Implementing the REDD-Plus Safeguards:
The Role of Social Accountability

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In the fight against climate change, one approach that has been gaining increasing international momentum is the REDD-Plus mechanism. REDD-Plus stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, and the Conservation and Enhancement of Existing Forest Carbon Stocks. It was adopted as an international mechanism to address climate change during the 16th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC) in Cancun, Mexico held last December, 2010 (La Vina et al 2011). In Cancun, among others, countries agreed to the scope of the mechanism, the components of a national REDD-Plus program, and what could be the phases of such a program. As part of the REDD-Plus agreement, Parties to the UNFCCC also agreed to a set of safeguards that would accompany REDD-Plus implementation at the national level. Still pending and currently being negotiated in is how REDD-Plus will be financed over the long-term.

This paper explores and articulates the role of social accountability in implementing REDD-Plus safeguards. Unless social accountability – an emerging and powerful concept centered on citizen engagement with governments – is mainstreamed in the implementation of REDD-Plus programs, we predict that countries will not be able to adequately implement the social, governance and environmental safeguards agreed to in Cancun. And because these REDD-Plus safeguards are critical for the success of REDD-Plus programs, we argue incorporating social accountability mechanisms increases the likelihood of desired climate change and environmental outcomes and further facilitates just and equitable results.

After providing an overall background on the concept of the REDD-Plus mechanism as a way of addressing climate change, this paper present the case for utilizing existing principles in *social accountability*—as conceptually established by the Affiliated Network on Social Accountability-East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP)—as a logical system of concepts by which to practically mainstream REDD-Plus relevant social and governance safeguards for implementation in developing countries. ANSA-EAP is a regional network launched in 2008 with the objective of providing a common platform to exchange information and experiences in the practice of social accountability. Its work is hinged on the core belief that improving governance essentially requires facilitating constructive engagement and partnerships between citizen groups—which are direct beneficiaries of public services—and government—which ideally provides the open space for citizen participation in monitoring public programs.

We begin with a short discussion on the increasingly apparent social dimensions of climate change and the emerging global call for civic action and accountability towards responding to the

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climate crisis. We then move on to introduce ANSA's four pillars of social accountability and other relevant work. The paper then will discuss linkages between the existing REDD-Plus framework and attempt to present some ideas towards mainstreaming social accountability into REDD-Plus taking the example and experience of the Philippine National REDD-Plus Strategy. In this regard, the authors also propose a framework for practically integrating social accountability into REDD-Plus, identifying the elements of such framework.

This paper should be read together with its accompanying study - *REDD Lights: Who Owns the Carbon in Forests and Trees?* authored by Antonio G. M. La Viña and Owen J. Lynch. In that paper, La Viña and Lynch, using examples from the Philippines and the world, argue in favor of the ownership by indigenous and local peoples of carbon in forests trees and that such ownership could be the basis of social accountability.[†]

Background

The REDD-Plus mechanism under the UNFCCC is a voluntary scheme which aims to address the growing contribution of deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries to global climate change. It does so by providing a framework to transfer resources and incentivize cost-effective ways of avoiding deforestation and forest degradation while also promoting forest conservation, restoration, and sustainable development in tropical developing countries.

It has since been recognized that the value-adding elements of REDD-Plus over other forest initiatives are: its attention towards the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of potential emissions reductions from REDD-Plus activities; and its social, governance, and environmental safeguards that, among others, respectively require any REDD-Plus programme to ensure multi-stakeholder participation, respect for indigenous peoples' rights, consistency with national forest programmes and legislation, permanence, and the non-conversion of natural forests (UNFCCC 2010).

		Activity	Example
Reducing carbon emissions	1.	Reducing deforestation	Slowing the rate of broad scale or clear fell logging
	2.	Reducing forest degradation	Reducing forest areas affected by selective logging, grazing, fire or fuel wood collection
Increasing the removal of carbon (the 'plus')	3.	Conserving forest carbon stocks	Preservation of existing forests
	4.	Sustainable management of forest	Extending logging cycles from 10 years to 30 years to allow a greater amount of carbon to develop in regrowth
	5.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks	Forest regeneration and rehabilitation (but not afforestation and reafforestation)

Table 1: *Five Elements of REDD-Plus with Examples* (UNDP 2010).

Since its inception, several developing countries with the assistance of developed country and multilateral partners have begun developing National REDD-Plus programmes and projects—some more aggressively than others. And a review of these activities and REDD-related literature since 2007 offers a rich perspective into the many aspects of formulating and implementing REDD-Plus in various developing country contexts—from technical discussions on MRV-ing forest carbon change, to socio-economic analyses on the impacts of REDD-Plus on sustainable development, to emerging financing schemes, and governance considerations for facilitating REDD-Plus on international, national, and local levels.

Most notable in the literature is an increasing trend and interest among institutions—ranging from multilateral to non-government organizations cutting across different sectors—to further nuance the discussion of how REDD-Plus safeguards can be translated into useful and comprehensive frameworks for actual implementation in developing countries.

The Social Dimensions of Climate Change: The Case for Participation, Accountability and Transparency

The scope for applying social accountability principles in climate change, let alone REDD-Plus, is founded on the simple realization that the climate crisis is essentially a social crisis interacting with a myriad of political, economic, and environmental factors. In the midst of multiple crises, it helps for the purposes of this study to frame our understanding of climate change not only according to its more prominent environmental impacts but also to its social dimensions and

implications. In this way, a more targeted inspection is made possible towards identifying areas for mainstreaming social accountability interventions

The fact is the ability of a certain community to withstand a cyclone or a drought is and will always be shaped by a range of social factors including the degree of social inequality, access to resources, poverty status, lack of representation, and the effectiveness of external and internal systems of social security, early warning and planning, within in the community. Therefore, additionally, issues of gender inequality, social identity, and the interplay between rich and poor, children and the elderly, shall also contribute towards defining political economic structures by which a community will succeed or fail to adapt to climate impacts (World Bank 2010).

Similarly, one does not have to look very far to identify the groups most exposed to multiple risks of climate change. These are the same groups that heavily depend on natural resources and are already at the margins of society—the rural and urban poor, women, children, and indigenous peoples (Ahmed et al. 2009). Indeed, as Table 2 outlines, there is a direct relationship between the projected impacts of climate change with the Millennium Development Goals.And yet historically, developing countries and most especially these vulnerable groups have least contributed to the causes of global warming, though it is likely that developing countries' share of emissions will grow further to meet their social and developmental needs.

Millennium Development Goal	Examples of link with climate change
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1)	• Climate change is projected to reduce poor people's livelihood assets such as health, access to water, homes, and infrastructure • Climate change is expected to alter the path and rate of economic growth due to changes in natural systems and resources, infrastructure, and labor productivity. A reduction in economic growth directly impacts poverty through reduced income opportunities. • Climate change is projected to alter regional food security. In Africa, in particular, food security is expected to worsen.
Health-related goals: • Combat major diseases • Reduce infant mortality • Improve maternal health (Goals 4, 5, and 6)	• Direct effects of climate change include increases in heat-related mortality and illness associated with heat waves (which may be balanced by less winter cold-related deaths in some regions) • Climate change may increase the prevalence of some vector-borne diseases (for example, malaria and dengue fever), and vulnerability to water, food, or person-to-person borne diseases such as cholera and dysentery. • Children and pregnant women are particularly susceptible to vector- and water-borne diseases. Anemia—resulting from malaria—is responsible for a quarter of maternal mortality

	• Climate change will likely result in declining quantity and quality of drinking water, which is a prerequisite for good health, and it may also exacerbate malnutrition—an important cause of ill health among children—by reducing natural resource productivity and threatening food security, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa
Achieve universal primary education (Goal 2)	• Links to climate change are less direct, but loss of livelihoods assets (social, natural, physical, human and financial capital) may reduce opportunities for full-time education in numerous ways. Natural disasters and drought reduce children's available time (which may be diverted to household tasks), while displacement and migration can reduce access to education opportunities.
Promote gender equality and empower women (Goal 3)	• Climate change is expected to exacerbate current gender inequalities. Depletion of natural resources and decreasing agricultural productivity may place additional burdens on women's health and reduce time available to participate in decision-making processes and income-generating activities • Climate-related disasters have been found to impact more severely on female-headed households, particularly where they have fewer assets to start with
Ensure environmental sustainability (Goal 7)	• Climate change will alter the quality and productivity of natural resources and ecosystems, some of which may be irreversibly damaged, and these changes may also decrease biological diversity and compound existing environmental degradation
Global Partnerships	• Global climate change is a global issue and response requires global cooperation, especially to help developing countries to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change

Table 2: *Links between the MDGs and climate change impacts* (Ahmed et al. 2009)

It is in this context that climate change and its associated response measures should unambiguously be understood as a question of equity and social justice. In fact, at the international level, this precise question drives the whole negotiation process under the UNFCCC and the positioning of multilateral organizations towards fulfilling the "common but differentiated responsibilities" of both developed and developing nations towards addressing the causes and impacts of climate change.

