

TAP Review of the FCPF R-Package Submitted by Fiji

Independent TAP Expert Review on the Self-Assessment Process and R-Package – 02/27/2019¹

Contents

Purpose of the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) expert review	1
Methods Applied for the TAP Expert Review	1
TAP Review Part A: Review of the Self-Assessment Process and the Documentation	2
Review of the results of the multi-stakeholder assessment	2
Facilitation by an independent facilitator	3
Participation, communication and information	3
TAP Review Part B: Summary of the REDD+ Processes - Strengths and Weaknesses of the R-Package	3
Self-assessment of the readiness process	4
Understanding of the REDD+ Readiness process	4
Respect of the FCPF R-Package Guidelines	4
Component 1: Readiness Organization and Consultation.....	4
Component 2: REDD+ Strategy Preparation	7
Component 3: Reference Emission Levels/Reference Level (Criteria 26-28)	11
Component 4: Monitoring Systems for forests, and safeguards	11
TAP Review Part C: Summary Assessment and Recommendations to the PC	13

Purpose of the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) expert review

The TAP review of the R-Package document “Participatory Self-Assessment of the REDD+ Readiness Package in Fiji”², dated January 2019, assessed (i) the process of this self-assessment by the national REDD+ Commission), (ii) results from the multi-stakeholder assessment of the Readiness process in Fiji; and (iii) remaining challenges. The review focused on determining whether a due process and approach was followed while performing the self-assessment, and provides feedback to the REDD+ country.

Methods Applied for the TAP Expert Review

The methodology applied followed three steps:

- Step A: Review the self-assessment process of REDD+ Readiness based on the report² and documents referenced in the report, using the FCPF Assessment Framework and its 4-color stoplight system: **Green** = significant progress; **Yellow** = progressing well, further development required; **Orange** = further development required; **Red** = not yet demonstrating progress.
- Step B: Review the results from the multi-stakeholder R-Package self-assessment process.
- Step C: Assess what additional activities need to be completed or issues addressed to finish Readiness.

Note: “iTaukei” refers to traditional culture of ancestral iTaukei people and communities, roughly 45% of Fijians. iTaukei decision-making on land use occurs via a traditional consensus process, supported by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. Roughly 90% of land is owned and managed by individuals or clans.

¹ This TAP Expert Review consisted of a desk study of Fiji’s R-Package report, plus other documents on Fiji’s REDD+ Readiness process. The review was carried out by Kenneth Andrasko, independent TAP expert, February 11 to February 27, 2019.

² Participatory Self-Assessment of the REDD+ Readiness Package in Fiji, Suva, January 2019. Ministry of Forestry of Fiji, 99 pp.

TAP Review Part A: Review of the Self-Assessment Process and the Documentation

This part of the TAP report provides a feedback on the multi-stakeholder self-assessment report and outcomes, including the summary of the multi-stakeholder process and discussions

Review of the results of the multi-stakeholder assessment

The Fiji R-Package is an assembly of viewpoints and assessments from key stakeholders engaged in development of the national REDD+ program. It characterizes Readiness progress since 2009; and defines progress on the development of analyses, tools and the participation of major stakeholders; and assesses strengths and weaknesses and measures proposed to address them to finalize the Readiness preparation process.

Fiji's national self-assessment process took place December 2018 to mid-February 2019, and included a national R-Package validation workshop organized by the National REDD+ Committee on January 28, 2019 in Suva, the capital.

The self-assessment found six topics that require significant additional work (p. 7):

- 1) Strengthening institutional capacities and coordination mechanisms among relevant sectors, ministries, land owners, private sector, and civil society groups (CSOs);
- 2) Strengthening awareness activities to improve participation and engagement of REDD+ relevant stakeholders, including land owners and CSOs;
- 3) Sharing analytical study results at the divisional level (eg, studies on drivers of deforestation and corresponding strategic options, etc.);
- 4) The Forest Reference Level (FRL) design uses historical land use change activity data with high uncertainties, thus adoption of a stepwise approach will improve estimation of the FRL;
- 5) A report on National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) including MRV recommends a revised organizational structure to operationalize a REDD+ monitoring system;
- 6) Forest monitoring systems need may need to expand carbon pools included and develop the monitoring system for non-carbon benefits and safeguards.

Table 1 of the report: Summary of R-Package overall valuation based on the self-assessment

Components	Sub Components	Progress Status
1. Organization and Consultation	1a. National Readiness Management Arrangement	Green
	1b. Stakeholder Consultation and Participation	Green
2. Prepare the REDD Strategy	2a. Assessment of Land Use, Forest Policy and Governance	Yellow
	2b. REDD Strategy Options	Green
	2c. REDD Implementation Framework	Yellow
	2d. Social and Environmental Impacts	Green
3. Reference emission level/reference level		Green
4. Forest monitoring systems and safeguard measures	4a. National forest monitoring system	Green
	4b. System of information on the multiple advantages, governance and safeguards	Yellow

The report summarizes results achieved in all R-Package components, and outlines the multi-stakeholder self-assessment process, which utilized participatory tools and was facilitated. Awareness of REDD+ at the national level is higher than other two divisions as the national level stakeholders demonstrated strong

familiarity to the REDD+ concept and mechanism. This results from continuous interaction of REDD+ Unit and Ministry of Forestry's staff with national level stakeholders or exposure to the three REDD+ pilot projects. All 34 criteria have been rated in the self-assessment and report, with their strengths and weaknesses highlighted, and further activities to be carried out identified. Final color ratings reflect the perception of the majority of stakeholders following review of the input documents and REDD+ readiness implementation experience.

