

FCPF: Review of R-PP of Republic of Congo

Reviewer: Stephen Cobb, synthesising 5 expert reviews

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Standards to be Met by R-PP Components

(from Program Document FMT 2009-1, Rev. 3:)

Summary of the Review

The Republic of Congo has produced an impressive R-PP, which was highly appreciated by its reviewers. All those involved in its preparation should feel well pleased with their achievements so far.

The components are well described and the most important studies that will be conducted in the R-PP implementation are described with short TORs. The options proposed for the REDD+ strategy are, with the exception of Option 5, all logical for a country with low deforestation/high forest cover). However, the differences between the dense forests in the north and the degraded forests in the south are not well contrasted. On the other hand, the fact that they prominently include production forestry in the REDD+ strategy will make the Congo case probably more special than other R-PPs and in the package of all approved R-PPs, this one will thus stand out.

Given the large fraction of Congolese territory classified as production forests (over 80% of the forests are in 18 FMUs - p 23) and the large fraction of that are under concession, maps of forest concessions and information on the location and duration of existing concessions as well as other information on management plans, certification ,harvesting practices and volumes would be useful in judging the extent to which baseline assessment and other analytical components should focus on this sector.

In general terms, the R-PP of Congo is differently structured than other R-PPs. It contains however most of the essential information and it is easy for the reader to understand the overall intention of the R-PP. The document does not go in many details and generally refers to consultancy work and pilot projects that will be conducted during the R-PP implementation. These activities should generate the needed information for achieving REDD+ readiness in the country. The R-PP is ambitious and the TAP has some doubts that, due to the lack of capacities, a number of planned studies and pilot projects might not be implementable as smoothly as expected in the R-PP document. While the TORs for the proposed studies are mostly attached, the role, contents and expected outputs of the numerous proposed pilot projects remain vague.

Reviewers felt much more comfortable about Components 1 and 2, which require only minor editing. There are more substantial concerns about Components 3 and 4, which reviewers felt need more careful thought about methodology, data and capacity. The final two components need editorial work to bring them up to standard, but that would not be a very great challenge.

Component 1. Organize and Consult

Standard 1a: National Readiness Management Arrangements

The cross-cutting nature of the design and workings of the national readiness management arrangements on REDD, in terms of including relevant stakeholders and key government agencies beyond the forestry department, commitment of other sectors in planning and implementation of REDD readiness;

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

A complex structure is proposed to manage and implement the R-PP process. While the functions of the different bodies proposed are well described, it is not entirely clear who will chair the different bodies (e.g. the REDD+ National Committee; the REDD+ National Coordination). While there is a broad involvement of all stakeholder groups foreseen in the different bodies created, the overall leadership is not further specified. For example, what role is foreseen for the Minister in charge of the MDDEFE (e.g. two members of the public chamber of the REDD+ National Committee are appointed by the President of the Republic, do they have specific functions?). A 42 member body (the REDD National Committee) with 'voting rights' is a unique proposition, and is perhaps too large and unwieldy.

From the description and the overview figure, it appears that the unit responsible for MRV is purely technical (composed by CNIAFF and CERGEC); this unit seems to be fully dependent on the REDD+ National Coordination Unit under MDDEFE. The proponents should explain how the MRV unit can develop a degree of independence (which is needed for a monitoring and verification unit) under these circumstances. It would also be important to know if other, non-technical stakeholders (e.g. indigenous communities) are to be integrated into the MRV work.

Under section 2.3 potential task forces are mentioned. These are essential and should be implemented as soon as possible. The task forces for design of MRV systems and for development of the reference scenario could be combined – since they will have much in common at the beginning. That is, the MRV system design will depend partly on what is known and not known. Later, there could be separate task forces. It is recognized that the Readiness process involves broad stakeholder participation, but nevertheless the institutional setting seems to be heavy and potentially carries a risk of considerable transaction costs. This is already reflected in the proposed budget. Considering the overall budget of the Congo R-PP, the budget allocation for the National Readiness Management Arrangements, seems to be rather high .

