

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



High-Integrity Carbon Markets Toolkit



Introduction

Toolkit objectives and how to use

About UNDP

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet. Learn more at undp.org or follow at [@UNDP](https://twitter.com/UNDP).

About Climate Promise

UNDP's Climate Promise is the UN system's largest portfolio of support on climate action, working with more than 140 countries and territories and directly benefiting 37 million people. This portfolio implements over US\$2.45 billion in grant financing and draws on UNDP's expertise in adaptation, mitigation, carbon markets, climate and forests, climate risk and security, and climate strategies and policy. Visit our website at climatepromise.undp.org and follow us at [@UNDPplanet](https://twitter.com/UNDPplanet).

About this publication

This publication was developed with support from the UN-REDD Programme. UN-REDD is the UN knowledge and advisory platform on forest solutions to the climate crisis. It supports nationally-led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, to mobilize finance for and implement REDD+ activities agreed under the UNFCCC. UN-REDD builds on the convening capacity and technical expertise of FAO, UNDP and UNEP, serving 65 partner countries. UN-REDD is made possible through support from the European Commission and the governments of Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Japan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland and United Kingdom.



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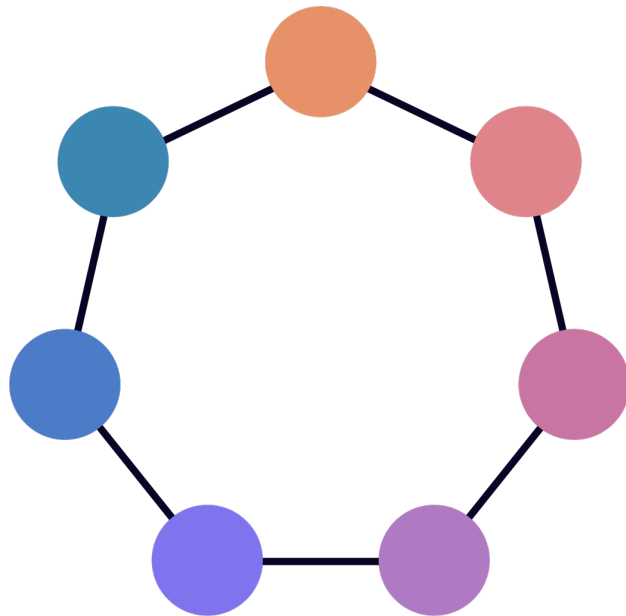
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Editor: Julia Stewart

Designer: Nina Barrois

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Toolkit rationale



UNDP is committed to advancing high-integrity carbon markets because they can be a powerful means to accelerate climate action and sustainable development—when grounded in trust, transparency, and respect for rights, people and nature. High-integrity carbon markets channel finance toward measurable and verified emission reductions while upholding strong environmental and social safeguards that protect ecosystems, promote equity and strengthen community resilience.

UNDP's High-Integrity Carbon Markets Toolkit is one way this commitment is being put into practice—helping countries and partners build the systems, safeguards and capacities needed to ensure that carbon markets deliver credible, inclusive and sustainable outcomes.



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Toolkit objectives

1

Drive convergence on high integrity:

Build shared definitions, practices and capacities, starting with social integrity.

2

Boost market confidence: Help unlock investment and support price premiums for high-quality credits.

3

Provide practical guidance:

Demonstrate how to integrate, measure, monitor, verify and validate social and environmental safeguards and SDG impacts in projects and programmes.

Target audience

- **Supply-side actors:** The Toolkit helps governments, project developers, companies, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and other rights holders to design, implement and scale carbon market activities that deliver real, additional and equitable climate outcomes.
- **Demand-side actors:** The Toolkit guides investors, corporates, governments and individuals in procuring high-integrity credits and ensuring their investment drives meaningful, long-term benefits for both climate and communities.
- **Institutions that set and uphold market integrity:** The Toolkit provides practical guidance to help institutions strengthen safeguards, assess project quality, and promote transparency and trust in the marketplace. These institutions include standard-setting bodies, carbon credit rating agencies, verification and validation bodies (VVBs), technical assistance providers and integrity initiatives.





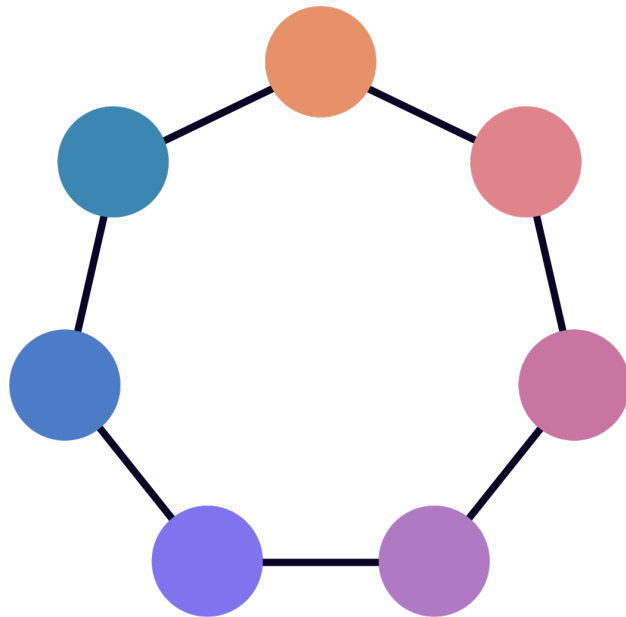
Acknowledgments

UNDP works hand-in-hand with a diverse network of partners at every level, united by a shared commitment to advancing high integrity and sustainable impact. We extend our deep appreciation to all collaborators and contributors whose expertise, insights and dedication have been instrumental in shaping this work.

