedures, and that financing in the readiness and policy implementation phases of REDD+ could be leveraged to support these improvements (Box 3).

Discussions of transparency and access to information in the ER-PINs relate primarily to the need to share information on program planning. Only four ER-PINs mention existing legal requirements on transparency and access to information or systems for information dissemination that are relevant to the REDD+ process, despite the fact that half the countries whose documents were reviewed have enacted general legislation on freedom of information.³¹ While these laws should mean that capacity and infrastructure exist for both proactive disclosure and responding to information requests about REDD+ programs, many laws have been put in place relatively recently. As Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) data indicate, additional investment and capacity-building may be needed to support development of information units that can assist with dissemination of environmental information, including on REDD+, within relevant ministries. Such an approach can help to ensure that REDD+ readiness activities are also contributing to long-term capacity development for ensuring access to environmental information.

Box 2 | **Indonesia's REDD+ Agency**

With approximately 10 percent of the world's tropical forests and a high deforestation rate, Indonesia is both a high-priority and high-potential country for REDD+. The opportunity for major emissions reductions and governance reform prompted the biggest bilateral deal of REDD+ so far: Norway's US\$1 billion commitment to Indonesia in 2010.

As part of the deal, Indonesia created a new institution with responsibility for planning, implementation, and coordination of REDD+ programming. According to the 2012 National REDD+ Strategy, the REDD+ Agency's tasks included the following:

1. Undertake governance at the national level and coordinate all REDD+ activities in Indonesia
2. Oversee and accelerate improvements in forest and peatlands governance in order to reduce the rate of deforestation and degradation
3. Ensure effective funding services and fair benefit distribution for parties running REDD+ programs/projects/activities in accordance with the integrity requirements for REDD+ implementation systems.^a

The Agency's mandate included preparing regulatory frameworks, facilitating communication and coordination with subnational bodies and existing entities, and effectively implementing carbon trade and safeguard systems. In addition, it was tasked with priority-setting and oversight of two other national REDD+ institutions: the REDD+ Funding Instrument and the REDD+ Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Institution.

The REDD+ Agency was established on September 2, 2013 on the recommendation of the initial REDD+ Task Force and with the approval of then President Yudhoyono. In December, Heru Prasetyo, a former management consultant with public and private sector experience, was appointed to lead the Agency, with the rank of minister. Article 19 of Presidential Decree Number 62 sets out the primary oversight mechanism and associated procedures for the Agency.^b

Following this initial decree, the REDD+ Agency met with some resistance from existing forest-sector institutions. For example, the Forestry Ministry's general secretary told the *Jakarta Post* that the new agency's powers would be limited: "... the REDD+ Agency will not be able to take any actions. The council only has the power to report on emissions reduction projects and any program irregularities to the related ministries. It is then up to the appropriate ministry to take action."^c Less than two years after it was issued, the decree establishing the REDD+ Agency was officially revoked by Presidential Decree No.16, 2015, which absorbed the Agency into the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.²⁹ This example underscores the importance of clearly defined institutional mandates that also take into account political economy and existing power structures when designing new programs and institutions to govern REDD+.

a. Indonesian REDD+ Task Force. September 2012. "REDD+ National Strategy:" 12–13. <http://www.satgasreddplus.org/download/301112.REDD+.National.Strategy.Indonesia.pdf>

b. CIFOR (Center for International Forestry Research). 2013. "Full Text of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Decree on Indonesia REDD+ Agency." September 10. http://blog.cifor.org/19055/full-text-of-president-susilo-bambang-yudhoyonos-decree-on-indonesia-redd-agency#.U1WUWI_D-mR.

c. The Jakarta Post. 2013. "Govt Sets Up REDD Council after Criticism over Inaction." September 2. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/09/02/govt-sets-redd-council-after-criticism-over-inaction.html>

While all of the ER-PINs are obligated to discuss consultation and participation processes as part of REDD+ readiness, just four mention formal legal requirements related to public participation or consultation. Another five ER-PINs reference development of specific guideline documents for the REDD+ process. For example, in Cameroon there was a national process to develop and validate a set of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) guidelines for the REDD+ process based on experiences with participatory rural appraisal methods. Since public participation

legislation may not cover all types of processes or provide sufficient detail on engaging forest-dependent populations, development of REDD+ specific tools could provide a useful complement. However, guidelines and plans typically lack legal force. Putting in place legal frameworks that set clear standards can be a first step toward supporting improved implementation of public consultation and, in some cases, providing the legal basis for redress in instances where rules are not complied with.