The Executive Summary (p6) notes the relationship between this proposed RPP – National Strategic and Action Plan process and preceding or complementary national plans and processes, most notably the PRSP (2008) and PAN (2008). The document should indicate how this coordination will be maintained and also make reference to appropriate linkages with regional processes such as the COMIFAC Minister's decision to revisit the Plan de Convergence in line with evolving REDD+ policies and measures and the forthcoming African Ministerial and HoS Conference (to be hosted by Gabon in September), the COMIFAC HoS Summit planned for Oct-Nov 2010, hosted by the DRC, and similar caucuses to develop common positions with respect to the CBD and UNFCCC.

Recommendations:

- **Clarify better the bodies/persons responsible for each unit created; who appoints them; and how voting on Committees should be conducted (to ensure proper representation of non-government sectors)**

- **Clarify the role and the positioning of the MRV unit and its relationship to non-state stakeholders that also have a function in the MRV process. Show to what extent they can operate in an independent manner**
- **Reflect on the high costs proposed for this component, and if they are really necessary or not.**

The R-PP largely meets the requirement for this standard.

Standard 1b: Stakeholder Consultation and Participation

Ownership, transparency, and dissemination of the R-PP by the government and relevant stakeholders: Inclusiveness of effective and informed consultation and participation by relevant stakeholders, assessed in the following ways:

- i. the consultation and participation process for R-PP development thus far³, the extent of ownership within government and REDD coordinating body, as well as in the broader national stakeholder community; and

the Consultation and Participation Plan included in the R-PP (which looks forward in time); and the inclusion of elements in the R-PP that adequately document the expressed concerns and recommendations of relevant stakeholders and propose a process for their consideration, and/or expressions of their support for the R-PP.

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

This component is well prepared and describes the consultation processes for:

1. the validation of the current R-PP submitted; and
2. the implementation phase of the R-PP (including a consultation plan).

Relating to (1): While a process of consultation has been organized during the preparation of the R-PP (Annex 1b1), including a national workshop (held in January 2010) and 3 regional workshops, the perception of the various stakeholders on the proposed R-PP is not exactly reflected, nor is it clear how they were selected. A short critical review of the perceptions of the different stakeholders on the preparation process and the proposed strategy/implementation arrangements of the R-PP could be given in chapter 3.4. Also, it is said in the Annex that on 15 April, a pre-validation workshop of the draft R-PP has been held at the national level. The proponents of the R-PP further propose that a final workshop will be held that includes as the core input the comments of the TAP. However, considering the timing and the fact that the final R-PP is planned to be submitted to the FCPF June 2010 meeting, it is questionable how the country can deal with the final appropriation of the plan in the short time period available until the Guyana meeting.

Relating to (2): The proposal to hold the consultations through stakeholder platforms (on the model of the VPA/FLEGT process) is good. Nonetheless, the consultation plan that accompanies the implementation of the R-PP seems to propose a large process and intends to address many stakeholders (within the sector, in adjacent sectors, but also in sectors with no functional relationship to the forest

³ Did the R-PP development, in particular the development of the ToR for the strategic environmental and social assessment and the Consultation and Participation Plan, include civil society, including forest dwellers and Indigenous Peoples representation? In this context the representative(s) will be determined in one of the following ways: (i) self-determined representative(s) meeting the following requirements: (a) selected through a participatory, consultative process; (b) having national coverage or networks; (c) previous experience working with the Government and UN system; (d) demonstrated experience serving as a representative, receiving input from, consulting with, and providing feedback to, a wide scope of civil society including Indigenous Peoples organizations; or (ii) Individual(s) recognized as legitimate representative(s) of a national network of civil society and/or Indigenous Peoples organizations (e.g., the GEF Small Grants National Steering Committee or National Forest Program Steering Committee).

sector). In the TAP's view, the established, large 42 member REDD+ National Committee, with 14 members from each of the three main stakeholder groups (public authority, civil society, private sector), and their correspondent 12 Departmental committees, is itself already something like a consultation body. The broad consultation process ("with final large scale consultations") might not help to achieve the objective of full readiness for REDD+.

While there is an annex provided on a consultation plan, it is not clear how the list of people will be handled and how the process will be structured. It would be useful for the RPP to state what it expects the consultations to achieve. While the purpose is clear the expected or desired outcomes are not.