Fiji's self-assessment process rated 20 out of 34 criteria as **green** and 12 as **yellow** (collectively 94%), which demonstrates substantive progress, and implies solid ownership over the Readiness process by key stakeholders; and only 2 as **orange**.

→ *TAP assessment: The R-Package report provides an excellent overview of REDD Readiness progress in Fiji. The collective views and assessments of key stakeholders who took part in the self-assessment workshop are represented and recorded, including issues they raised and Readiness aspects needing further action. The Self-assessment process appears to follow the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines, and was participatory. All required elements are contained in the R-Package Report, which includes links and references to the key background documents.*

*However, the TAP scores only 13 criteria as **green** (versus Fiji's 20), fully 15 criteria as **yellow**, and 6 as **orange**—4 more than Fiji. Improvements that would be welcome include: summarizing the timeline and products of Fiji's REDD+ Readiness activities since 2009; broadly disseminating a summary of the results of the self-assessment process and key recommendations made; and continuing its nascent work transparently sharing the R-Package and ER-PD assessment processes and results by FCPF with stakeholders.*

Facilitation by an independent facilitator

The REDD+ team arranged facilitation for the self-assessment workshop, but it is not clear if independent facilitators were used.

Participation, communication and information

The stakeholder self-assessment process appears to have been conducted in a participatory, relatively inclusive and transparent manner with the major stakeholders active in REDD+. A platform has been created that actively includes relevant government agencies at national and to a lesser extent Divisional level, civil society and some private sector representatives, and traditional authorities.

The R-Package Team prepared survey instruments and questionnaires, collected information on progress achieved, the area of improvement, and weaknesses under each component, subcomponents and assessment criteria. The report is silent on whether the R-Package documentation was adapted to the background of participants (e.g. translated in local language). It also is silent regarding how information on REDD+ activities and findings moves from the top down and from local level up to regional and national level.

→ *In the TAP's view, the self-assessment process included key stakeholders and was a well-managed process overall that included key stakeholders. Some weaknesses noted above, which also should include the need to reach out to additional stakeholders like sawmillers; and to improve communication of results of studies and processes. The TAP recommends continued, ongoing work to build capacity for deep multi-stakeholder investment in the further evolution of the REDD+ program; and renewed commitment to get the REDD Unit's website functioning and to disseminate summary documents about the REDD+ process and outcomes.*

TAP Review Part B: Summary of the REDD+ Processes - Strengths and Weaknesses of the R-Package

This part of the TAP review focuses on the self-assessment results; progress indicators (color scores) for the nine subcomponents, significant achievements and areas requiring further development related to the corresponding 34 assessment criteria, and activities that address identified areas which require further work.

Self-assessment of the readiness process

The R-Package self-assessment was developed using participatory tools. The R-Package team inventoried REDD activities, reviewed key REDD+ analytic documents and their major findings, and organized two divisional-level and one national-level consultation workshops that consisted of facilitated dialogue on the FCPF criteria, and found both areas of consensus and remaining areas where further work is needed.

→ *The TAP finds that the report outlines the self-assessment consultation process, the structure and findings of the validation workshops in early 2019, and the scoring of criteria in the R-Package. The process followed FCPF guidelines.*

Understanding of the REDD+ Readiness process

Fiji has been actively engaged in the UNFCCC REDD+ process since 2009 (summarized in the report's pp. 10-12). Its R-PP was approved by FCPF in December 2013; and its Mid-term Review Report of October 2017 led to additional funding of USD \$2 million, totaling \$5.8m from FCPF. Government of Fiji committed \$687,000 and GIZ \$588,000 for Readiness activities, both early contributions. Fiji submitted its ER-PD to FCPF's Carbon Fund in December 2018, which is currently under review. The "first phase" of Fiji's Readiness work is slated to end in April 2019, whereupon it intends to enter into results-based payments for REDD+ in the Carbon Fund via its ER-PD proposal or otherwise.

→ *The TAP finds that Fiji has progressed through its Readiness process over 9 years since beginning in 2009, all the way to producing the ER-PD now before the Carbon Fund. While Fiji is a very small country and its capacity limited, it has developed what appears to be a solid but fairly thin understanding of the Readiness process. This is demonstrated by its apparently successful self-appraisal process and report, but limited by the few individuals involved who fully understand REDD+-- mostly in the capital. In the Fiji context, this seems adequate, though—since the Min. of Forestry, Min. of Economy (the national focal point for REDD+ and GCF) are adequately involved, though there are concerns from stakeholders in the self-assessment about the degree of cross-ministry coordination.*

Respect of the FCPF R-Package Guidelines

The R-Package was developed by a four-member team, which performed an inventory of REDD activities in Fiji; reviewed relevant documents; collected stakeholder opinions, including senior managers of the Ministry of Forest, key policymakers from other government agencies, the private sector, and CSOs. The team held two division-level and one national-level consultation workshops, with a total of 44 participants (p. 13).

→ *The TAP finds that the R-Package report is complete and it fulfills FCPF R-Package guidelines and requirements.*

Component 1: Readiness Organization and Consultation

Sub-Component 1a: National REDD+ Management Arrangements (Criteria 1-6)

C1 – Accountability and transparency [Green]

The Fiji Government established the REDD+ Unit in the Ministry of Forestry, and the REDD+ Steering Committee, Technical Working Groups, and Working Groups at the divisional level—all of which appear to be functional and meet regularly.