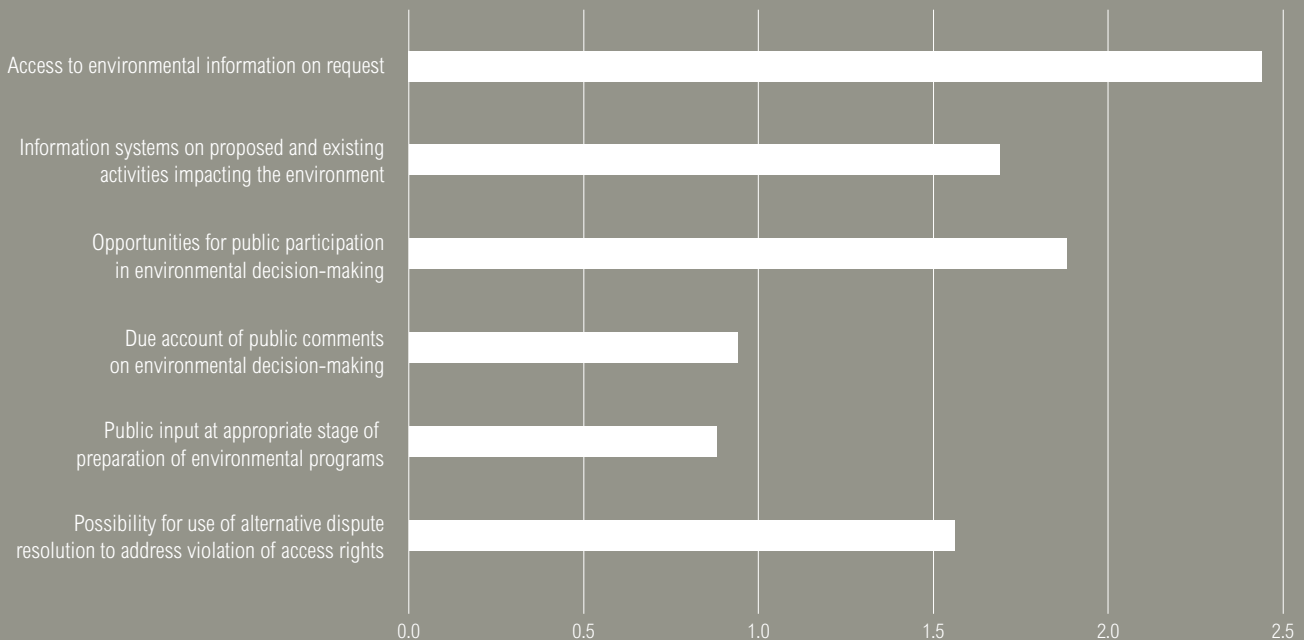
Box 3 | Analysis of Legal Frameworks for Access Rights in REDD+ Countries

Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which was signed by 178 countries, recognizes the critical importance of rights of access to information, public participation, and justice in relation to environmental decision-making. Since 1992, many countries have begun to establish nationally binding legislation designed to promote freedom of information, enable public participation in decision-making, and establish dedicated mechanisms to support redress in relation to environmental harms. Such reforms entail not only development of policies and implementing guidelines, but also the development of institutional capacity to support access rights and development of dedicated systems and institutions to carry out functions such as managing and disseminating environmental information or hearing complaints.