The issues involving indigenous peoples and the application of the "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" are briefly mentioned in the Chapter on Principles, but not further specified in the operational text of the R-PP. It needs to be clearly stated in the R-PP, where the FPIC will be applied and what will happen if agreement is not reached (FPIC: the right so say no). Simply to mention the FPIC as a principle in the document is not sufficient: if applied, it has to be integrated as an element in Components 2, 3 and 4.

Recommendations:

- **Clarify more specifically who need to be consulted, on what and when for each component of the R-PP**
- **Consider an approach to primarily develop the consultation process (REDD+ strategy development, Reference Scenario, MRV) through the three chambers of the REDD+ National Committee.**
- **Specify how FPIC and the interests of marginalized groups will be applied in the consultation process**
- **Specify how the "selection process" for consultation providing input into the SESA will comply with the footnoted requirements.**
- **Propose, in light of the recommendations made by the TAP, to scale down the budget of the consultation process**

The R-PP largely meets the requirement for this standard.

Component 2. Prepare the REDD Strategy

Standard 2.a: Assessment of Land Use, Forest Policy, and Governance: A completed assessment is presented that identifies major land use trends, direct and indirect deforestation and degradation drivers in the most relevant sectors in the context of REDD, and major land tenure and natural resource rights and relevant governance issues. It documents past successes and failures in implementing policies or measures for addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and identifies significant gaps, challenges, and opportunities to address REDD. The assessment sets the stage for development of the country's REDD strategy to directly address key land use change drivers.

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

In general, this chapter has been well developed and also contains a number of critical elements that are important for the development of the REDD+ strategic options.

The deforestation rate between 1990 and 2000 was about 17,000 hectares per year, or 0.1% of the total

forest area. For a long time, the northern forests remained almost untouched because of a lack of infrastructure and low population density. Over the past fifteen years, however, logging has increased in these forests (after the award of a number of extremely large concessions) and there is now more in-migration from southern Congo and neighboring countries to these areas that can also offer employment through the development of logging and the forest industry.

It would have been reassuring if more information were presented on the size, location, duration and tenure of these concessions, since they feature so large in any understanding of the nationwide dynamics of the forest, and ultimately of forest carbon. We return to this again in our comments on Component 2 (b).

Decision support tools as discussed under component 4 can be very useful for assessment of land use. It will be helpful to have at the beginning a way of seeing impacts in the national context, for example, in the north where the degradation will be noticeable – more roads for mining and oil drilling. Decision support tools can also help with the governance and development of protected forest areas.

The fact that 37% of forests are permanently flooded gives some impetus to measuring forest carbon in flooded forests (see below under section 4).

The proposal does a number of useful things. For example, it:

- highlights the unresolved legal issues of customary tenure rights that is of critical importance for traditional lifestyle of forest dwellers, including pygmies. (pp 23 and 27).
- summarizes the current status and recent improvements in forest management practices and their implementation. Table on p 28 indicates the considerable scope for potential additional improvements of management practices that could affect current and future forest GHG emissions.
- identifies regional differences in logging practices and their effect on forest ‘health’, quality and regeneration.
- acknowledges the impact of weak governance on emissions.
- notes the lack of an overall underlying land use vision and plan as a key current weakness.
- recognizes, although does not (yet) address the potential effects of macroeconomic, demographic and social factors
- outlines a series of future studies needed to identify the impact of macroeconomic and local drivers and related patterns of public and private investment. These might include the potential for rehabilitation of former agroforestry concessions with fund-based or market based REDD+ finance.

As the process outlined in Component 4 for MRV is followed, the relevance to agriculture should also be considered. The new agriculture that arises from deforestation could possibly help with carbon sequestration. For example, for East Africa, FAO has noted that agricultural productivity which is currently at a relatively low level could, by improving nutrient management, increasing organic and synthetic fertilizer use, and restoring degraded land, increase productivity, reduce deforestation pressures, and sequester carbon. The changes could be monitored with the same MRV techniques used for forest carbon monitoring. Numerous studies have analyzed ways in which carbon offsets could generate funding for the adoption of conservation agriculture in Africa. As agriculture develops it would be worthwhile trying to integrate agricultural carbon measurement within the MRV framework. Australia with its long experience in forest carbon MRV use for agriculture could be a good partner on

this.