→ *The TAP reviewed the self-assessment's overview of how REDD+ is being organized and implemented in Fiji, and finds the Min. of Forestry supportive of REDD+ implementation and processes, including at the level of the new Permanent Secretary, in a generally transparent manner. The TAP recommends a yellow rating here, however, since workshop feedback indicates that the Ministry and REDD+ Unit need to: a) consider and respond to stakeholder comments that program reports and studies are not always adequately shared; b) commit to getting the Unit's website running again, and c) produce at least a half-dozen short policy papers summarizing key study results in 2019, as proposed.*

C2 – Mandate and operational budget [yellow]

The mandate for REDD+ work is clear. An updated financing budget for the overall Readiness preparation activities is presented on p. 11, although it is not detailed.

Management and disbursement of Fiji government funding for REDD+ Readiness is good, and 73% of its funds have been disbursed. Only 34% of the FCPF grant has been disbursed as of 12 February 2019 (p. 11). However, the report makes clear that Fiji has already signed various contracts with consultants to carry out analytical studies that would raise the committed amount to 44% total. Stakeholders recognized the need to raise capacity of the REDD+ unit in the capital, to decentralize to the Divisional level (the field), and to mainstream REDD+ in ministries' work plans.

→ *TAP assessment: The yellow rating is warranted. Disbursement of REDD+ funding is very slow and significantly hinders realization of Fiji's REDD+ program. A summary of funds allocated for each component, including the \$2m additional funding approved by FCPF (April 2018 to July 2020) -- would be desirable and more transparent. Presently it is difficult to determine what work is underway currently that would produce major additional studies or processes for Readiness and/or the ER-PD process; and what funds are dedicated to those studies. The TAP recommends that the REDD+ Unit and Steering Committee undertake a process to review procurement and utilization of funds and how to accelerate it, for the REDD+ program to succeed.*

C3 – Multi-sectoral coordination mechanism and inter-sectoral collaboration [green]

Workshop participants voiced a number of concerns regarding the declining impact of the Steering Committee; the need for improved coordination and support between the REDD+ Unit and the Ministry of Forestry, especially Senior Staff; and called for capacity building of Steering Committee and Min. of Forestry central and field staff. The Ministry of Forestry has committed to mobilize communication with other line Ministries through Permanent Secretary interventions in early 2019 (report Table 4).

→ The TAP observes that the stakeholders' assessment of green should be yellow instead, in its view. The TAP finds that the major quasi-private companies engaged in plantation management including Fiji Pine Ltd and Fiji Hardwoods Ltd. are proposed to implement major REDD activities (according to the draft ER-PD), but hardly appear in the R-Package report, and need to be more coordinated with the REDD+ Unit and engaged with stakeholders. The TAP urges Fiji to redouble its efforts to improve cross-agency coordination, especially with Min. of Agriculture and Min. of iTaukei Affairs, critical to success of the proposed REDD+ interventions.

C4 – Technical supervisory capacity [yellow]

Stakeholders repeatedly noted a lack of skilled capacity to implement REDD+ activities within the Min. of Forestry, especially at Divisional level where the field activities would occur. Eg, implementing the Database, guiding REDD+ activities at the field office level, and performing MRV data collection and analysis and system design among Min. Forestry staff (pp. 15, 18, 45).

→ *The TAP applauds the assessment as yellow. But the TAP observes that the situation is improving: a series of trainings are planned (eg, Table 2 p. 65, 85-86, 91-92, Annex D p. 104), and Min. of Forestry staff are closely engaged in cooperation with CSIRO in Australia on rerunning analyses of historical activity data for deforestation and degradation (Annex D).*

C5 - Fund management capacity [orange]

In Annex E., on the number of stakeholders who expressed their views on the 34 assessment criteria, the highest number rated fund management capacity as orange within component 1 (tied with Operational mandate and budget). The report states (p.20) that REDD+ decentralization transition will feature Divisional working groups soon submitting work plans to the REDD+ Unit to facilitate disbursement of funds

→ *The TAP's assessment agrees with the self-assessment orange ranking, since the stakeholders perceive the fund management capacity to be minimal, slow and cumbersome. Only 34% of the FCPF grant funds have been disbursed. Procurement for consultancies is slow (p. 20); reasons cited include the loss of the National Coordinator and the Technical Advisor in 2016 (new ones are now onboard). To introduce more efficient fiscal management, the Ministry is considering increasing funding to CSOs—since CI is a proven partner thus far for REDD+ pilot projects and managing Readiness reports; and the successful CSO Platform is chaired by the women's group, Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei (Indigenous Women's Society of Fiji).*

C6 - Feedback and redress mechanism [green]

A study has been completed assessing existing feedback grievance mechanisms that provides recommendations on a design for FGRM. Two standard feedback and grievance redress forms under consideration are traditional procedures of customary iTaukei village headmen and Village Councils; and a second form for Min. of Forestry field officers. Further work is needed to select one approach, and to implement guidance and trainings to implement it. The FGRM is scheduled to be presented to Forestry Board for adoption in 2019; and awareness of the FGRM mechanism will be raised using formal (workshops/radio talk shows) and social media during March – Dec 2019 (Table 4: Summary of future activities to support National REDD+ Management Arrangement, p. 23).

The self-assessment **green** rating finds significant progress, and lists the next steps planned as continuous information dissemination to stakeholders to improve understanding of FGRM procedures; and SC work on defining implementation mechanisms and procedures for applying the FGRM.