At the national level, suffice to say that the centrepiece of any national response to climate change, especially in developing country contexts, should be an effective governance system capable of developing and implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation policies in an

efficient yet "socially accountable" manner—that is to say in a manner that promotes equity and social justice while supporting the broader sustainable development agenda.

But how "social accountability" according to this broad definition can practically be applied in the policy context is not as straightforward or as forthcoming. However, one can easily detect an emerging movement to address this.

In a workshop organized by the World Bank in 2008 on the *Social Dimensions of Climate Change*, participants affirmed that among the critical questions that are already being asked in this arena are:

- Which actors and institutions need to be involved?
- How do we give voice to the vulnerable in crafting governance arrangements?
- How can various forms of social accountability be built into such arrangements?

The proceedings of the workshop captured how "governance and institutions powerfully shape adaptive capacity at the national level, and are critical in ensuring that the results of efforts (against climate change) match intentions."

The workshop also recognized that the ability of governments to formulate effective responses and facilitate adaptive capacities depends on the strength of governance mechanisms.

And a key element towards strong governance mechanisms, or "good governance", is giving voice to and ensuring the representation of traditionally poor and marginalized groups in the design of climate change strategies. For both climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, good governance can be promoted through measures that increase participation, transparency and accountability, maximize co-benefits for local communities, and empower stakeholders by recognizing and strengthening their rights so that they may genuinely benefit from the opportunities offered by such responses.

Additionally, the IPCC (2007) argues that good governance should closely respect procedural as well as consequential equity—or in other words, equity in how decisions are made and how they translate to outcomes, respectively. To be effective and promote cooperation, platforms and interventions must be regarded as legitimate, and both types of equity are important elements in gaining legitimacy.

What these points ultimately highlight is the critical role of strengthened multi-stakeholder engagement, decentralization, accountability, and transparency in planning and executing actions for climate change. And increasingly, with the advent of the Cancun Agreements, there is an emerging consensus that for an international mechanism such as REDD-Plus to succeed nationally, good governance with the above features are a key pre-requisite—and we return to this in more detail in the succeeding sections.

However, without a clear and targeted approach as to what can categorically constitute as "social accountability" beyond just citing participation, transparency and accountability, we are at risk of a pedantic discussion that is unlikely to mature to any practical policy applications.

The next section shall therefore take the opportunity to introduce and relate ANSA's defined concept of social accountability to address this dilemma in a more methodical fashion.

Social Accountability: General Principles and Challenges

The Affiliated Network on Social Accountability -East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP) is a member of a global network of institutions and researchers dedicated to promoting social accountability concepts and practices, and in developing citizen engagement by leveraging demand-side governance: helping people connect with their governments, and make them accountable for public goods and services. Based out of the Institute of Governance Studies in BRAC University, Bangladesh, and formally launched in partnership with the World Bank Institute last June 29 here in Manila, the ANSA Global Partnership Fund (ANSA Global or ANSA GPF) provides a networking platform for the three main regional ANSA networks: Africa (ANSA Africa, in fact the oldest of the regional networks, created in 2007, East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP, which is headquartered in the Ateneo School of Government), and South Asia (ANSA-SAR, which is based in BRAC University alongside ANSA-Global), a means for these networks to exchange ideas, distribute and share knowledge and resources, and collaborate with each other achieve their objectives of enhancing sustainable citizen engagement in their respective home bases.

Through each regional network serving as both social accountability schools and project manager, ANSA links together knowledge and practice, through people in government and in civil society (e.g., academia and NGOs), to apply the concept of social accountability to policy design and execution. We can think of each *local* instance of policy, each public program of government as an opportunity for social accountability, as a laboratory for developing and testing methods and mechanisms of constructive citizen engagement in governance, and a means to promote the concept to governments and people alike. "Learning in action", is what ANSA-EAP definesas turning policy and accountability projects into schools of governance, accountability, and citizen engagement.

From these local projects, ANSA Global gains the necessary data and experience to refine the concept of social accountability, building up a database of knowledge and best practices for academics, policymakers, and citizens. To these local projects, and the regional networks as well, ANSA Global provides a platform and forum to advance and discuss their interests and objectives to the rest of the world, and mobilize resources and technical resources to fund and sustain these projects, such as the much praised CheckMySchool.org initiative in the Philippines. Much like in environmentalism ("think globally, act locally"), the global and local levels feed into each other: serving to develop and promote social accountability on the regional and global stages as a cornerstone of democratic governance, and attracting attention and support from partners, while improving such democratic governance at home and citizen's participation in government programs.

ANSA Global and the regional networks aim to lift demand-side governance to the mainstream of public governance practice through advocacy, research, and technical support, to make constructive citizen engagement an adjunct to the formal institutions of governance and

government accountability (the "supply side" of governance). Part of ANSA's challenge is understanding the limits of traditional, formal governance approaches, or of relying on government institutions alone (such as checks and balances among government branches, or independent investigatory bodies like ombudsman offices) for accountability.

As for ANSA-EAP, from whose work the authors draw their knowledge on social accountability, to date, its outreach has spanned the exchange of knowledge, techniques and experiences among citizen groups, non-government organizations, civic associations, the business sector, and government institutions towards monitoring government performance, specifically, the quality of public service delivery and the transparency of public transactions—or in other words the championing of ethical public leadership (ANSA 2010a). Vis-a-vis this study's discussion on capturing a conceptualization of social accountability useful for governance applications in climate change and REDD-Plus, ANSA's strength and relevance lies in its overarching understanding of accountability and social accountability.

Firstly, ANSA understands accountability per se to imply both an obligation of public officials and a right of citizens. At its core, "social accountability" is that old idea of a "government of the people" given new impetus: that citizens, even if they do not hold public office or don't have the influential power of lobbyists, rich people, and corporations, can still work with government in a productive, meaningful way. This is "demand-side governance", or the governance practiced and provided by the intended beneficiaries of public policy, the citizens of a given country. It involves *horizontal accountability systems* which traditionally include political mechanisms such as constitutional and legislative bodies; fiscal mechanisms for auditing and financial accounting; administrative mechanisms; and legal mechanisms such as corruption control agencies, judiciary and ombudsman offices. It also includes *vertical accountability systems* which involve mechanisms to obligate elected political leaders to answer to citizens and civil society groups (ANSA 2010b)

Good governance is facilitated when horizontal accountability is reinforced by strong vertical accountability, whereby citizens, mass media and civil society organizations are provided an avenue to practice their right to scrutinize public officials and horizontal government practices.

In this sense, public officials are not simply open to criticism but proactively work with society to improve honesty and performance in government. Government engages in dialogue to explain and justify their behaviour, plans of action, and the results of these actions, and then are consequently sanctioned. In this manner, good governance is a process of simultaneously applying horizontal and vertical accountability.

And yet, as evidenced by rampant corruption and poor decision-making across developing country contexts in the quest for sustainable development, there is now a widespread perception that traditional forms of accountability—horizontal and vertical—still largely fail to ensure transparent and accountable use of public authority (Joshi 2008).

And in response to this crisis—which has since been identified as systemically hindering the attainment of sustainable development and more recently climate change adaptation—the international civil society movement began to engage in different and non-traditional forms of collective action to demand accountability from government. And this is where ANSA's conceptualization of *social accountability* takes its cue.

ANSA's Concept of Social Accountability

According to ANSA, "social accountability is a process of constructive engagement between citizens and government to check the conduct and performance of public officials, politicians, and service providers as they use public resources to deliver services, improve welfare and protect peoples' rights," (ANSA 2010a)

In this definition, social accountability does not replace traditional institutions of accountability. It is instead a *process* that complements and strengthens horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms by systematically adding an *ex ante* dimension or "before-the-fact"-type of procedural participation for civil society in government decision-making.

So far, motivations towards introducing social accountability in governance are largely to do with desires to improve development effectiveness in terms of budget transparency and addressing inefficient public services, and also improved governance in terms of decentralization and addressing pervasive corruption across different public sectors (World Bank Institute 2005).

Under the ANSA framework, this translates into targeted engagements or applications aimed at making sure that:

- Public resources are used according to rules—responsibly and efficiently;
- Government agencies perform according to agreed upon performance standards and targets;
- Government officials (both elective and appointive) are true to their oath of office; and
- Public institutions are governed by the rule of law in carrying out their functions.

In their most promising forms, social accountability innovations achieve the above while in the process provide marginalized groups opportunities to realize their rights and to "shift the terrain of governance from technical solutions to social justice issues." Hence social accountability ensures accountability systems do not just satisfy concerns with procedural integrity, as mentioned above, but also emphasize consequential equity or social justice—where outcomes are assessed in terms of how they ultimately improve and empower the lives of poor and vulnerable groups (ANSA 2010b).