What is not specifically mentioned in the R-PP is the increasing frequency of uncontrolled forest fires that occur regularly in the south at the end of the dry seasons. The document could here also refer to the outcomes of the NAPA as forests in Republic of Congo are also affected by the effects of climate change and climate variability, in addition to their mitigation potential in REDD+. Also, little is said on how REDD could function in the forests under customary control and the challenges of introducing REDD both alongside and within the all-important Forest Concessions. This could be improved.

The R-PP largely meets the requirement for this standard.

Standard 2.b: REDD strategy Options: Alignment of the proposed REDD strategy with the identified drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and with existing national and sectoral strategies: the R-PP includes a summary of the emerging REDD strategy to the extent known presently, and of proposed analytic work (and, optionally, ToR) for assessment of the various REDD strategy options. This summary states:

- i. how the country proposes to address deforestation and degradation drivers in the design of its REDD strategy;
- ii. early estimates of cost and benefits of the emerging REDD strategy, including benefits in terms of rural livelihoods, biodiversity conservation and other developmental benefits;
- iii. socioeconomic, political and institutional feasibility of the emerging REDD strategy;
- iv. major potential synergies or inconsistencies of country sector strategies in the forest, agriculture, transport, or other sectors with the envisioned REDD strategy; and
- v. risk of domestic leakage of greenhouse benefits. The assessments included in the R-PP eventually should result in an elaboration of a fuller, more complete and adequately vetted REDD strategy over time.

Reviewer’s assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

This component is well elaborated and informative. To propose a set of different options and to assess them according to a set of criteria is a good approach.

As a country with low actual deforestation and high forest cover, the proposed REDD+ strategy options reflect the particular REDD+ potential in the country. Option 1 (enhance tenure security, Option 2 (SFM of forest resources), Option 3 (improved agricultural production systems) and Option 4 (Streamlining fuelwood production and use) are clearly articulated and fully compatible with a REDD+ approach.

Option 5 (which is titled as “transversely integrate REDD+ in policies”) seems to be interesting from the overall idea, but the proposed sub-options. SO5.1 (Health) and SO5.2 (Energy) do not really correspond to what the title of the option suggests. They seem to be better placed in a wider country low-carbon economy approach. The sub-actions relating to training and outreach should not be mentioned as a separate REDD+ strategy, but as an integrated elements in the different REDD+ strategy options 1-4. Thus, Option 5 as an element of an overall country (development/climate change) strategy needs to be better articulated and described, or reconsidered in a different context.

In chapter 1.4, it is proposed that a considerable part of the REDD implementation and gaining of experience will be done through pilot projects (at least 24). However, in the description of the various REDD+ strategy options, there is no concrete mention of any more of these pilot projects. The pilot projects come back, however, in the budget of the component, with the considerable figure of 2.4 million US\$. It is thus recommended to develop further the pilot projects and to link possible actions to the proposed options and sub-options.

A special mention has to be made of Option 2, (sustainably managing production forests). Virtually all the closed natural forest is contained within Congo's Permanent Forest Estate (21 out of 22 million ha). Since the 1960s, Congo has divided its national forest estate into forest management units (UFAs, *Unités d'Aménagement Forestier*). Presently, more than 30 forest management units covering an area of 20.5 million hectares have been established to ensure sustainable management. Eleven UFAs are situated in the south (10.95 million hectares), two in central Congo (0.59 million hectares) and 21 UFAs are situated in northern Congo (8.98 million hectares). While the concessions (UFAs) in the south are often under increased logging pressure and in many parts have led to the degradation of forests, the UFAs in the northern part of the country are operating in largely intact forest areas and generally are able to reduce their impact to an acceptable level; the achievement of already having concessions that have been FSC-certified is proving that high standards of forest management are being applied in some of the concessions. Thus, the fact that the PFE is clearly defined and the largest area of closed forests is allocated to concessions, the inclusion of forest concession management in the REDD+ strategy is of particular importance.