Access to information and public participation in relation to decisions concerning the environment are particularly critical in the context of implementing REDD+ programs, which impact forest-dependent groups including Indigenous Peoples. Taking stock of existing commitments, laws, and tools should therefore be a critical step as countries develop REDD+ programs. WRI's Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) project, launched in 2015, carried out a systematic review of how 70 low-, middle-, and high-income countries have established rights of access to information, participation, and justice in their legal frameworks. The analysis used a set of legal indicators based on the UNEP Bali Guidelines, providing practical guidance for countries on how to integrate access rights into national laws and policies.^b While these questions are focused on the quality of the legal framework and not on the level of implementation, they nonetheless provide REDD+ countries with a snapshot of the strengths and weaknesses of their legal frameworks for access rights that could help prioritize additional reforms.

The EDI analysis includes 15 of the 20 countries whose ER-PINs were reviewed for this study. Figure 1 below shows the average scores for these 15 countries in relation to a subset of indicators that are relevant for access to information and participation in REDD+ programs. Each indicator examines whether there is a legal requirement and the strength of the requirement on a scale from 0 to 3, where 0 indicates no requirement, and 3 indicates that the legal requirements in place are strong in relation to the Bali Guidelines. The results indicate that legal frameworks for information provision and access in these countries are relatively robust. The lowest average scores are found in relation to provisions for public participation, including in development of environmental programs, and rules requiring decision-makers to take due account of stakeholder inputs.

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE EDI SCORE FOR 15 STUDY COUNTRIES ON KEY INDICATORS OF ACCESS RIGHTS



Note: Countries included in the EDI analysis whose ER-PINs were reviewed in this paper: Cameroon, Chile, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Peru, Republic of Congo, Vietnam.

a. <http://www.environmentaldemocracyindex.org/>

b. UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). 2010. *Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters*.

Dedicated spaces for dialogue, such as consultative platforms for civil society and/or Indigenous Peoples are mentioned by 12 ER-PINs as an important tool for REDD+ participation. Of these, six platforms were specifically developed to facilitate civil society input into the REDD+ process. However, there is almost no discussion of the means by which decision-makers will provide justification or create space to respond to public input received throughout the consultation process or during implementation of REDD+ programs. Only four ER-PINs cited the specific need for accountability or responsiveness to feedback obtained via civil society platforms or from other actors within the REDD+ process.

Fundamental to answerability is the existence of clear standards that promote transparency and justification. Discussions in the ER-PINs do not provide great detail on the specifics of the countries' legal frameworks, or specific areas that should be strengthened. There is a particular lack of clarity on whether information-sharing and consultation processes will follow dedicated steps or continue to be developed on an ongoing, ad hoc basis. Although there have been significant efforts to promote civil society voices in REDD+ planning processes, insufficient attention has been paid to ensuring that there are dedicated mechanisms that promote responsive decision-making. The existence of dedicated procedures can both maximize government efficiency by reducing duplication across different initiatives, and ensure that civil society has the information required to participate actively in the process and hold decision-makers to account for their actions.

Monitoring Systems

REDD+ discussions of oversight have strongly emphasized the importance of monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of carbon and, increasingly, of non-carbon benefits and other impacts.³² In discussing monitoring, we employ a broad definition in which monitoring is any activity that measures and/or evaluates progress toward REDD+ program objectives, and can include efforts to identify problems and options for improvement as well as to highlight successes and lessons learned.

While monitoring discussions are covered in detail in the ER-PINs, there is limited discussion of the specific powers of agencies responsible for monitoring activities or how these entities will report to other REDD+ governance structures. Only six of the ER-PINs reviewed identified a single institution responsible for oversight of MRV or

monitoring systems for REDD+, while another 10 listed multiple departments or institutions. In cases where multiple separate ministries were identified as involved in monitoring, there is a particular need to clarify roles and responsibilities across separate institutions and potentially put in place information-sharing protocols or other coordination tools. For example, Mexico's ER-PIN discusses a working group that has been established, comprising five government entities that play a role in monitoring. Neither the lead institutions nor the relationships among these entities are mentioned, although the ER-PIN notes that institutional arrangements are under discussion.