And this certainly resonates with the social and governance implications of climate change and its impacts as raised by the preceding section. More specifically, ANSA's framework proves most useful in presenting four essential pillars required towards ensuring an enabling environment for constructive engagement and good governance, extending the relevance of the above objectives for social accountability to climate change and REDD-Plus.

The Four Pillars of Social Accountability: Outcomes and Challenges

We argue that an enabling environment is foundational towards generating opportunities to address the increasingly social and governance dimensions of climate change. And this can systematically be done by ensuring four conditions, or ANSA's four pillars of social

accountability, are considered and met across the design and implementation of any intervention (ANSA 2010a):

(1) Organized and capable citizen groups—refers to the presence and ability of the civil society sector and their members towards technical and advocacy skills, mobilizing resources, effective use of media, internal accountability practices, and ultimately, legitimacy to engage with government;

(2) Responsive government—refers to the receptivity of government entities towards citizen's participation, transparency, and willingness to deliver better services and improve people's welfare and rights. Is largely pivoted on champions in government and the ability to nurture them for social accountability across the ranks;

(3) Context and cultural appropriateness—refers to the extent to which social accountability action, tools and mechanisms are appropriate and therefore effective within the larger context and framework of a sector, nation, or region, against broader political, socio-cultural, legal, and institutional factors;

(4) Access to information—refers to the availability and reliability of public data, where such data when analyzed and correctly interpreted by competent citizen groups, becomes the basis for constructive engagement. Where "access" can mean physical access to source documents and/or to people who have information, and/or easy retrieval and proper processing.

Literature from this incipient field would suggest that social accountability as framed according to these four pillars is in practice in the East Asia Pacific region through projects or programs focused on budget planning and monitoring, policy making and planning, public goods and services, expenditure, and public oversight and monitoring (World Bank Institute 2007). More recently, and through the ANSA-EAP's program, there have been initiatives to mainstream social accountability in procurement monitoring, extractive industries, education and the youth (ANSA 2010a).

A rapid assessment of these social accountability initiatives in the region undertaken by the World Bank Institute (2005) revealed a range of interesting outcomes of relevance to us here:

- Social problems were exposed, and new ones were called to attention;
- Public opinion was inflamed, generating public interest;
- Corruption was prosecuted;
- Policies and laws were changed;
- Cost-effectiveness was improved; and
- Public service efficiency enhanced.

There were also some problems and challenges identified as these programs sought greater social accountability, among others:

- Politicians have ignored findings of social accountability projects;
- Governments have conceded and resorted to token changes;
- Bureaucracies have resisted reforms;
- Access to government data has been restricted;

- Civil groups face capacity, resource, and time constraints; and
- Information, communication and technology (ICT)-related infrastructure barriers hinder progress

The initial stocktaking exercise therefore led to the identification of some low-hanging opportunities for institutionalizing social accountability in governance, namely through

- Mechanisms for regular repetition and engagement;
- Better lobbying and social mobilization skills;
- Synergy among civil society organizations that conduct fiscal research and advocate transparency;
- Capacity building for civil society organizations;
- Improving ties with mass media; and
- Generating stronger presence in the internet and ICT realm.

Interestingly, Abraham and Santos (2010) foresaw that a discussion on mainstreaming social accountability into extractive industries in oil, gas and mining necessitated a further deepening in understanding of the abovementioned outcomes and challenges—a process which they cited will unavoidably involve questions relating to mainstreaming social accountability in climate change mitigation and adaptation issues, most especially in the forestry sector.

We therefore take this opportunity to build on precisely that process, and identify the linkages between what we have established as a practical framework for social accountability, and now, REDD-Plus.

Social Accountability and REDD-Plus: Identifying Linkages and Challenges

Although a full-fledge discussion on the REDD-Plus mechanism is outside the scope of this paper (for more details see Angelsen 2009 and La Vina 2010), it is however worth revisiting here in full the value-adding element of its safeguards, as alluded to earlier. For it is precisely these safeguards that offer a direct avenue for designing and implementing social accountability into REDD-Plus.

The official safeguards as recognized in the Cancun Agreements that are to be promoted and supported when undertaking REDD-Plus are as follows (UNFCCC 2010):

a) Actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;

b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;

c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

d) Full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, including, in particular, indigenous peoples and local communities;

e) Actions that are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;

f) Actions to address the risks of reversals;

g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions;

The Cancun Agreements also require participating countries to develop "a system for providing information on how the safeguards…are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities (under REDD-Plus), while respecting sovereignty"

The modalities for establishing such a system are still to be discussed in Durban in December 2011. However, growing literature on REDD-Plus safeguards already affords us an opportunity to identify the close linkages and challenges raised by the aforementioned concept of social accountability and the safeguards of REDD-Plus, and propose some priority areas for this system.

And ideally these priority areas should build and encapsulate what the UN-REDD (2010), among others, has identified as the social and environmental risks "inherent" in REDD-Plus activities. And they range from:

- The conversion of natural forests to plantations and other land uses of low biodiversity value and low resilience
- The loss of traditional territories, natural resource rights and ecological knowledge
- The loss of traditional and rural livelihoods
- Social exclusion and elite capture in the distribution of benefits from REDD-Plus
- The creation of contradictory or competing national policy frameworks
- The other benefits of forests are traded-off at the expense of maximizing the carbon benefits

We argue that understanding the linkages and challenges of social accountability and REDD-Plus safeguards as they relate to governance and anti-corruption, as well as to participation, rights, and sustainable development, are paramount towards addressing and complementing efforts to address these risks.

Linkages and challenges in governance and anti-corruption: social accountability as an objective

The evolution of REDD-Plus from a mere concept to a full-fledge mechanism in a short span of time has been remarked by many as representing a critical juncture in international forest research and practice. While the risks and potentials underpinning REDD-Plus are yet to be fully understood or elaborated "beyond a small inner circle", its practice nonetheless is already underway in a number of demonstration sites around the world, with several National REDD-Plus Strategies being developed and finalized across developing countries (Bofin et al. 2011). And coming out of these early experiences, much of the literature published on REDD-Plus since 2009 stress the centrality of improved forest governance and/or controlling forest-linked corruption in order for REDD-Plus to meet its objectives (Bofin et al. 2011; FCPF 2010), in line specifically with safeguards a) and b) above.

It goes without saying this goes to the heart of why social accountability must be mainstreamed into REDD-Plus in order to practically trace and inform the monitoring of forest governance in developing countries. As we have outlined earlier, alongside improving development effectiveness, social accountability has as its core objective making sure that public resources are used according to rules—responsibly and efficiently by government agencies and officials. And this has never been more urgent in the forestry sector.

The World Bank (2006) estimates around USD 15 billion is lost every year in terms of foregone government revenue and sectoral growth due to illegal logging and forest activities—which is approximated to be eight times the annual total official development assistance allocated for the conservation and sustainable management of forests globally (Saunders and Reeve 2010a). This attests to the reality that financial incentives alone are not enough to change behaviour, let alone guarantee accountability, transparency and participation, in the forestry sector.

As such, it has increasingly been noted that many stakeholders engaged in developing the rules for REDD-Plus believe equal emphasis should be given to monitoring forest governance as with monitoring forest carbon. And this is simply owed to the fact that REDD-Plus activities will take place in contexts of high-risk, or where significant proportion of logging and forest activities, including forest-related institutions, are already illegal and/or corrupt (Saunders and Reeve 2010a). Clearly, lack of equal attention to this space will assuredly compromise any possible environmental benefits and social co-benefits from REDD-Plus, or worse, lead to perverse incentives for deforestation, degradation, and other abuses.

Table 3 outlines the relationship between deforestation and corruption notwithstanding REDD-Plus. Table 4 on the other hand, presents the possible corruption risks out of REDD-Plus, further complicating existing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

The United Nations Development Program (2010) also assessed the various corruption risks involved in the design of National REDD-Plus frameworks; implementation; and administration of revenues and benefit distribution out of REDD-Plus. And the study too emphasized on possible manipulation and abuses in land-use and natural resource-use planning, the allocation of carbon rights, the setting of reference forest and forest emissions levels, embezzlement and misappropriation of REDD-Plus benefits and revenues.