We reiterate that this proposal covers important ground simply and well. Amongst other things, it gives attention in its strategic options to the following:

- i. Enhancement of tenure security for forest dwelling and other rural populations, increasing the area under legal protection under various rules and development of a broadly supported land use plan are all potentially effective means of reducing underlying drivers. Incentives for improved forest management can decrease the risk of degradation due to over exploitation. The development of enhanced capabilities for GIS will help with advancing land tenure security and will support the national land use plan
- ii. Initial analyses of the costs and benefits for improved agriculture and charcoal production although relatively simplistic are plausible at least at a local level, though there is not any analysis yet available of macro-level costs and benefits. There do, however, appear to be multiple potential benefits (environmental, social) from sustainable improvements in forest management practices and increases in the protected area network.
- iii. Given the 60:40 balance of urban vs rural dwellers one of the key questions has to be "What's in it for the majority?" which will have a strong effect on public policy. The strategy focuses on rural residents as most RPPs to date do while avoiding the larger question of socio-political feasibility based on demographics and self interests.
- iv. Plans for transport corridors may have the effect of increasing deforestation and degradation on a local scale and altering the economics of current logging operations to encourage greater harvest rates such as is done in other tropical regions. Plans and efforts already underway for improved forest management and agricultural intensification are fully compatible with the emerging REDD+ strategy.
- v. The strategy as it is currently conceived seems unlikely to generate significant domestic displacement of emissions (leakage) because it takes a national level approach to policies and measures while recognizing the value of sub-national measures during a pilot or testing phase.

Looking from a more global perspective, the Congo REDD+ strategy would be one of the few that could justify the inclusion of the production forestry sector in the REDD+ strategy. The challenge

would be to develop an approach that combines timber production and protection and the optimization of carbon management in these timber production forests.

Recommendations:

- **Clarify the relationship between the pilot projects and the strategic options proposed. Make the case for the results of these pilot projects informing the development of the REDD+ strategy and the MRV system. Simplify, or reduce, the pilot project structure.**
- **Emphasize Option 2, considering that the Congo Republic is one of the few countries in the world to have developed quite a comprehensive system for developing, controlling and monitoring its production forestry units.**
- **Clarify Option 5 and consider the distinction between REDD+ and a wider low carbon strategy of the country. Consider integrating the capacity building blocks in each of the components.**
- **The RPP should be clear on what incentives will be required to improve logging and wood transformation techniques (training, tax breaks on machinery, marketing support?) . Under this section, the proposal to process and market the huge waste from current logging is innovative and worth pursuing**

The R-PP largely meets the requirement for this standard.

Standard 2.c: REDD implementation framework: Describes activities (and optionally provides ToR in an annex) to further elaborate institutional arrangements and issues relevant to REDD in the country setting that identifies key issues, explores potential arrangements to address them, and offers a work plan that seems likely to allow their full evaluation and adequate incorporation into the eventual Readiness Package.

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

This is one of the better attempts at describing an implementation framework. It needs to re-emphasize the issue of roles and responsibilities of the various bodies and who will ensure that the REDD Programme is implemented according to plan.

Some of the main issues that need to be addressed are

- Carbon ownership
- Benefit sharing mechanisms for potential REDD revenues
- Scale of REDD Implementation (national vs. sub-national vs. hybrid implementation)

The R-PP document briefly reviews existing laws and regulations and proposes a rough outline of a REDD+ Law to be developed. This is one of the clearest and most candid and straightforward analyses of the legal and regulatory issues that must be addressed for REDD+ to succeed that reviewers have seen. The notion of creating a "REDD+ law" is both innovative and intriguing and may be possible given the unique circumstances of the RoC, its demographics, economy and historical trend toward increased natural resource protection and stewardship.

The question of carbon rights and finance is also tackled as well as the proposal that there is a preference to implement REDD+ at a national level. Four studies are proposed, including the development of guidelines for REDD+ pilot projects, the development of a REDD+ law and enacting regulations, the

development of a REDD+ fund and the development of implementation arrangements. While all these activities are important per se, they need to be closely linked to the deforestation and degradation drivers and in particular to the proposed REDD+ strategy. Thus, the R-PP needs to be carefully taking into account the sequencing of work of a comprehensive REDD+ strategy before advancing too fast with developing the implementation arrangements for REDD+.