→ *The TAP concurs with the **green** rating, and finds that Fiji's customary consultation and consensus traditions in iTaukei society are an unusually fertile foundation on which to build REDD+ FGRM. The TAP recommends that efforts intensify on finalizing the design of the FGRM, building on traditional models, and on implementing and operationalizing an efficient complaints mechanism as soon as possible, now that an ER-PD proposal is in review by the FCPF.*

Sub-Component 1b: Consultation, participation and outreach / awareness (Criteria 7-10)

C7 – Participation and commitment of key stakeholders [green]

C8 – Consultation process [green]

Fiji has implemented its Consultation and Participation Plan (CPP) to integrate REDD+ consultation and participation objectives into existing outreach systems, and is being implemented per national local governance structures, UNDRIP and safeguards guidelines of WB. It uses a self-selection process to identify rights holders and stakeholders, following an early stakeholder analysis. The three demonstration sites where REDD+ activities have been undertaken feature partners experimenting with different approaches to consultation. The common lesson learned is that a “consultation process aligned to existing traditional structures and supported by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs is an integral component for successful engagement” (p. 26).

Since 90% of land in Fiji is under customary ownership, the national Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, National iTaukei Resource Owner's Committee, and iTaukei Affairs Board are involved in the Steering Committee and Working Groups. A CSO Platform has been established, chaired by Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei, or Indigenous Women's Society of Fiji. This selection helps ensure participation of women in the consultation process: the Platform also includes women's groups like the Catholic Women's League, Femlink Pacific, etc.

→ *In the TAP's view, the Consultation and Participation Plan appears adequate and the **green** rating reasonable. Given the stakeholder feedback at the R-Package validation workshop, the challenge now is to expand participation of additional stakeholders, and of Division-level communities who have far less exposure to and training in REDD+ concepts and activities. Given Fiji's traditional gender roles, the TAP recommends that the REDD+ Unit make a concerted effort to engage women, who appear to have a secondary status in Fiji traditional society, more fully in the REDD+ process. The Unit could, for example, consider earmarking some programmatic activities and/or grants implementation for women's group; provide enhanced trainings in gender inclusiveness, etc.*

C9 - Dissemination of information and access to information [yellow]

A Communication and Awareness Working Group has been formed under the Steering Committee, to provide guidance for the preparation and delivery of REDD+ key messages to targeted stakeholders via appropriate traditional and social media channels, in both English and iTaukei languages.

The weakest element of the REDD+ communication strategy has been recognized as information dissemination to the communities. A set of REDD+ Project Implementation Units have been slated to be established in the landscapes -- to create more permanent forums for dialogue between local communities and government technical staff. This should stimulate the flow of feedback and information, using appropriate language and methods.

→ *In the TAP's view, substantial efforts have been made, and the country should continue its progress. However, the operationalization of the REDD+ program outside of the capital is not yet fully in place—so the yellow score is accurate. The TAP recommends that Fiji work to continue its decentralization of knowledge about and funding for the REDD+ program out to the Divisions, strive to incorporate private sector interests and participants, and aggressively procure, fund and finish the range of ongoing or still-proposed studies.*

C10 – Use and disclosure of the results of the consultations [yellow]

The self-assessment is yellow, as the REDD+ website is currently under re-construction and inaccessible (due by March 2019). Also, further development is essential for transparent, comprehensive and timely sharing of information related to all readiness activities, with all stakeholders, across line ministries, and via radio programs targeted to rural communities. FPIC is being followed (p. 29).

→ *The TAP's assessment is that C10 mirrors C9. If the REDD+ Unit website is running again and the results of the R-Package are shared within the next few weeks, this could qualify for a green rating. But it should be rated yellow until that outreach occurs.*

Component 2: REDD+ Strategy Preparation

Sub-Component 2a: Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use change drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance (criteria 11-15)

C11 - Assessment and analysis stock [green]

At least a dozen major technical studies were carried out, including on direct drivers and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation in Fiji; the framework legal, regulatory and economic framework of the REDD+; and land use and land tenure, including the prevalent customary and traditional rights (pp. 32-33). Other assessments underway include: Carbon rights assessment; study on benefit sharing mechanism (due April 2019); the SESA; and ESMF. The overall self-assessment is rated green, though it notes that the REDD+ Unit needs to improve the level of involvement of REDD+ partners and government stakeholders in the assessment of and proposed methods of implementation for REDD+ activities.

→ *The TAP echoes the green rating for generation of a quality Drivers study, available on the Min. of Forestry's website (though not on the REDD+ cell's website, under revision and not operating now). However, stakeholders noted (p. 7) the results of studies have not been well disseminated, especially at the Division level (eg, outside of the capital). The TAP observes that little information on lessons learned from these studies, or how they have impacted the Readiness process or the development of Fiji's ER-PD, has been made available or included in the R-Package report, which would be helpful. Short summaries of the results of the key analyses would have augmented each section of the report by providing evidence of findings and how they informed the selection and design of REDD+ activities.*

C12 - Prioritization of direct and indirect drivers/barriers to forest carbon stock [green]

The R-Package states that it is conducting a cost-benefit analysis of REDD+ strategic options via a consultancy, but it has been delayed until March 2019 due to unavailability of cost and activity data required for the economic model. This is expected to facilitate development of the REDD + strategy—which surprisingly has not yet been developed and approved, although a REDD+ national policy was announced in 2011, and is referenced.

To validate assessment of the Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation, a study relying on spatial and economic models is due March 2019.