Stage in process	Corrupt activity	Possible impact on deforestation
Land planning	Interest groups bribe public officials to skew design and implementation of land use plans	Contributes to deforestation by undermining land use allocation process and enforcement of land use plans
	Large-scale farmers bribe politicians in exchange for agricultural subsidies	Contributes to deforestation by reducing agricultural productivity (farmers deliberately use land inefficiently to attract subsidies)
	Corruption limits private investment in agricultural land	Protects forests by limiting investments in extension of agricultural land
Harvesting	Loggers bribe forestry officials to harvest without legal permits, or to speed up the issuance of such permits	Contributes to deforestation by foregoing legal system for allocating harvesting rights
	Logging operators bribe local officials to obtain logging permits not recognised by the forestry regulatory framework	Contributes to deforestation by facilitating forms of harvesting not allowed within the legal system for forestry
	Logging concessionaires pay bribes so that over-harvesting is not monitored	Contributes to deforestation by foregoing the established system for monitoring logging activity
Transportation	Loggers bribe public officials to allow transport of illegally logged timber	Contributes to deforestation through facilitation of exit-routes for illegally harvested timber

Table 3: *Links between corruption and deforestation* (Tacconi et al 2009; Brown 2010)

Governance level	Corruption risk
National	Agricultural or timber conglomerates bribe national politicians to undermine establishment of national REDD mechanism
	REDD project developers bribe national politicians or senior officials to promote fraudulent REDD schemes
	Public officials or politicians bribe technical staff to skew national baseline data
	Politicians and senior officials extract rents from REDD revenues
	Officials responsible for reconciling REDD projects with national accounting take bribes from project developers to double-count projects
	Agricultural or timber conglomerates bribe national officials responsible for forest protection to ignore violations of conservation laws
Sub-national	Agricultural or timber conglomerates bribe sub-national politicians and public officials to opt out of REDD implementation, or weaken REDD policies, in their areas
	Agricultural or timber conglomerates bribe sub-national officials responsible for forest protection to ignore violations of conservation laws
Local or project	REDD project host bribes official monitors either to overstate avoided emissions or understate problems of permanence/additionality of the project
	REDD project host intentionally increases emissions in lead-up to implementation in order to benefit from higher credits
	Local administrators extract rents from environmental service schemes aimed at benefiting local communities

Table 4: *Possible corruption risks with REDD-Plus* (Tacconi et al 2009; Brown 2010)

The knowledge of having such risks threaten the integrity and outcome of REDD-Plus in developing country contexts, before performance-based payments are even begun in earnest, warrants for a type of vigilance existing horizontal and vertical accountability systems may not be able to practically provide. Especially as REDD-Plus design and implementation requires engagement between government, local communities, project developers and financiers, and in some cases international organizations, oftentimes simultaneously.

And again, Abraham and Santos' study (2010) on mainstreaming social accountability in extractive industries is relevant here, as it clearly demonstrated the already complicated relationship between government, business and civil society when it comes to "respecting" how each should exercise accountability to one another as policymaker, service provider, and citizen-client, respectively. Similarly, social accountability mapping exercises undertaken for the Philippines for instance highlight glaringly poor implementation of anti-corruption measures despite strong legal frameworks (ANSA 2010b). The lack of *practical* frameworks to engage these issues—especially as to how they will impact and relate to REDD-Plus, the public, private and civil society sectors—remain.

Davis (2010) in her stocktaking of how forest governance was considered in 16 country program proposals to the UN-REDD and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility noted how despite these countries mentioning coordination and relevant institutions to ensure respect for REDD-Plus governance safeguards, there was a serious lack of information on measures towards operationalizing such actions beyond the concept stage. Again, while this may only demonstrate REDD-Plus is still indeed in its early days, it also exposes the vulnerability of REDD-Plus to fall under the same lapses in accountability and transparency.

Social accountability therefore, in this context, is an *objective* to hold government agencies and processes accountable to their duties and responsibilities in transparently developing and administering REDD-Plus.

Linkages and challenges in participation, rights, and sustainable development: social accountability as a process

In the same token that the official REDD-Plus mechanism recognizes good governance as a key prerequisite to successful design and implementation, it also acknowledges how facilitating social justice through REDD-Plus is as critical towards obtaining legitimacy.

The safeguards referred to in c), d) and e) of the REDD-Plus text above, work to ensure that REDD-Plus design and implementation respectively respect rights, engage in multi-stakeholder participation and lead to co-benefits and sustainable development.

And indeed while REDD-Plus' contribution to climate change mitigation is hinged on strict regimes towards the MRV of reduced emissions from forest carbon change, we argue that its contribution to climate change adaptation, sustainable development and improved welfare on the ground equally demands a high degree of inclusion, empowerment and respect for stakeholders' rights—or social accountability.

This is because at the core of social accountability involves informed action based on equally rigorous analysis of data where stakeholders use their interpretation of such data and their rights responsibly not only to assert their interests and the concerns of the marginalized, but also to develop their ability to influence and negotiate directly with official decision makers (ANSA 2010b). And this is particularly the case for REDD-Plus where multi-stakeholder participation should only be seen as a means to access information and influence decisions on REDD-Plus development plans, livelihood impacts, benefit-sharing schemes, legal arrangements, MRV regimes, and even the determination and acceptance of local forest and socio-economic data.

Early lessons from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (2010) demonstrate how countries who wish to approach REDD-Plus institutionally in line with the safeguards are faced with the immediate need to operationalize the inclusion of a wider network of relevant stakeholders in REDD-Plus policy and implementation, spurring discussions on possible alternative models towards the co-management of natural resources and associated decision-making processes.

Similarly, the Facility also noted emerging tools towards evaluating the potential of REDD-Plus strategy options vis-a-vis competing options, heralding new breakthroughs towards facilitating more genuine participation among stakeholders and targeted inputs for nuancing REDD-Plus plans and interventions.

And it is in this context that social accountability shines as a complementary *process* to the objective of holding government and project proponents accountable by facilitating genuine engagement and the respect of rights towards the realization of social justice and equity.

Having established therefore the dual dimensions social accountability introduces to REDD-Plus and REDD-Plus safeguards—as an *objective* and a *process*—we move on now to our proposal towards a framework for practically integrating social accountability into REDD-Plus.

Towards a Framework for Mainstreaming Social Accountability in REDD-Plus

While ideally REDD-Plus safeguards are to be treated as both a prerequisite and an ongoing requirement whilst engaging in REDD-Plus activities in line with the phased approach and the development of comprehensive National REDD-Plus Strategies, there is always the risk of these safeguards becoming mere afterthoughts in project development and program implementation.

And this is, unfortunately, viewed as a serious challenge especially with difficulties in "projecting" the *non-carbon* aspects of REDD-Plus--the governance, social and environmental/ecosystem benefits—as opposed to that of the more "straightforward" *carbon* aspect of REDD-Plus—the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in tons of CO_2 annually (t/CO2), hence contributing to climate change mitigation.

And while MRV regimes for the removal of carbon via REDD-Plus have initially occupied the attention of scientists, the academe, and policymakers for what traditionally was thought to be the end-all-be-all of a REDD-Plus mechanism under the UNFCCC, the mandate of the Cancun Agreements to establish a system to provide information on the non-carbon aspects of REDD-

Plus such as the safeguards, but ultimately its social and developmental co-benefits, attest to how these non-carbon components are emerging as equally critical towards the success of any forest mitigation program.

And as explained in the succeeding sections, the experience and vulnerability towards poor governance and social conflict in the forestry sector are seen as serious obstacles to lasting emission reductions, and therefore helped facilitate such a consensus.

Diagram 1 below therefore frames and emphasizes REDD-Plus activities and safeguards as encompassing both carbon and non-carbon dimensions so as to fairly represent equal importance to their role, and equal value to both carbon and non-carbon related outcomes, in designing and implementing REDD-Plus.

REDD-Plus Activities

Reduced emissions from deforestation
Reduced emissions from forest degradation
Conservation and enhancement of existing forest carbon stocks
Sustainable management of forests