What remains unclear is the role of pilot projects (chapter 4.2) and how they are different from the studies proposed. The Annex 2c, however, provides little additional substance beyond what appear to be framework TORs for consultancy studies.

The R-PP meets the requirement for this standard.

Standard 2.d: Assessment of social and environmental impacts: The proposal includes a program of work for due diligence for strategic environmental and social impact assessment in compliance with the Bank's safeguard policies, including methods to evaluate how to address those impacts via studies, consultations, and specific mitigation measures aimed at preventing or minimizing adverse effects.

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

The document outlines the (adequate) domestic legal basis and the guidance documents to be followed in carrying out an SEIA. It does not go into unnecessary detail in repeating the content of the guidance documents such as the World Bank's safeguard policies and operational procedures.

The safeguards are critical to ensure environmental and social integrity and the incorporation of REDD+ into development without harm. This component is kept very general in the present draft of the R-PP; it mainly refers to the capacity gaps in the country. The main activity is "implementation of the SESA" which does not sufficiently describe what is done and how it is done. What will happen with the conclusions out of the SEIA process? How will they influence the overall Readiness design at the end?

The proponents of this R-PP (RoC) could usefully provide further detail or ToRs of how the SEIA will be conducted, and what inputs are anticipated beyond those implied in the budget table (p 60). Also a timeline for implementation with key milestones like the public consultation and review process should be clearly indicated.

The R-PP largely meets the requirement for this standard.

Component 3. Develop a Reference Scenario

Standard 3 Reference scenario: Present work plan for how the reference scenario for deforestation, and for forest degradation (if desired), will be developed, including early ideas on feasibility of which methods to use (e.g., scenario of forest cover change and emissions based on historical trends in emissions and/or based on projections into the future of historical trend data), major data requirements and capacity needs, and linkages to the monitoring system design.

(The FCPF recognizes that key international policy decisions may affect this component, so a staged approach may be useful. The R-PP states what early activities are proposed.)

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

The Republic of Congo intends to promote efforts for subnational scenarios at department level that may serve to validate the national scenario. Further, the possibility of reference scenarios developed at project level is considered - provided that they comply with the standard national methodology. Such a strategy is possible. However, it should be clearly explained why a national reference level is not to be established and currently no measures are presented as to how the idea of sub-national levels will be implemented. Congo intends to make all national data available for project development but it is unclear if and how the required infrastructure is available and what for capacity demands would be entailed in implementation.

For the estimation of historic emissions, the R-PP refers to Component 4a: emission factors and methodology originating from the MRV system will be used once they are available. For the assessment of available and required data and capacities the R-PP focuses on the national level. No information is provided on the situation (e.g. regarding access to information, REDD-relevant skills and expertise etc.) at the department or local level. Since sub-national REL's are envisaged in Congo, the respective data and capacity needs should be assessed as well. Despite this shortcoming, it is suggested to discuss the pros and cons of national versus sub-national reference level establishment.

The implicit adoption of a nested approach linking project and subnational MRV with national MRV is a preferred methodology. Also the testing of different models for calculating a reference scenario that is intended as a basis for long term MRV is a sensible innovation that may produce results of some general applicability beyond the borders of the RoC and should therefore be encouraged under a pilot facility such as the FCPF.

Decision-making support is mentioned at the beginning of this section - there will need to be a way that the information from the reference scenario is easily used by decision-makers - this means a decision support system, preferably web-based (see comments below on Component 4).

Section 1.2 discusses sub-scenarios. It will be important to put these in a national context. Experience shows that project level MRV methods work best when carried out in a national context. The inventory provided in section 2 is a useful summary of the current state and reliability of the information, and shows the magnitude of what will be required. Testing three different options could be informative, but the budget and personnel proposed on p. 68 are very minimal for this task: more personnel time and budget are needed here. It will be difficult to make real comparisons with such limited capacity.