The emphasis on monitoring within REDD+ programs has significant potential to provide support for improving the quality of forest monitoring and information systems. Eight of the ER-PINs discuss the ways in which development of MRV systems for REDD+ will interact with or build upon monitoring initiatives that are already underway. For example, Chile's ER-PIN provides a detailed list of some of the existing information systems and data sources that will form an integral part of its national forest monitoring system, including information on native vegetation, forest carbon and wood energy monitoring, forest fires, and national forest inventory data.³³ It also mentions the development of spatial data infrastructure for forests, agriculture, and livestock, and emphasizes the importance of interoperability across different platforms and agencies.

In general, discussions of monitoring systems in the ER-PINs remain focused on technical issues. While technical development is critical to ensuring accuracy in efforts to measure, report, and verify emissions reductions, ensuring that there is adequate institutional capacity and that the information is linked to decision-making is also essential. REDD+ resources can make significant contributions to developing improved information systems for forest monitoring and management and ultimately contribute to comprehensive, integrated approaches to monitoring land-cover and land-use change. Mapping the institutions with roles in data collection, analysis, compilation, and dissemination can be a helpful starting point when identifying needs for strengthened coordination of information systems. Improved coordination can also streamline reporting to REDD+ decision-making and reporting bodies, and help support adaptive management of REDD+ programs.

Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanisms

Development of feedback and grievance redress mechanisms (hereafter “FGRM”) that provide established channels to identify and address conflicts arising from negative impacts of REDD+ activities has also emerged as an important type of accountability tool for REDD+.³⁴ Designing effective FGRM for REDD+ will require countries to take stock of current conflicts, anticipate potential issues that may arise from REDD+ programs, and evaluate the potential for different institutional options to address these issues. Conflicts may arise over a range of issues including disputes over infringements on land tenure and property rights (e.g., conflicts between statutory and customary claims), violations of procedural rights (e.g., rights to public information or participation), or disputes over which groups should qualify to participate in or receive benefits of REDD+ activities.

The ER-PIN template requires countries to provide an overview of the development of feedback and grievance redress mechanisms. Most of the ER-PINs report that studies and consulting contracts to develop FGRM systems are still underway; thus, few can provide a detailed discussion of specific institutional mandates, powers, or functions. Overall, 19 of the reviewed proposals clearly indicate that the REDD+ process should evaluate and build on existing systems for managing disputes, although only a handful discuss the functioning of these systems or specific needs for strengthening. For example, Mexico’s ER-PIN notes that the existing Feedback and Grievance Mechanism of the National Forestry Commission compiles complaints in collaboration with several government units, but that more work is needed to improve its efficiency and adaptation to local needs.³⁵ The ER-PIN also states that guidelines for strengthening this mechanism have been incorporated into the National REDD+ Strategy.

Despite the acknowledgment that most countries already have systems that are designed to address conflict, 15 of the ER-PINs clearly state plans to develop an additional set of procedures or mechanisms to address REDD+-specific complaints. For example, Vietnam proposes to develop a Register of Grievances to provide a system for reviewing grievances that is linked to existing procedures for grievance redress as set out in laws on access to justice, land, and forest protection.³⁶ Such a hybrid approach that combines existing approaches with REDD+-specific needs could help to ensure that investment in developing REDD+ institutional architecture is carried out in a way that complements existing processes and targets specific gaps or weaknesses within the system.

Our review noted that most of the references to existing FGRM were broad or listed multiple types of institutions at different geographic scales, and often placed considerable emphasis on the involvement of subnational actors. For example, Peru’s ER-PIN identifies six different types of procedures, institutions, or agreements related to addressing grievances or conflicts—including the access to information law, the national Ombudsman’s office, and the Ministry of Environment’s Office of Social and Environmental Affairs—that should be taken into account as the country develops an FGRM for REDD+.³⁷ While the ER-PIN notes the need to consider existing mandates, the sheer number of institutions listed may create a difficult coordination challenge that is both time and resource intensive.