REDD-Plus Safeguards

a) Consistency with national forest programmes
b) Transparent governance structures
c) Respect for rights
d) Multi-stakeholder participation
e) Non-conversion, co-benefits and sustainable development
f) Address reversals
g) Address emissions displacement
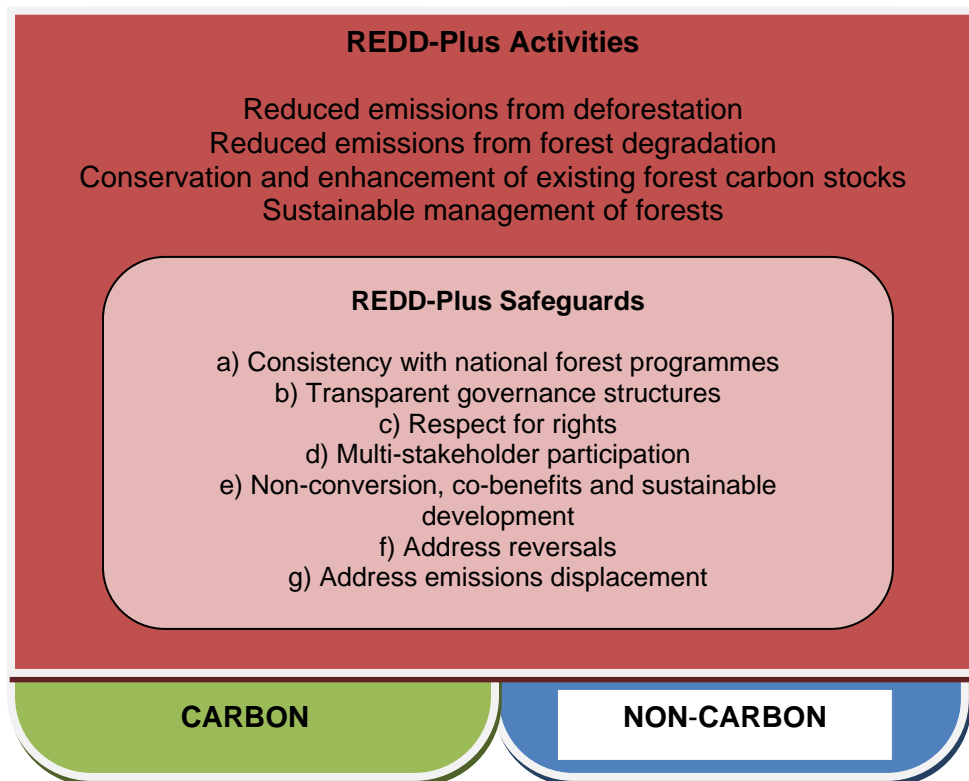
CARBON   **NON-CARBON**

Diagram 1: *REDD-Plus activities and safeguards as equally encompassing carbon and non-carbon dimensions*

Keeping this in mind, we move on to propose a framework for mainstreaming social accountability in REDD-Plus on the basis of creating an enabling environment towards realizing the dual function of social accountability as an objective and process for REDD-Plus. See Diagram 2.

Creating an Enabling Environment for REDD-Plus Activities through the Four Pillars of Social Accountability

We propose that a practical way to address the dilemma of REDD-Plus activities preceding the establishment and observance of safeguards from design to implementation would be to facilitate an enabling environment whereby such an environment engineers a circumstantial and hence political incentive towards naturally adhering to the safeguards.

We cite here the four pillars of social accountability as detailed earlier and relate them towards creating an enabling environment for REDD-Plus:

- Capable citizen groups—rallying relevant stakeholders, specifically a number of capable and credible civil society organizations, to engage themselves, government and fellow stakeholders in understanding and designing REDD-Plus activities and strategies
- Responsive government / government champions—identifying and mobilizing the key government agency relevant or legitimate enough to facilitate discussions on REDD-Plus, preferably latching such an exercise to a champion from within the ranks
- Context and cultural appropriateness—ensuring that the concerns and political sensitivities of stakeholders, including that of government's, are considered
- Access to Information—identifying and making available key data towards the design of REDD-Plus activities
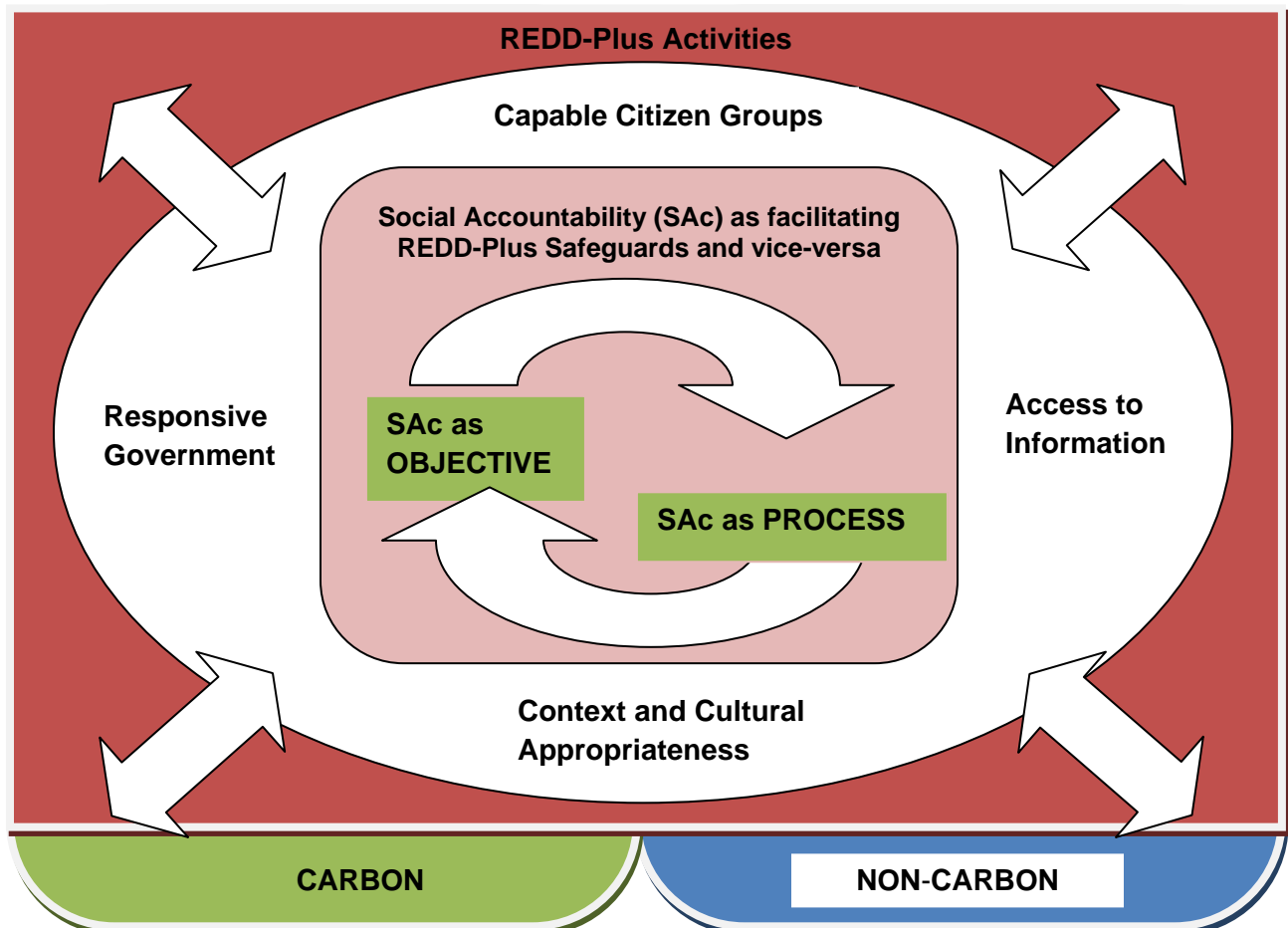
Diagram 2: *An enabling environment for REDD-Plus activities and safeguards to facilitate social accountability and vice-versa*

Explicitly accommodating the identification and mobilization of the above four pillars in the design of REDD-Plus so as to create an enabling environment towards a socially accountable REDD-Plus project/program/strategy is what we argue as the first step towards mainstreaming social accountability into REDD-Plus.

Engineering, whether institutionally or politically at first, an enabling environment where the four pillars set a template for contextually appropriate interaction and the exchange of ideas, information and interests between government and stakeholders allows for an unpacking of REDD-Plus concepts and activities in a manner that can be called as socially accountable and ultimately legitimate—and we cite an example of this later.

At this stage we are referring to the impetus of *wanting* to engage in REDD-Plus activities among stakeholders as facilitating the incentive to establish an enabling environment.

It then follows that having established such an environment renders it circumstantially easier and hence practical to observe the REDD-Plus safeguards which we have argued are in themselves veered towards achieving social accountability.

And before we move on to discuss this further, it is important to note that an enabling environment does not only render the observance of safeguards favourable (represented as the arrows moving inwards in the diagram), but it also renders the design and implementation of REDD-Plus activities more socially accountable as well and in line with the safeguards (represented by the arrows moving outwards in the diagram)—and we return to this dynamic later.

Social Accountability as facilitating REDD-Plus Safeguards and Vice Versa

If we are then to follow through with the mainstreaming process, an enabling environment established for REDD-Plus design and implementation *already* facilitates to a degree the observance of REDD-Plus safeguards especially the governance and social-related ones—a) to e).

It would then be a question of enhancing the objective and the process with which to achieve the safeguards that would only then be complementing the broader enabling environment.

And this is where social accountability as both an objective and a process comes in whereby greater social accountability can be treated as the end-result of respecting safeguards (objective) but simultaneously can also be treated as facilitating the respect of safeguards in the first place (process).

And as we've done so in the preceding section, we draw a clear line between social accountability as an *objective*—that of holding government agencies and processes accountable

to their duties and responsibilities in transparently developing and administering REDD-Plus—and social accountability as a complementary *process*—that of facilitating genuine engagement and the respect of rights towards the realization of social justice and equity in REDD-Plus. Such a complementary dynamic therefore articulates safeguards similarly as both objectives and processes within REDD-Plus design and implementation—a "self-reinforcing loop" to ensure context is never lost with REDD-Plus safeguards.