Capacity gaps are also identified for data on statistics in general and modeling (land use change, DD risk). For the former no measures for capacity building are presented as the data needs are not specific to REDD. Nevertheless, the R-PP should specify what data the reference scenario plans to integrate and if there is a sufficient level of cooperation and communication between the relevant agencies to ensure that extent, quality and scale of future data complies to national and international REDD standards.

According to the R-PP, some capacity building for mapping is currently underway at CNIAFF and a joint MRV team is considered with CERGEC where a strong demand for capacity building is identified. We endorse this kind of collaboration.

Further efforts to strengthen capacities for REDD are envisioned at the regional level (Congo Basin countries) and via South-South cooperation (Mexico is mentioned for mapping/spatial modeling), that may contribute to the creation of a REDD+ Master programme. Such a degree programme at the University (financed through the R-PP process) seems to reviewers to be premature. There is only little

content available for the time being and the knowledge existing is distributed throughout the world. The competitiveness of having such a formal training in a remote university in Brazzaville is questionable (availability of and access to know-how, availability of appropriate teaching staff and students, language problems, etc). The resources made available for this process are not sufficient. Capacity building, at a R-PP stage, should relate to on-the-job-training, and the framework for a more formal education in REDD+ should be developed in another setting.

Another step addresses the gaps in knowledge and data for two drivers of deforestation and especially forest degradation that are, apart from smallholder agriculture, of major importance in Congo - studies are planned for fuel wood (quantity, local demand, trend) and logging (quantity, impact on carbon stocks from sustainable management, low impact techniques, unsustainable and illegal logging).

The existing mapping capacities will need to be enhanced with upgraded GIS software and training. There also needs to be capacity building in spatial modeling, which is discussed in the last section. The degree programs would benefit from cooperation from universities in other African countries, and from South-South cooperation, perhaps Mexico and Brazil. The heavy emphasis on capacity building and data collection here is appropriate.

Given the engagement of Congo at the regional level, the R-PP could provide a better understanding on how the regional collaboration (COMIFAC/OFAC) feeds back into the design and the assessment of the national REDD strategy for the reference scenario (and the MRV system). This is a shortcoming of other Congo basin submissions.

The standard for component 3 has not yet been met.

Component 4. Design a Monitoring System

Standard 4: Design a monitoring system: The R-PP provides a proposal for the initial design of an integrated monitoring system of measurement, reporting and verification of changes in deforestation and/or forest degradation. The system design should include early ideas on including capability (either within an integrated system, or in coordinated activities) to monitor other benefits and impacts, for example rural livelihoods, conservation of biodiversity, key governance factors directly pertinent to REDD implementation in the country, and to assess the impacts of the REDD strategy in the forest sector.

The R-PP should describe major data requirements, capacity requirements, how transparency of the monitoring system and data will be addressed, early ideas on which methods to use, and how the system would engage participatory approaches to monitoring by forest-dependent indigenous peoples and other forest dwellers. It should also address independent monitoring and review, involving civil society and other stakeholders, and how findings would be fed back to improve REDD implementation. The proposal should present early ideas on how the system could evolve into a mature REDD monitoring system with this full set of capabilities.

(The FCPF recognizes that key international policy decisions may affect this component, so a staged approach may be useful. The R-PP states what early activities are proposed.)

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-Plan meets this standard, and recommendations:

4a. Emissions and Removals

The R-PP lists existing and required data, but does not include an assessment concerning the utility of available records or maps for REDD+, e.g. for cartographic material (topography, soil) or forest inventories of logging concessions. The Republic of Congo needs to better specify the value of available

data. The same applies to available capacities. It remains unclear to what extent capacity building is necessary for readiness and implementation of REDD+. From the information given by the R-PP, it seems that there is sufficient capacity for forest inventory purposes. However, the situation is unclear regarding remote sensing, GIS and carbon inventory expertise. Measures for capacity building and training are not defined. This carries over to other aspects of the MRV system as the document states its design will account for forest degradation, conservation, sustainable management and carbon stock enhancement, but it falls short on specifying appropriate approaches and the demand for data and capacity to implement such activities.

Monitoring of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (incl. drivers of carbon stock enhancement if applicable) is not addressed in the R-PP but forms an essential part of any REDD+ monitoring system since effective REDD+ policy must tackle the causes for forest loss and degradation and promote conservation and enhancement of forest areas and carbon stocks. The R-PP should provide a better understanding on how its envisaged MRV system is linked to the other components of the national REDD+ strategy.