The Peru example shows that it is likely to be useful for REDD+ countries to clarify how they will take advantage of existing resources and capacity to resolve conflicts while also designating an entity responsible for overall management and oversight. Such institutions could play a role in providing guidance to existing mechanisms on addressing REDD+-related grievances, standardizing procedures for processing and reporting complaints, and analyzing the types of conflicts that are occurring in order to better understand the impacts of REDD+ decisions in practice and develop solutions. For example, Fiji’s ER-PIN notes the existence of several processes, but points out that the Communication Officer of the REDD+ Unit can play an important role in uptake, documentation, and reaction to grievances, including development of standardized forms and trainings for forestry officers and village headmen on documenting grievances.³⁸

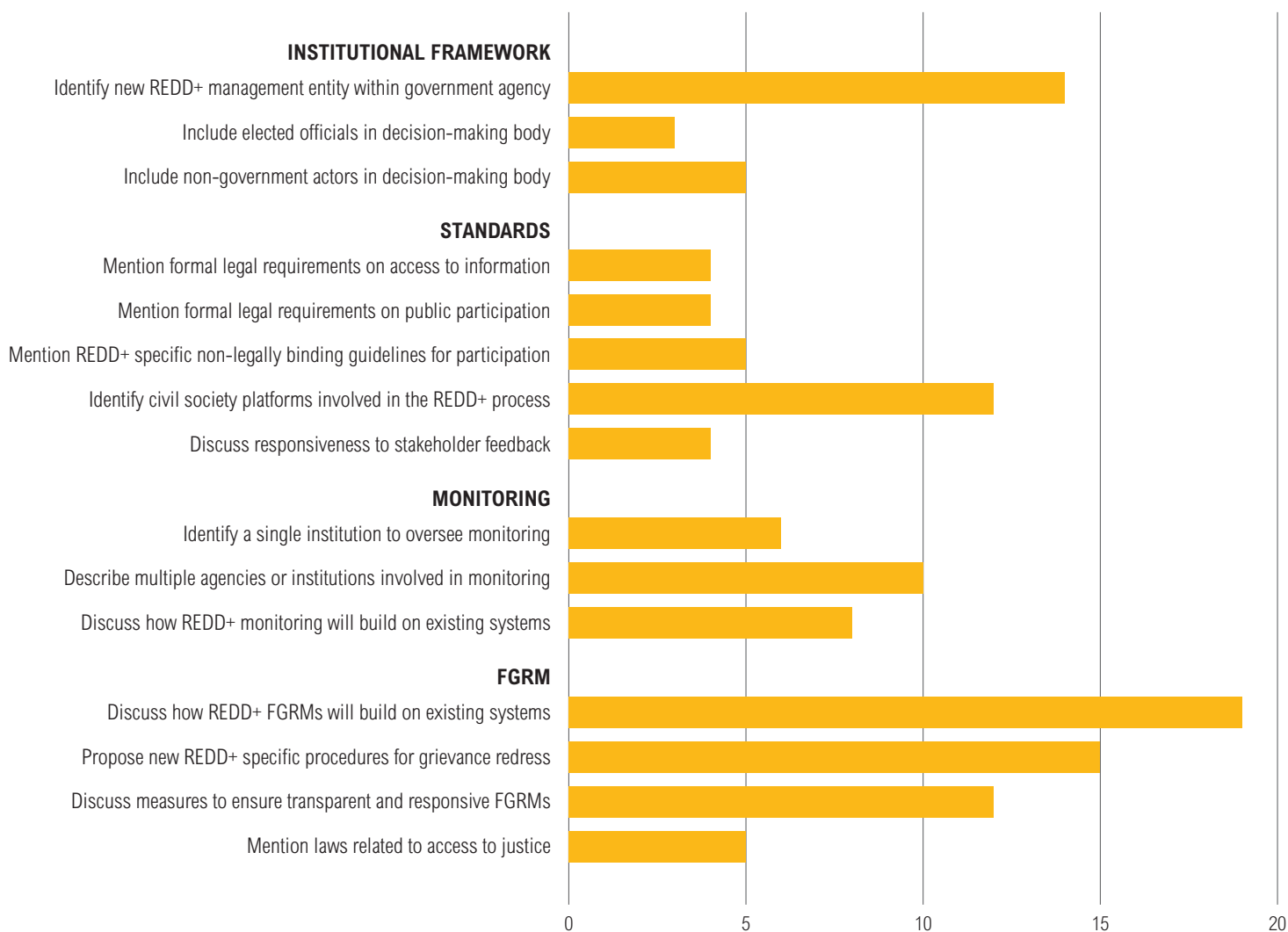
Since most FGRMs for REDD+ are in early stages of development, relatively limited detail was provided in relation to the types of procedures that would be used. However, 12 of the proposals discussed the need for measures to support transparent and responsive systems. For example, Vietnam’s ER-PIN includes measures to ensure that grievances can be received orally in Vietnamese or local ethnic languages in addition to written form, and proposes multiple channels for reporting including village heads or commune-level committees.³⁹ Several ER-PINs also mentioned access to justice laws that include formal procedures for grievance redress that can be built upon. The discussions of FGRM remain vague in describing whether these entities will have powers beyond receiving and hearing grievances, such as the ability to investigate or apply penalties. Review of the ER-PINs indicates that,