And again, the inward arrows point to how an enabling environment facilitates and incentivizes the respect of REDD-Plus safeguards, while the outward arrows point to how having such an articulation of REDD-Plus safeguards and social accountability further strengthens, reinforces, and further enhances an enabling environment and hence also the design and implementation of REDD-Plus activities, so on and so forth.

Operational Considerations and Opportunities for Further Enhancements

Efforts to enhance and operationalize the mainstreaming of social accountability into REDD-Plus will necessarily have to build on existing and ongoing work being done in the arena of forest monitoring since it represents if not the most comprehensive attempt to track and establish good governance in the context of REDD-Plus.

Saunders and Reeve (2010b), in their assessment of initiatives on forest monitoring systems already and currently being undertaken in several countries, proposed that practical lessons can be extracted from such initiatives to develop effective and credible national governance and social monitoring regimes applicable for REDD-Plus. And in the context of mainstreaming REDD-Plus safeguards as with social accountability, they argue that such lessons can be grouped under "three pillars on which any credible national system should be built."

- Transparency
- Appropriate accountability
- Cost-effectiveness

They then go on to identify operational considerations towards realizing transparency, accountability, and cost-effectiveness in REDD-Plus monitoring systems.

Pillar	Operational considerations
Transparency	• Clarify and publish relevant laws and policies, including tenure and land/forest use rights • Clarify and publish institutional roles and responsibilities • Include field-based element of monitoring to reconcile policy and practice • Report publicly and in a timely manner • Establish benchmarks against which to demonstrate progress/change • Establish robust financial accounting for REDD+ financial flows, with full reconciliation and stakeholder oversight
Appropriate accountability	• Establish institutions to facilitate multi-stakeholder participation • Collect data/opinions from broad-based sources as well as expert opinion • Develop capacity both within and outside REDD+ institutions to facilitate accountability, with particular attention given to enabling the vulnerable groups highlighted above • Develop appropriate peer review mechanisms Establish conflict-resolution/complaints mechanisms at national and international levels • Establish independent and consistent financing for monitors
Cost-effectiveness	• Avoid waste through fraud or corruption with effective auditing • Enforcement monitoring should be 'intelligence-led' • Systematic information gathering should build on existing data sets wherever possible • Data gathering should be based on complementary national and international concepts and needs

Table 5: *Operational considerations for national forest monitoring systems* (Saunders and Reeve 2010b)

It goes without saying that the above list, for our purposes, can be treated as elements with which to operationalize, or as mentioned earlier "engineer", an enabling environment for social accountability in REDD-Plus activities and safeguards—with an obvious bias for access to information as the entry point. It can alternately also be treated as the specific *processes* with which to facilitate social accountability in REDD-Plus safeguards radiating out towards monitoring REDD-Plus activities—with a particular entry point on engaging government with the participation and rights of relevant stakeholders through improved and participatory data gathering, monitoring and conflict resolution.

And if we are to further consider the potential role of national monitoring systems for REDD-Plus in the mainstreaming of social accountability and the development of relevant indicators,

there is a wealth of initiatives focusing on improving forest governance that we can take our cue from.

Capistrano (2010), writing for the FAO, published a seminal study on developing forest governance indicators coming out of early lessons from various forest governance initiatives.

While outside the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning here the key initiatives Capistrano's study identified as informing the development of comprehensive frameworks for assessing and monitoring forest governance:

- The World Bank's *Analytical Framework for Forest Governance Reforms* (WB FFGR)
- The World Resources Institute and IMAZON's *Governance of Forests Initiative* (GFI)
- The *Sustainable Forest Management Criteria and Indicators* (SFM C&I) , further developed by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the Forest Certification Standard (FSC)
- The EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)'s *Voluntary Partnership Agreements* (VPAs)
- Global Witness' *Transparency Report Cards*
- Chatham House's *Monitoring of Illegal Logging and Related Trade*
- The Climate, Community, Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) and CARE's *Social and Environmental Safeguards* as part of CCBA Standards for certification
- Public Financial Management (PFM) *Performance Measurement Framework*
- The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)
- The upcoming UN-REDD/Chatham House Guidance on Monitoring Forest Governance

The above initiatives therefore provide a useful landscape with which to technically base the mainstreaming and operationalization of social accountability in REDD-Plus, which we argue will necessitate a deeper discussion on the development of relevant and very targeted indicators, tools and guidance.

The Example of the Philippine National REDD-Plus Strategy

It is appropriate at this stage to attempt to apply and relate the framework we have proposed here to the experience behind the development of the Philippine National REDD-Plus Strategy (NRPS). Both authors are familiar with the NRPS, having participated actively in the process that led to its finalization.

In early 2009, alongside the active participation and exchange of information from the Philippine Delegation to the UNFCCC, a diverse set of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individually at first, sought to further explore and engage the potential of REDD-Plus for the Philippines—not only as a mitigation initiative, but also as an opportunity to address the long-standing socio-political problems plaguing the country's forestry sector. Out of this desire, internal coordination among these NGOs including some awareness building efforts were conducted in earnest, ultimately resulting in the establishment of CODE-REDD (Community Development and/Communities Developing/Conservation and Development Through REDD)—

a coalition of more than 15 NGOs working both inside and outside the forestry sector, with several partner institutions and people's organizations. Initially, support for CODE-REDD's activities were supported by the Swedish Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), further augmented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the budgets of member organizations.

As government had not began planning or coordinating for REDD-Plus in the Philippines, or in some instances had not even taken it to consideration, CODE-REDD as an organized entity then spearheaded initial consultations, mapping and capacity building activities across the country with the informal participation of officials from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), in particular from its Forest Management Bureau (FMB).

After a series of very frequent and well-attended workshops which included a broad array of stakeholders interested in REDD-Plus for reasons ranging from its biodiversity and human rights co-benefits to its revenue generating potentials, momentum on REDD-Plus led to a broader network for CODE-REDD, and hence compelled deeper engagement from government, particularly from the FMB on the issue.

CODE-REDD then with its growing base of partners, identified jointly with the FMB the need to establish a multi-stakeholder strategy on REDD-Plus to more formally discuss technical issues and activities in this space, and facilitate the appropriate development of REDD-Plus in the Philippines. And outside FMB, other government agencies such as the Climate Change Commission had already inscribed a "national REDD-Plus strategy" as one of the goals of the National Framework Strategy on Climate Change (2010), subsequently then supported by an Executive Order signed by then President Arroyo establishing the Climate Change Commission as the national coordinator and the DENR as the implementing arm of such a strategy—further legitimizing the process towards the formulation of a national REDD-Plus Strategy.

This series of events therefore provided a policy and legal platform to engage on REDD-Plus with stakeholders inside and outside CODE-REDD. Suffice to say, that several workshops and national consultations, in partnership with government, later resulted in the completion and approval of the Philippine National REDD-Plus Strategy—which itself is a living and reiterative document—by the DENR in late 2010.

The National REDD-Plus Strategy can be read in full here: http://ntfp.org/coderedd/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/RTD_on_REDD+_24June2010_-_final.pdf

Overall, it has seven components that reflect seven critical areas of work towards REDD readiness and implementation in the Philippines—since then translated to their own working groups for deeper discussion of specific emerging issues and action planning:

Diagram 3: *The Seven Components of the NRPS* (DENR 2010)
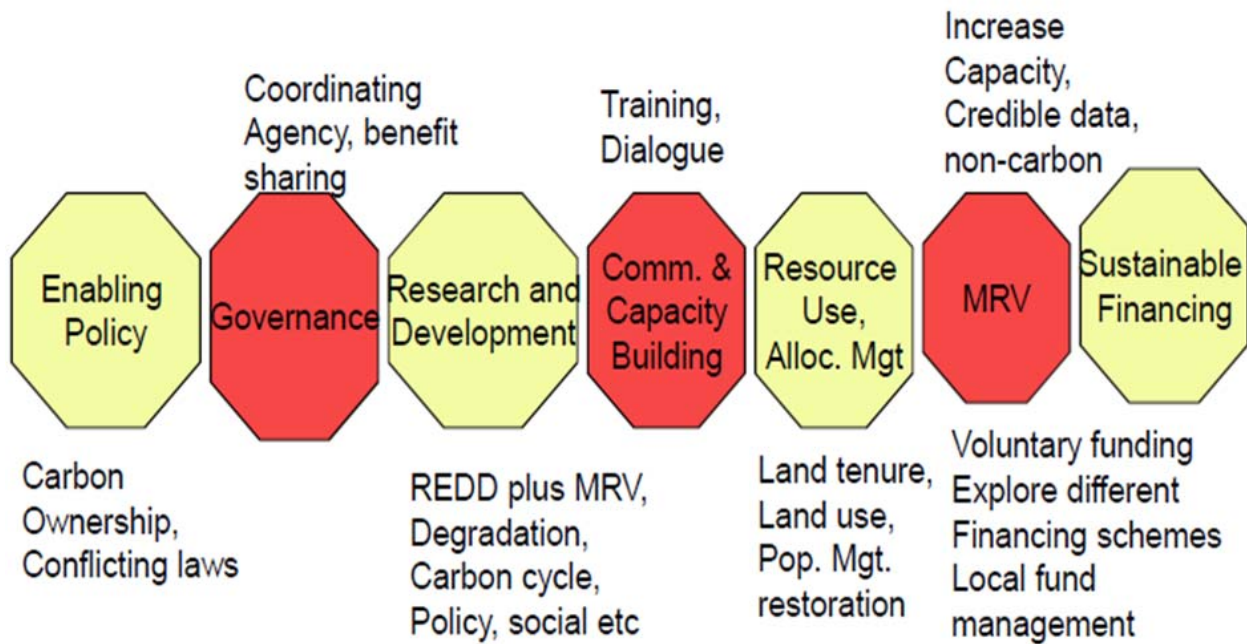
The NRPS also sets out a twenty year timeline from REDD readiness, to scaling up, and to full national performance-based implementation and compensation.
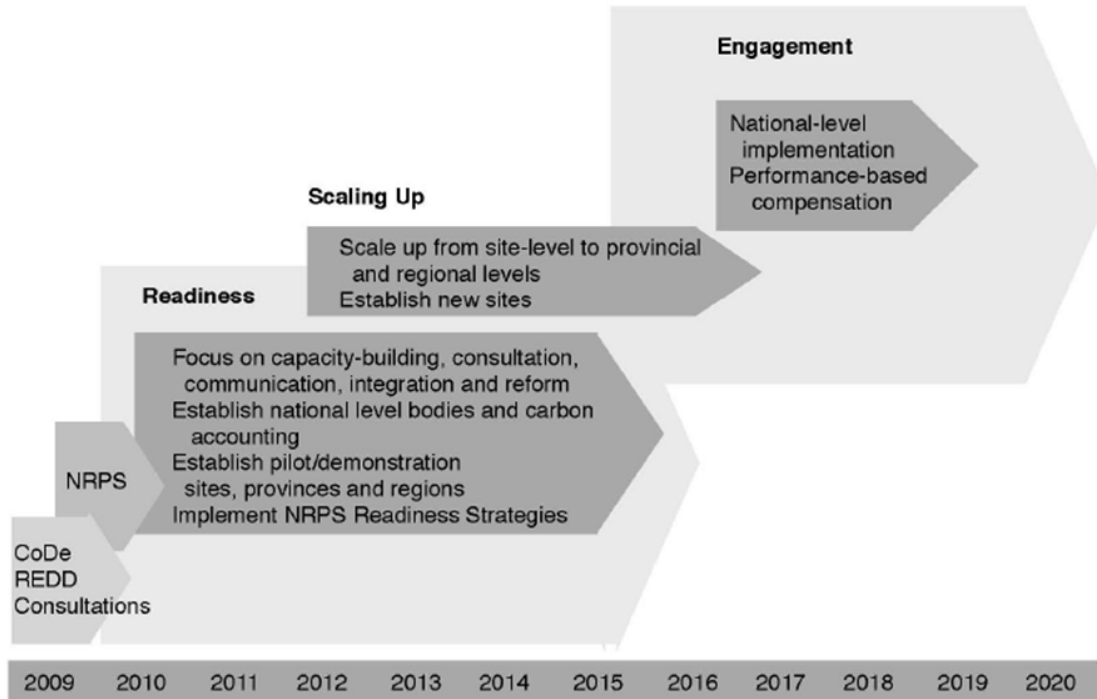

Diagram 4: *Timeline for the NRPS* (CODE-REDD 2010)

It is therefore worth outlining how the above series of events which led to the ambitious enterprise of the NRPS can be framed as the development of an enabling environment towards socially accountable REDD-Plus in line with the framework proposed in this paper.

An enabling environment for the NRPS

Firstly, it goes without saying *capable citizen groups* as organized and capacitated under CODE-REDD, with its desire to engage the Philippines in REDD-Plus officially, proved the catalyst towards mobilizing awareness and capacity building towards establishing a legitimate and skilled base of stakeholders for REDD-Plus. Indeed, a base that is both technically and politically capable to engage on REDD-Plus issues in a serious and effective fashion.

With CODE-REDD mobilized and initiating early discussions with both government and non-government players, potential *government champions* were immediately identified within FMB on the basis of their affinity to key experience and data in the forestry sector, and likewise their willingness to learn and engage with the subject matter on behalf of the national government. In the case of the Philippine experience, *responsive government* here came in the form of a receptive FMB director and the four committed senior forestry staff tasked to see through the joint processes between CODE-REDD and DENR in facilitating broad national consultations for REDD-Plus development in the Philippines and providing time and resources towards assisting the needs of the initiative—even if it meant going beyond what was expected and adding to existing responsibilities from these officials. Government champions and responsiveness from outside the DENR, for instance coming from the Climate Change Commission's move to explicitly reference a national REDD-Plus strategy to be part of the National Framework Strategy on Climate Change and facilitate the Executive Order also helped move things along.

In terms of *access to information*, it has to be noted that this continues to be a dialogue between CODE-REDD, DENR and an increasing number of stakeholders. So far, access to information for enabling REDD-Plus in the Philippines represents key data on forest cover, statistics, management regimes, legal arrangements, policy and on-the-ground experience, and honesty in identifying information and policy gaps. Practically, it also means transparency in project initiatives and policy obstacles that may impact on REDD-Plus development, REDD-Plus related financing, and government requirements, processes, and timelines. To a significant extent the establishment of Working Groups—which shall be returned to shortly—on specific strategic areas of the NRPS proved very useful in contextualizing and hence identifying and generating specific data requirements from the DENR and beyond. Likewise the Working Groups also continue to be the conduit with which the DENR and other government stakeholders are capacitated and updated on REDD-Plus developments and data generated from NGO initiatives.

It therefore becomes very straightforward how *context and cultural appropriateness* plays a huge factor towards the continuity of the NRPS process and collaboration, provided that there is understanding essentially among CODE-REDD, Working Groups, and stakeholders that the lead for developing and implementing REDD-Plus has to come from the DENR-FMB. And this essentially translates to respect towards the internal political dynamics of the DENR towards "getting work done" or "signed off"—for better or for worse. There was a very conscious collaborative effort to ensure that everything being discussed and undertaken under the NRPS

was hinged under a broader DENR-FMB mandate—whether it be ensuring REDD-Plus principles are founded on FMB's Revised Forest Management Plan or the Executive Committee Meetings held every week. And this is simply owed to the realization that there has to be a strong institutional basis for REDD-Plus to succeed in any context, and the NRPS experience has demonstrated for several reasons, politically especially, that DENR-FMB has to be this champion.

On the same enabler of context and cultural appropriateness, the NRPS process has ensured that it takes a very participatory and engaging stance towards providing an avenue to voice and discuss dissent or disagreeing views on REDD-Plus as a whole, elements of it, or on the NRPS. The NRPS process then attempts to accommodate and address such views with the ultimate objective of serving the broader forestry sector.

Having said this, we move on to describe how such an enabling environment then creates a circumstantial and political incentive to engage REDD-Plus safeguards.

Social Accountability as Facilitating REDD-Plus Safeguards and vice-versa in the NRPS

An enabling environment had therefore manifested itself in the process of wanting and developing REDD-Plus for the Philippines. And while the specific trajectory taken by the Philippines may be unique in some sense, it can be argued that REDD-Plus discussions would not have matured as efficiently or crystallized as legitimately into the NRPS had not the four conditions or pillars of social accountability been met.

As capable citizen groups, in the spirit of social accountability, begun engaging government champions in DENR in a culturally appropriate way, particularly towards access to and building information, a constructive platform for further unpacking REDD-Plus safeguards had already been established, in that such a platform actually allowed for a more context-specific articulation of the safeguards as per the Philippine situation and later the NRPS.