→ *The TAP finds that a yellow rating is warranted at present, not green. It notes that the cost-benefit analysis of REDD+ strategic options sounds useful-- but is not yet available. Minimal information or lessons learned about work on*

prioritization of drivers and barriers, or how they could impact the Readiness process or the development of Fiji's ER-PD, have been made available or included in the R-Package report.

C13 - Link between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities [green]

The assessment report states the REDD+ Unit produced a major body of work on Drivers; and next needs further work to be sure that the REDD+ activities are aligned with government development strategies like the 5-20 year National Development Plan. But the Unit needs further demonstration of linkages between drivers and the selected REDD+ activities chosen, and of how drivers and barriers can be reduced via activities, and implementation of proposed guidelines (p. 35).

→ *The TAP finds that significant analytic work has taken place on linkages between the drivers identified and the REDD+ activities selected for the program and the ER-PD. However, the green score is not justified—and should be yellow. This body of work is referred to but not presented very well. The TAP recommends that this work be made public as soon as possible, and that the next outreach workshops or discussions review these findings and identify the next steps.*

C14 Action Plans to take into account the right to natural resource, land tenure and governance [green]

Rights to land and land uses appear to be stable and well-established, as reviewed in the 2013 “REDD-plus and Forest Carbon Rights in Fiji: background legal analysis” study by Trenorden, part of the Readiness process. The Drivers study identified short, medium and long-term actions to address relevant land tenure and titling, and natural resource rights issues as priorities, but it does not articulate sectoral action plans needed to ensure alignment with Carbon Rights and Benefit Sharing Mechanism.

→ *The TAP concurs with the green rating, and notes that land tenure is far less an issue in Fiji than other countries, due to the prevalence of a customary land tenure system.*

C15 Impacts on forest law and policy [green]

Work on law and policy has progressed substantially, although the results of several activities still need to be shared. Most major actors are involved. However stakeholders recommended new efforts to entice additional user groups (such as sawmillers, forest owners, farmers, Fiji Crop and Livestock Council, Fiji Kava Association, etc.) into a deeper consultation, given they also are actors in proposed interventions.

→ *The TAP finds that while Fiji probably can achieve a green rating, it recommends a yellow rating now. Fiji produced detailed studies on tenure (2013 study, available) and Drivers of deforestation and others. But Fiji needs to finalize and publish studies underway, on carbon rights (due in April) etc. to advance any regulations needed. The Drivers study identified legal and policy implications to be addressed to buttress interventions on forest management, adoption of Reduced Impact Logging guidelines, etc. for these activities to be operational in the near future.*

Sub-Component 2b: REDD+ Strategy options (criteria 16-18)

C16 – Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategic options [green]

C17 – Assessment of the feasibility [green]

C18 - Impacts of policy options on existing sectoral policies [green]

The R-Package refers to the national REDD+ Policy published by the Cabinet in 2011 that lays out a broad national approach to REDD+. The policy states that “The Fiji REDD-Plus Programme will pursue the goal of ‘REDD-Readiness’ by completing by no later than the end of 2012” via six listed activities. In essence, this forms an early draft of a general REDD Strategy, but which remains stuck in very gradual development.

The R-Package assessment report states that a process was undertaken for stakeholders to prioritize and select, and the REDD+ unit and consultants to assess, the strategic options for implementation of REDD+ in Fiji. The Strategy Options were developed as part of the Drivers study, which used participatory assessment tools with Open Standards for Conservation to identify key drivers and underlying causes. Two rounds of national consultation, Divisional-level consultation and community consultations were needed to consolidate the Strategy Options. The expected emissions reduction potential of the interventions is estimated as 2 million tCO₂e.

The R-Package report states that “the REDD+ Unit is committed to facilitate the development of an all-encompassing REDD+ Strategy that will also incorporate the outcomes of the study from SESA and ESMF” (p. 8), which Table 10 p. 42 states will happen by May 2019.

→ While the TAP recognizes the efforts made thus far under C16 on the REDD+ strategic options, it finds the green rating for subcomponent 2b optimistic-- and assesses it as a yellow. The REDD+ Strategy, SESA, ESMF are still to be finalized and published. The TAP agrees with a green rating for both C16 and C18. Analysis of the potential impacts of the identified REDD+ activities has been shared among the Steering Committee – but not shared publicly (due March 2019, once the economic modeling is completed). The TAP urges the REDD+ Unit to swiftly complete the study, share it via a stakeholder workshop or the equivalent and online, and use it to drive formal agreement leading to publication of a REDD+ Strategy to guide REDD+ activities and the ER-PD process.

Sub-Component 2c: Implementation Framework (criteria 19-22)

C19 - Adoption and enforcement of laws and regulation [green]

C20 – Implementation guidelines [orange]

Fiji has identified several important legislative and regulatory reforms that would further clarify the REDD+ process (e.g., guidance for land use planning at the Division level, updated logging sustainable harvest guidelines

C20 - Implementation guidelines is rated by stakeholders in the R-Package report as orange, with significant additional work required.

→ In the TAP’s view, legislative and regulatory reforms that would further clarify the REDD+ process are identified. Most are at least in early stages of development and build on foundational work performed on tenure, carbon rights etc. -- but reforms necessarily require significant time to achieve consensus. Thus these reform processes need to accelerate, given that the ER-PD has been submitted to the Carbon Fund. For C20, the TAP agrees with both the green score for C19 and the orange rating for C20, and urges that implementation guidelines need to be jumpstarted by procuring a consultant or allocating REDD+ Unit staff time. The self-assessment report states that “What we lack is published guidelines on best practices for each process... [eg] development of land use plans... baseline assessments, community monitoring systems and others” (p. 44).