Key partners

- > Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM)
- > Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART)
- > Bezero Carbon
- > Calyx Global
- > Climate Focus
- > Climate, Law and Policy (CLP)
- > Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA)
- > Consensus Building Institute (CBI)
- > Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- > Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)
- > Earth Innovation Institute (EII)
- > Emergent
- > Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)
- > Forest Trends
- > Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)
- > Gold Standard
- > Government of Brazil
- > Government of Costa Rica
- > Government of Ghana
- > Government of Ecuador
- > Government of Indonesia
- > Government of Norway
- > Government of Sweden
- > Government of Switzerland
- > High Tide Foundation
- > Instituto Centro de Vida (ICV)
- > Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM)
- > Kawari Fund
- > Namati
- > Paris Agreement Article 6 Implementation Partnership (A6IP)
- > Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN)
- > Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS)
- > RECOFTC (The Center for People and Forests)
- > Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)
- > Rotta Moro
- > The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- > The Tenure Facility
- > UK Government
- > UN-REDD Programme
- > United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- > Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMI)
- > Verra
- > World Bank
- > Wocan

Toolkit modules



The Toolkit has **seven** (7) **modules**, each module may have several parts, each part may have several chapters.

All materials in each module are meant to be explored in sequence, such as Part 1, then Part 2, then Part 3 and so on.

- 1 Carbon markets 101
- 2 Consultation and consent
- 3 Gender equality and women's empowerment
- 4 Grievance redress mechanisms
- 5 Equitable benefit sharing
- 6 Social and environmental safeguards
- 7 Sustainable development impacts



1

Carbon markets 101

How compliance and voluntary carbon markets work, who the key players are, and how diverse project types—from forestry to clean energy—generate credible emission reductions. Includes in-depth training for countries on operationalizing Article 6.2.

2

Consultation and consent

Building trust and legitimacy through meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples, local communities and other stakeholders, applying the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

3

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Strategies to enhance women's participation and leadership across all stages of carbon market project and programme design and implementation.



4

Grievance redress mechanisms

How to design transparent, trusted and accessible systems that prevent and resolve disputes, strengthen accountability, and promote continuous dialogue.

5

Equitable benefit sharing

How to design and implement fair and inclusive benefit sharing mechanisms to ensure carbon finance supports lasting social and economic gains for communities.

6

Social and environmental safeguards

Tools to identify, assess, manage, monitor and report social and environmental risks and align with international human rights and best practice standards.

7

Sustainable development impacts

How carbon projects and programmes can advance the Sustainable Development Goals by enhancing biodiversity, resilience and community well-being.



Intended outcomes for participants

- **Informed engagement** – Gain the knowledge and capacity to participate effectively in carbon markets.
- **Opportunities & risks** – Understand key opportunities and challenges shaping market participation.
- **Clear next steps** – Leave with a practical roadmap for continued engagement and action.
- **New connections** – When used in a group setting, build valuable relationships and partnerships across the carbon market ecosystem.
- **Resource access** – Learn how to tap into tools and networks that support informed decision-making.
- **Strategic dialogue** – Be equipped to drive forward-looking discussions on your role and impact in carbon markets.

Realizing social integrity

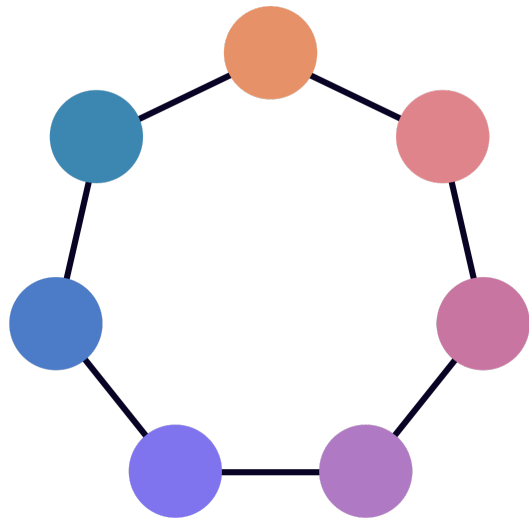
The Toolkit also supports actors to achieve longer-term social integrity objectives.

- **Project developers:** Apply rigorous procedures to identify, assess, manage, monitor and report potential social and environmental impacts, including those affecting Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- **Host countries:** Establish legal and policy frameworks for Article 6 and voluntary carbon markets to ensure all carbon market activities align with strong safeguards and international obligations.
- **Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and other rights holders:** Actively engage in the design, implementation, monitoring and governance of carbon market activities to ensure respect for their rights, equitable benefit sharing, and participation in decision-making.
- **Carbon credit rating agencies:** Integrate safeguards and SDG impact into rating systems, offering a more complete evaluation of credit quality and project performance.
- **Validation and verification bodies:** Strengthen methodologies and staff capacity to conduct not only technical assessments but also social audits, verifying compliance with safeguards and human rights obligations.
- **Buyers:** Drive change by demanding high-integrity credits and paying a fair price for them.

How should the Toolkit be used?

The Toolkit is flexible, user-friendly and multilingual. It will first be made available in English, and then starting in 2026, in French, Portuguese and Spanish. It includes presentations, webinars, FAQs, guidance notes, comparative assessments, blogs, videos, photo stories and case studies, to support diverse learning styles.

Users can learn at their own pace, explore specific topics, or use the materials for group learning in workshop and training settings. While global in scope, materials will be tailored to national, regional and community contexts through close collaboration with local partners, ensuring practical, real-world impact.



For more information

Explore: climatepromise.undp.org/carbonmarketstoolkit

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Contact: carbon.markets@undp.org



1 United Nations Plaza,
New York, NY 10017, USA

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