despite years of readiness activities, many REDD+ countries have made limited progress in developing FGRM to address disputes that arise from implementation of REDD+ programs. Although some interesting approaches are being proposed, there is still significant opportunity to strengthen current approaches.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The review of ER-PINs provides a snapshot of the current status of the accountability issue in recent REDD+ program design and presents some initial trends that can be addressed as REDD+ programs move forward. Figure 2 identifies the number of study countries that address each of the accountability criteria proposed in this paper.

Figure 2 | **Number of ER-PINs that Address Accountability Criteria**



In general, REDD+ countries have made progress in embedding national governance arrangements within existing institutions and acknowledging the importance of robust consultation processes and oversight mechanisms such as FGRM. However, important challenges remain. We highlight the following areas that require additional emphasis, both for countries whose ER-PINs were reviewed in this document, and for other countries seeking to develop national or subnational REDD+ programs.

- **POWER RELATIONSHIPS.** In general, the relationships between the myriad institutions involved in the REDD+ process are ill defined. There is a need to more explicitly define the specific accountability relationships among institutions tasked with decision-making, implementation, consultation, monitoring, and grievance-redress roles in order to promote clarity and ownership over different components of the REDD+ process and avoid institutional conflicts.
- **FORMALIZING RULES AND PROCEDURES.** Across the components of accountability, REDD+ countries rely heavily on “soft” accountability mechanisms that are largely informal in terms of their mandate or procedures. This is particularly true for discussions of participation and information. Many of these processes and rules lack a supportive legal framework that could promote accountable implementation by defining clear rules as well as relevant sanctions for noncompliance.
- **GRIEVANCE REDRESS.** Discussions of FGRM are underdeveloped compared to many other elements of REDD+ programs, such as monitoring or participation. A 2013 review of 32 readiness plans found that over 90 percent of REDD+ countries recognize the potential for REDD+ activities to create conflict and 63 percent stated the importance of conflict resolution for achieving REDD+ goals.⁴⁰ Yet, to date, limited progress has been made on establishing functional FGRM.
- **STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING FEEDBACK.** REDD+ readiness processes in general, including the discussions in ER-PINs, have emphasized information-sharing, awareness-raising, and general commitments to transparency as important elements of REDD+ planning, implementation, and monitoring. However, there is far less discussion of how to design consultation processes or monitoring systems that are responsive to feedback or findings. Furthermore, it is unclear which institutions have obligations or responsibilities to analyze and respond to information received.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although there is no single approach to supporting accountable and effective institutional design for REDD+ programs, our review identifies some general lessons to consider as REDD+ countries move from readiness into implementation. Attention to accountability tools is particularly critical for countries seeking to pilot performance-based payment systems, as it will be essential to demonstrate sound program design and ensure that the right tools are in place to deliver on emissions reductions as well as other social and environmental obligations. We therefore make the following recommendations:

- **DEFINE AND SIMPLIFY INSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND POWERS ACROSS THE DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS ENGAGED IN REDD+.** Specific mechanisms could include multistakeholder processes to clarify legal mandates, develop memoranda or terms of reference between institutions, or other means of clarifying obligations such that these actors can coordinate with one another and be held accountable for performance of their specific tasks. Such approaches may also require additional analysis to understand not only the institutional relationships that exist on paper or in legal texts, but existing power dynamics among various groups of actors with roles in the REDD+ process. These efforts should also aim to ensure that roles for subnational government actors are clearly defined.
- **STRENGTHEN RULES AND CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT REDD+ PROGRAMS IN A TRANSPARENT AND PARTICIPATORY MANNER.** Many REDD+ countries have relied heavily on externally driven processes or donor requirements to address social and environmental issues for REDD+, such as ad hoc stakeholder consultation processes. As countries develop compliance systems for donor programs, they should also evaluate the extent to which national laws—for example, on access

to information—and their implementation should be strengthened as a strategy for ensuring compliance with international standards while also promoting approaches that are adapted to the national context.

- **CLARIFY MONITORING AND REPORTING ROLES AND PROCEDURES.** While significant attention has been paid to design of MRV systems, REDD+ countries should also develop procedures to ensure adaptive management of REDD+ processes. For example, dedicated procedures for sharing monitoring results with decision-making bodies such as the REDD+ Steering Committees are critical for ensuring that feedback is addressed and that it informs broader REDD+ decisions.
- **ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON FEEDBACK AND GRIEVANCE REDRESS.** REDD+ countries have made incremental progress on developing FGRM, although these approaches should be operational prior to commencement of ER program activities. REDD+ countries should ensure that adequate readiness resources are channeled to work on FGRM, building on lessons from existing systems where feasible.
- **IMPROVE COORDINATION ACROSS REDD+ PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL.** There is significant scope to improve coordination of REDD+ support. Both REDD+ donors operating in specific countries and governments themselves should make an effort to ensure that resources supporting development of REDD+ processes and systems are being used efficiently and maximizing impact. Coordinated processes to develop roadmaps or ensure that financing and technical support are allocated on the basis of comprehensive needs assessments are useful starting points to avoid duplication of efforts.

ENDNOTES

1. REDD+ includes reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.
2. Williams, L. 2013. "Putting the Pieces Together for Good Governance of REDD+: An Analysis of 32 REDD+ Country Readiness Proposals." Working Paper. Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute.
3. In this paper, we use a broad definition of REDD+ programs that encompasses both national-scale efforts to develop REDD+ as well as subnational approaches that are larger than individual projects both in geographic scope and programmatic objectives.
4. The terms conflict resolution, grievance redress mechanism, and dispute resolution have often been used interchangeably to describe approaches for addressing potential conflicts or complaints arising from REDD+. While each of these terms may refer to different types of institutions and approaches, in this paper we follow the terminology used in the ER-PIN template and group these terms under the general heading of feedback and grievance redress mechanisms.
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lauren Williams works with WRI's Forest Team as the Deputy Chief of Party for their program of work in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo. She worked previously as an Associate in WRI's Governance Center where her work focused on promoting good governance in the context of REDD+ programs at both global and national scales and supporting civil society research and advocacy to advance governance reforms. Lauren holds a Masters in Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and undergraduate degrees in Biology and French from Wake Forest University.

Contact: llwilliams@wri.org

Free de Koning is the Director of the Natural Resource Governance Practice in WRI's Governance Center of Excellence. He works to promote improved forest governance across a range of policy issues including forest conservation, restoration and REDD+. His expertise includes forest governance, conservation incentive programs, climate change, protected area management, marine conservation, ecosystem services, and land use planning. Free holds an M.Sc. in Agricultural Sciences and a Ph.D. in land-use change modeling from Wageningen University in The Netherlands.

Contact: fdekoning@wri.org

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