C21 - Benefit sharing mechanism [yellow]

A study of options for designing the benefit-sharing mechanism has been performed and is contributing to the further design efforts, which have not yet culminated in the development of a Benefits Sharing Plan (not required until if and when the ERPA stage is reached). However, the R-Package document provides minimal information on how the benefit sharing mechanism will be implemented, and safeguards will be respected.

→ The TAP concludes that yellow is appropriate, since additional work is essential to define the modalities of the eventual REDD+ Benefit Sharing mechanism, and to develop a legal instrument for RED+ requirements. Strong traditional iTaukei Benefit Sharing concepts provide a solid foundation, however, so this task appears manageable. The TAP recommends that the REDD+ Unit redouble its efforts to advance the BS mechanism and Plan, as these require negotiation.

C22 – REDD+ National registry and REDD+ activity monitoring system [yellow]

A national database management system exists in the Min. of Forestry, but the national database management system (DBMS) should have capacity to accommodate the data from the divisional level (R-Package report p. 45). More work is needed to support a national REDD+ information system or registry that is operational and comprehensive, and retains of all relevant information (e.g., location, ownership, carbon accounting and financial flows for sub-national and national REDD+ programs and projects).

→ TAP conclusion: work on Fiji’s national REDD+ Registry slowly continues; yellow is appropriate. The government expects the Registry, parts of which will be accessible for public consultation, to be operational by

December 2019, although it also plans to consolidate arrangements for a third-party registry (possibly the FCPF; report p. 47). Harmonization of various forest information platforms will be a priority going forward.

Sub-Component 2d: Social and Environmental Impacts (criteria 23-25)

C23 - Analysis of the issues related to social and environmental safeguards [yellow]

SESA, ESMF and Process Framework are safeguard instruments required by World Bank Operational Safeguard Policies. The ESMF is a tool for screening proposed interventions, to assess their potential to negatively impact the natural and social environments-- before locations of proposed activities are identified.

The R- Package report summarizes the state of play of the draft tools, explains the need to finalize them, and states their due dates. It refers to analyses performed by the SESA and ESMF processes repeatedly, which clearly have informed design of the REDD+ program. But—these documents are not available publicly.

→ *The TAP recommends an orange rating, not a yellow, since the SESA and ESMF processes are not available. On the positive side, the report notes that the SESA and ESMF have already provided crucial analyses to a range of design issues.*

C24 - Design of REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts [yellow]

Due to development of its ER-PD, now in review, the government has consulted widely at national and divisional levels on World Bank safeguards in SESA and ESMF, and to a lesser extent the Cancun Safeguards. This is an ongoing process (report Table 14 p. 50).

A reassessment of the proposed strategic options and prioritization of them using multiple criteria is proposed for additional funding. This exercise would facilitate further dialogue between stakeholders and the government agencies regarding how to best preserve and manage Fiji's forests. Criteria under consideration include the seven Cancun, emission reduction potential of each option, and policy criteria.

→ *The TAP assesses C24, like C23, as orange, and not yellow. The TAP understands that substantial efforts have been made, and that the original consultants retained in September 2016 to prepare the SESA and ESMF drafts have faced unforeseen obstacles that have delayed these critical products. But the SESA and ESMF both remain in draft and not publicly available (no reference or hyperlink given), and are not summarized in the report. The report indicates that the SESA and ESMF are due end of January (p. 48) or by April-May (several dates are given). These are essential documents for defining the REDD+ strategic options, for assessing their impacts—and for completing the REDD+ Strategy. The Ministry for Forestry needs to finalize these.*

C25 -Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)³ [yellow]

A draft Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) has been produced, in close cooperation with World Bank staff, although it is not publicly available yet. Work is underway to finalize the ESMF by February/March or later, and to share it publicly on websites.

→ *The TAP holds that the R-Package rating should be orange, not yellow. As noted just above, the ESMF is a critical document and process and has not been finished and shared. It is important for the REDD+ Unit to state a clear timeline in the process, considering the forthcoming submission of the ER-PD.*

Component 3: Reference Emission Levels/Reference Level (Criteria 26-28)

C26 – Demonstration of the methodological basis for the establishment of Reference Level [green]

³ The ESMF sets out the principles, rules, guidelines, and procedures to assess potential environmental and social impacts and risks, and contains measures to reduce, mitigate, and/or offset adverse environmental and social impacts and enhance positive impacts and opportunities of said projects, activities, or policies/regulations.

A stepwise approach was selected for FRL construction, since gaps in the existing data and methods were identified. The report contains a long table (pp. 51-53) that explains the most prominent gaps and offers possible remedies to improve national forest inventory and thus the FRL. The Situational Analysis Report⁴, FRL Methodology Document, and discussions with the MRV/FRL consultant team led to these recommendations, scheduled for FCPF's additional \$2m funding.

→ *The TAP finds the green rating for C26 justified, as methods are well-developed, clearly described in detail, and appropriate for Fiji's context.*

C27 - Use of historical data, adjusted for national circumstances [green]

National historical data 2000-2015 used in the development of the FRL in accordance with the UNFCCC guidelines and the FCPF methodological framework, for the years 2006, 2012, and 2016. Adopting a stepwise approach, Fiji is actively improving its FRL by creating a new set of forest activity data estimated in collaboration with CSIRO in Australia, using a semi-automatic method for land use classification and land use change but performed as training by Min. of Forestry staff. No adjustment for national circumstances is included.