And this can be found in the way in which the NRPS outlines nine key approaches towards REDD+ development and implementation to transcend the abovementioned components beyond the seven general safeguards stated in the UNFCCC text:

(1) Nested and Scaling-up approach—whereby REDD-Plus activities shall be done through a phased approach of pilot, to subnational, and then national scales, so as to allow for integration of initiatives to existing efforts and accommodate capacity building, in line with safeguard (a)

(2) Priority Development Areas—whereby priority will be given for REDD-Plus activities in areas where emissions reduction can be done at reasonable scale and cost, in tenured areas such as ancestral domains and community-based forest management areas where safeguards are strongest and stand to deliver the most co-benefits, and protected areas or key biodiversity areas where REDD-Plus can deliver multiple ecosystem benefits, in line with safeguards (a), (b), (c), and (e)

(3) Decentralized Forest Governance—involving national, to regional, to local entities in the REDD-Plus design and implementation, in line with safeguards (a), (b) and (d)

(4) Building on Existing Structures—whereby REDD-Plus shall where possible be streamlined into existing processes rather than create new institutions to lessen "red tape", in line with safeguards (a) and (b)

(5) Community Focus—whereby REDD-Plus should ultimately maximize social co-benefits and promote community empowerment, rights, tenure, and effective resource management, in line with safeguards (c), (d) and (e)

(6) Participatory Planning and Multi-stakeholder approaches—in line with safeguard (d)

(7) Inter-sectoral approach—whereby strong inter-sectoral coordination and communication are recognized towards addressing the drivers of deforestation and degradation inside and outside the forestry sector as well as ensuring governance mechanisms are coherent, in line with safeguards (a) to (g)

(8) Rigorous Carbon Accounting—whereby the credibility of the NRPS is hinged on the robust MRV of carbon, hence priority towards research, capacity building, and institution building towards a national MRV system, in line with safeguards (e), (f), and (g)

(9) Watershed, Ecosystem, and Landscape Approaches—whereby the NRPS shall utilize the approach of national government towards a comprehensive management strategy that treats forests as part of a broader watershed, ecosystem, and landscape, along with its social and political dimensions, in line with safeguards (a) to (g)

Hence what an enabling environment, inspired by the four pillars of social accountability, afforded the NRPS is a context-specific or context-appropriate unpacking of the REDD-Plus safeguards, where it can be strongly argued that social accountability as an objective and process triggered further discussions of equity and social justice as well as facilitated participation, rights, and transparency as per the Philippine experience and situation. All of which were already propped to the surface by the establishment of an enabling environment *before* the NRPS, creating a circumstantial incentive to deepen and translate this environment into useful REDD-Plus principles and a national strategy beyond just citing REDD-Plus safeguards.

In other words, the establishment of the above nine key approaches under the NRPS, themselves a product of social accountability, while facilitated by the overall guidance of the REDD-Plus safeguards as outlined in the UNFCCC text, conversely also facilitates a much more meaningful articulation of REDD-Plus safeguards suited to the circumstances of the Philippines.

Mainstreaming Social Accountability in the NRPS

If we were then to translate the above interpretation of the development and overall content of the NRPS towards a useful framework for mainstreaming social accountability to the NRPS, such a framework would necessarily have to represent an ongoing dialogue between REDD-Plus

activities (seven components), a consistently enabling environment, and REDD-Plus safeguards (seven key approaches) as founded on social accountability as an objective and process. See diagram 5.
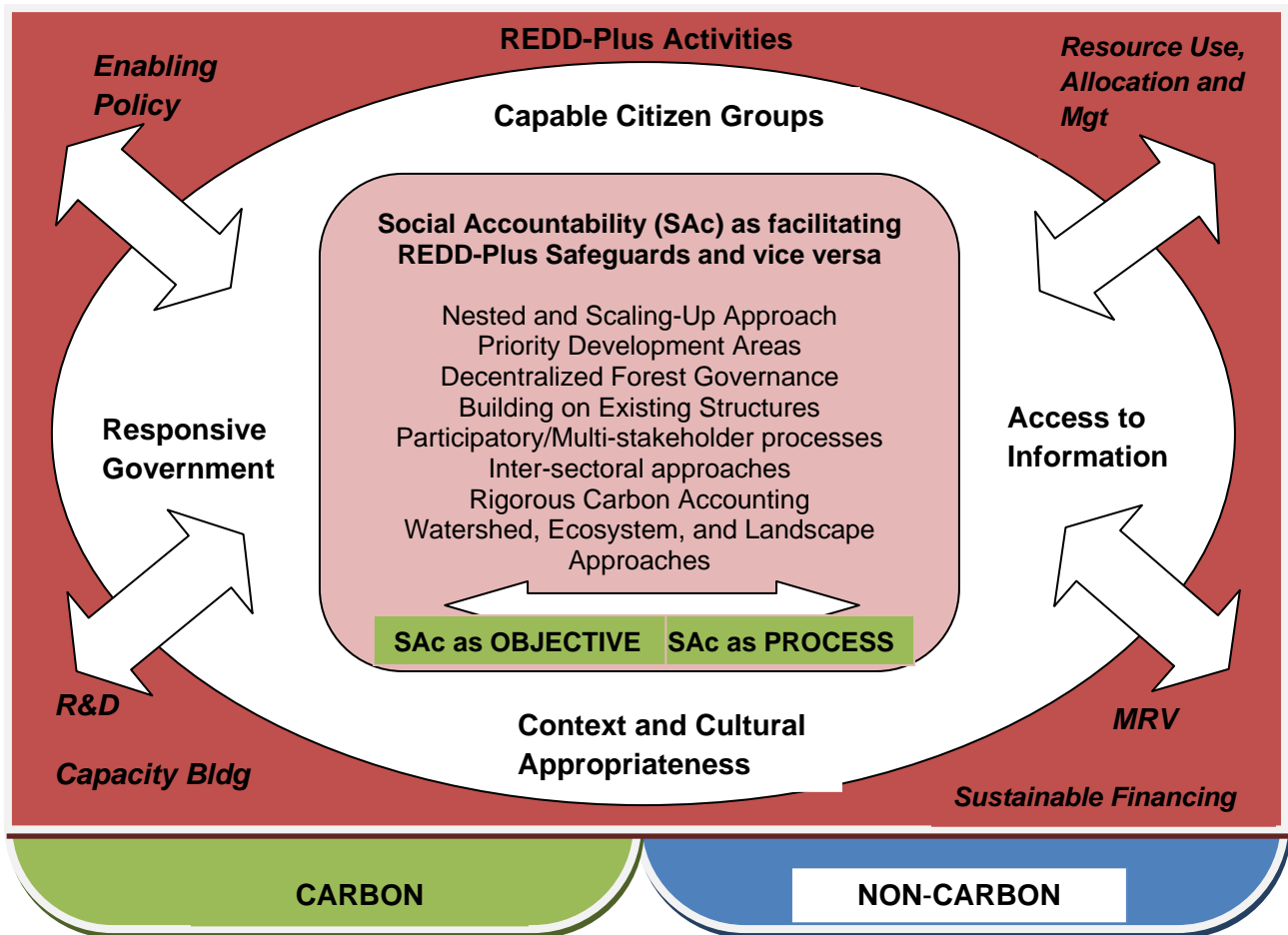

Diagram 5: *Framework for mainstreaming social accountability in the NRPS*

Mainstreaming social accountability in the NRPS would require the seven components of the Strategy—representing different dimensions of REDD-Plus activities both carbon and non-carbon—be subject to a broader enabling environment so as to genuinely and effectively facilitate the implementation of REDD-Plus safeguards—which in the case of the NRPS are the nine key approaches. With an enabling environment, a circumstantial incentive is provided for engaging the seven components with the nine key approaches or context-specific safeguards.

Another route towards mainstreaming social accountability would be through the nine key approaches, seen by social accountability as both objectives and process, with which an enabling environment could be established or further deepened to effectively and legitimately undertake the seven components or REDD-Plus activities.

So as to always ensure the ultimate objective and process of social accountability—equity, social justice and participation—are kept as the overarching framework for undertaking REDD-Plus activities, it is essential both above routes, as represented by the arrows radiating inward and outward, are simultaneously undertaken to further reinforce an enabling environment towards legitimate REDD-Plus in the Philippines.

Conclusion

The experience of the Philippines in developing its national REDD-Plus strategy illustrates what might be possible in terms of mainstreaming social accountability in REDD-Plus implementation. We believe that such mainstreaming is the best and most effective way to adhere to the Cancun requirement that countries implementing REDD-Plus must establish a system for providing information on how the safeguard are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of REDD-Plus activities. In this regard, the framework we suggest here, based on the four pillars of social accountability that ANSA-EAP elaborates, can be useful for ongoing negotiations towards establishing a safeguards information system.

It should be noted that social accountability is also important in the proper monitoring of REDD-Plus finance at the global, national and local levels. Given the potential scale and flows of REDD-Plus finance, the potential for leakage, inefficiency and corruption is very real. Citizen monitoring of such financial flows is therefore critical to ensure integrity and accountability—and there are many social accountability approaches, as those described in this paper, that can be useful for this purpose. In our view, the same framework towards mainstreaming social accountability that we used for the REDD-Plus safeguards can also be adopted and applied to REDD-Plus finance.

Ultimately, the REDD-Plus mechanism has a real potential to contribute to the mitigation of climate change but only if its safeguards are respected and implemented. Mainstreaming social accountability is an important step towards that direction.

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