→ *The TAP appreciates clarity of the description in the report of how historical data have been originally selected and are now in revision via cooperation with CSIRO. The green rating is justified.*

C28 - Technical feasibility of methodological approach and compliance with UNFCCC guidelines and IPCC recommendations [green]

The R-Package report indicates that the FRL used UNFCCC, IPCC and FCPF guidelines as a basis; and is transparent--required information is given and reconstruction is thus possible (although TAP experts' attempt produced slightly different results, now under discussion).

The current FRL includes only CO₂ gas; other GHGs emissions and removals are not significant and/or data are not readily available. Methane emissions from the fire will be included in a stepwise approach, and a study to estimate forest fire emissions factors will be commenced in 2019.

The FRL covers 94% of forest area, also covering three major Islands. The Ministry of Forestry decided to assess land use change in all islands by 2020, to create a truly national FRL and submit it to UNFCCC for technical assessment. Ten upgrades to the FRL are detailed in Table 15 p. 57 over 2019-20.

→ *TAP finds that the green rating is justified: The national FRL under development is quite feasible and meets IPCC and FCPF Meth. Framework guidance. These R-Package report sections carefully present the various technical issues and methodological choices involved in establishing the FREL/FRL, with a set of tables that summarize key data sources and issues. The TAP recommends that Fiji should continue assessing whether fire and its methane emissions need to be included, since the TAP's review of the draft ER-PD suggests fire, household fuelwood use and shifting slash and burn cultivation may produce collective emissions over 10% threshold for significance.*

Component 4: Monitoring Systems for forests, and safeguards

Despite the Mid-Term Report assessing 5 of 6 criteria within Component 4 as orange back in October 2017 (MT Report p. 3-4), only 2 have truly advanced, with some progress made on 4 in the R-Package report.

Sub-Component 4a: National forest monitoring system (criteria 29-31)

C29 - Documentation of monitoring/tracking approach [green]

A study for developing a National Forest Monitoring System for Fiji was completed and widely disseminated, and is guiding elaboration of this system at both the national and divisional levels.

⁴ The Situational Analysis Report is available at: <http://www.forests.gov.fj>

→ *The TAP finds that substantial work establishing an MRV system in the country has occurred and provides a strong platform for its further elaboration, and agrees with the **green** rating.*

C30 - Demonstration of early system implementation **[green]**

Early work on the system found that forest measurement data from the quasi-government companies (Fiji Pine Ltd. and Fiji Hardwood Ltd.), and from *mataqali* traditional local clans participating in REDD+, will need to be validated by Divisional Forest Offices, entered in their databases, and then uplinked to the national one.

→ *The TAP finds that a solid body of work has delivered in developing and testing the proposed MRV system at the national and Division levels, which has led to major renovations in the system design and assessments of required capacity to run it has occurred and provides a strong platform for its further elaboration. The TAP agrees with the **green** rating.*

C31 - Institutional arrangements and capacities **[green]**

The self-assessment makes clear that institutional technical capacity in remote sensing, field measurement, data processing, and information management currently is not adequate. Additionally, divisional and district-level staff involved with REDD+ have minimal experience in WB and Cancun safeguard systems, although the report states that capacity building at three levels will be targeted for 2019.

However, Fiji is already responding to this self-analysis. A revised organizational structure is in progress, to assure human and other resources will be in place (Figure 4 in report). Revitalization of the prior system elements has started. Training is underway with CSIRO and external expert consultants, who work closely with the Fiji team; eg, the Fiji team was in Australia in late January completing land use change analysis and data management under the guidance of CSIRO experts. The full range of elements for this process is well-defined and clearly explained in the report (pp. 62-63 and Table 17 p. 80).

→ *The TAP finds that while Fiji granted a green rating, the TAP finds the lack of capacity they document more realistically should score a **yellow** rating for the inadequacies listed above. Institutional arrangements and capacity for remote sensing, field measurement, data processing, and information management and communication were found to be inadequate in the self-assessment. However, institutional capacity already is being revitalized, under a clearly laid out roadmap looking forward as a result of the self-assessment, to be in place by late 2019 or 2020.*

Sub-Component 4b: Information system for multiple benefits, other impacts, governance, and safeguards (criteria 32-34)

C32 - Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues **[yellow]**

Sixteen types of non-carbon benefits have been identified by the SESA study (p. 64). Selected interventions to address drivers and enhance carbon stocks, and their potential socio-economic risks and environmental impacts are summarized in the detailed Table 2 p. 65. The REDD+ and Forest Carbon Rights in Fiji study of 2013 and a follow-up study due April 2019 are highlighted as a tools and a process to facilitate dialogue with stakeholders re the realization of monetary REDD+ benefits.

→ *The TAP finds that non-carbon benefits have been identified and thoroughly discussed by the report and the self-assessment process, but additional work needs to be done to operationalize and report these non-carbon benefits. The **yellow** rating is justified.*

C33 - Monitoring, reporting and information sharing **[yellow]**

This criterion remains at an early stage of development. A National Forest Database System has been established within the Ministry of Forestry, to manage information on carbon accounting, Setting up the framework of the system is an outcome of work on the SESA and ESMF. However elaborating it to be operational, and deciding which non-carbon and safeguard monitoring system data will be integrated into the existing system, is scheduled to be carried out in 2019 (p. 67) using FCPF additional funding. Work designing a National Safeguard Information System (SIS) to report to UNFCCC on how the Cancun safeguards are addressed and respected is also slated for 2019 (report p. 66), but yet to commence.

→ *TAP conclusion: Development of the information system on multiple benefits and safeguards as well as the Safeguard Information System has barely started and still requires significant work. The TAP rates this as orange, in contrast to the self-assessment yellow rating—since several such prominent blocs of work have barely started. In a positive development, these blocs are stated as resourced in 2019-20 with some of the additional funding from the FCPF, but they need to get going in earnest. A further challenge is to improve dissemination of the environmental and social safeguards instruments and data collection processes.*

C34 - Institutional arrangements and capacities [yellow]

Min. of Forestry and partners are actively designing the SIS framework; and information sources on how the safeguards would be addressed as well as potential existing information systems have been identified. Institutional arrangements for the collection and dissemination of safeguards information are agreed. However, divisional and district level staff involved with REDD+ have minimal understanding of and experience in WB and Cancun safeguard systems. The report (pp. 66-67) states that capacity building at three levels will be targeted for 2019, to enhance understanding of social and environmental safeguard policies and reporting. Trainings for REDD+ stakeholders also are funded for 2019-20 in GIS/Remote Sensing, Statistical Analysis, Forest Inventory, Data Analysis, Database, and IPCC guidance and Guidelines, according to Table 16 p. 68.

→ *The TAP agrees with the yellow rating. It concludes that while progress has occurred, capacity building of staff has been recognized as essential and is beginning to be addressed, to enable the relevant institutions to better comprehend safeguards issues and procedures, and to perform safeguards reporting accurately.*

TAP Review Part C: Summary Assessment and Recommendation to the PC

In summary:

Fiji's Readiness self-assessment process appears to have been well conducted.

- Self-assessment workshop participants were actively engaged, offered important insights and identified key issues for further assessment, and determine what remains to be done to achieve it.
- Fiji's R-Package report offers an accurate and comprehensive perspective on REDD+ readiness progress, and overall all criteria have been considered, debated publicly, and their status assessed.

Many issues in the Readiness process were highlighted by the self-assessment and most confirmed by the TAP review. Key issues include:

- **Optimistic self-appraisal**—the TAP finds it differs with the self-assessment scoring on 14 criteria.
- Fiji is **lagging behind on numerous major tasks and on funds management** and procurement of consultancies—which are essential to the completion of many tasks. This must be immediately addressed, or Readiness will be indefinitely delayed.
- **Stronger government cross-agency coordination** is a fundamental function of REDD+ not yet fully realized. **New efforts are needed to make a breakthrough to broader team cooperation.**
- **Solving public sharing of major documents** and REDD+ process and results, and getting the REDD+ website back online.
- **Committing to safeguards processes and finishing them**—eg, SESA, ESMF, a functioning SIS, etc.

The TAP recommends that:

- **Fiji redouble its efforts to wrap up the Readiness process—it can do it.** It finally has laid a solid foundation on which to build the pieces needed, though its capacity remains modest.
- **But strong leadership is needed, now especially by the new Ministry of Forestry senior management,** to drive the process of finalizing the Readiness work in 2019. What needs to be done

is laid out in the self-assessment and this report -- but it is up to senior managers to provide the political and organizational drive to motivate achievement of the remaining tasks.

- **The REDD+ Unit shift to more of a team approach on major deliverables.** The R-package and the ER-PD draft both were quickly developed by only a few experts, often in Fiji NGOs. Fiji's studies, draft regulations and decisions will be better if a team pushes the work forward, rather than a few individuals.
- **The safeguards documents be finalized** and publicly released at the earliest moment.
- **The REDD+ Strategy finally be debated, agreed, and published.** It has taken far too long already and needs to be in place and formally recognized if Fiji is to evolve into the Carbon Fund or other results-based payments for REDD+.
- **The capacity building for the Forest Reference Level and MRV system design and implementation be a major focus of 2019**—building on solid progress in 2018 but with institutions in need of further revitalization.
- **Institutional capacity building both in the capital and especially out in the Divisions (field) where REDD+ will take place is essential**, if Fiji hopes to operationalize REDD+ interventions.
- **The roles and field procedures of major quasi-private companies like Fiji Pine and Fiji Hardwoods be clarified**—since they would deliver the majority of forestry interventions.
- **Implementing the Readiness work still underway or planned for 2019-20 is the perfect opportunity for agencies to demonstrate their ability and commitment to work together.**

Finally--Fiji's relatively unique circumstances present an **unusual opportunity to the Carbon Fund to include a still relatively traditional society with strong consensual norms and institutions in the CF REDD+ portfolio**, in the underrepresented Pacific.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Conservation International, 2018. Report: Analysis of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; barriers for forest conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhanced carbon stock; and strategic response options. Consultancy report to Fiji REDD+ team.

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18.11.2018.<http://www.forestry.gov.fj/images/REDD/National%20Forest%20Monitoring%20System.pdf>

University of Hamburg and University of Southern Queensland, 2018. Guidance document on the nesting of sub-national REDD+ MRV and FRL within national REDD+ MRV and FRL . Part of: Establishment of a Reference Level (FRL) for forest land and development of a System for Monitoring, Reporting and Verifying (MRV) carbon emission reductions from forests in FIJI (04.2017 – 12.2018). Consultancy report to Fiji REDD+ team.

<http://www.forestry.gov.fj/images/REDD/Guidance%20on%20the%20nesting%20of%20sub-national%20MRV%20and%20FRL%20within%20national%20MRV%20and%20FRL.pdf>