The Republic of Congo aims to achieve IPCC Tier 2 reporting, at least for above-ground and below-ground biomass and soil carbon. However, the R-PP under 3.2 *Challenges (vi)* mentions that “Congo will aim for a type 3 approach”. This needs clarification if this category (“type 3 approach”) refers to an IPCC tier and which activities are targeted for type 3. The Republic of Congo may wish to consider assessing the feasibility of IPCC Tier 3 methodologies on demonstration sites (that can be integrated into national monitoring). Approach 2 involves tracking of land conversions between categories, resulting in a non-spatially explicit land-use conversion matrix and hence changes cannot be directly linked to forest carbon maps.

It would be much better to target Approach 3, which provides for spatially explicit data and allows monitoring of land use changes over time. This may not be possible at the beginning, so an initial Approach 2 may be necessary. But it is important to note that spatial data assumes greater importance as climate change, fire, disease, and other disturbances alter forest carbon patterns at fine spatial scale. Another strength of a spatially explicit approach to monitoring is the ability to visualize land cover changes over time. Time series also permit improved detection of classification errors and continuous refinement of classification results. This enhances both transparency and verifiability. When carbon results are also spatially explicit, rather than just statistically inferred from samples, it is easier to verify project level estimates.

Approach 3 extends Approach 2 by using spatially explicit land conversion information, derived from either sampling or wall-to-wall mapping techniques in time series. While both Approaches 2 and 3 give gross-net changes among land categories, only Approach 3 allows for the estimation of gross-net changes within a category, that is, detection of deforestation followed by afforestation, which is not possible with Approach 2 unless detailed supplementary information is provided. Only Approach 3 directly addresses leakage (displacement rather than cessation of activity) and permanence (persistence in a particular activity). The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is an important part of the spatially explicit approach. GIS systems also help in strengthening land tenure.

It is good practice to conduct a key category analysis to identify carbon emission variables of major importance. Apart from carbon pools, the country may also prioritize certain locations (e.g. with high land conversion rates or high-level biomass/soil carbon stocks) for an efficient use of available resources. This procedure can be applied within a phased approach, offering the country both time and opportunity

to build the required capacities. Additionally, the country will be able to investigate the cost-benefit ratio for a Tier 3 implementation and has a possible prospect of surplus revenue due to greater returns through improved accuracy.

Reiterating the lack of linkage between the monitoring and the other components of the R-PP, a major problem of the MRV concept as presented is the apparent absence of stakeholder involvement (regarding non-governmental agencies, local communities, private sector). The development of the MRV system appears to be centered exclusively within the national government following a strict top-down approach. The R-PP should attach considerably more importance to the participation of relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation of Congo's proposed MRV system.

REDD+ does not call for technically sophisticated MRV alone, but also for an independent and transparent system. The MRV system is certainly a key element of any national REDD+ strategy and should consequently safeguard a meaningful participation of civil society. Furthermore, participation will facilitate understanding and acceptance for REDD+ and simultaneously can raise awareness for potential challenges, prevent inept decisions/developments and address common concerns regarding REDD+ in general (e.g. issues of REDD+ revenues and land tenure, opportunities for development and livelihoods, access to information, etc.).

Decision support tool

It would be very valuable if Congo could propose and develop a web-based decision support tool that uses spatial data in a GIS format to make maps and provide other layers of information in an interactive format. The tools thus provide easy access to information to decision-makers, organizations, and the public on the state of the forest, future scenarios, and impacts of various decisions on REDD+ actions. Decisions about sub-national projects are best made within the context of such a tool which can show the projects in a national context.

Phases and South-South cooperation

As a general guide, the document should view building an MRV system as a process that progresses in phases. Typically these will generally include, scoping and consultation, country specific design, start-up, test and finally operational phases. It useful for Congo to keep a record of how well and how far it has gone in each phase, even if it chooses to run some phases concurrently. I recommend that the Congo MRV Task Team at CNIAFF make contact with the Guyana Forest Commission, who have developed a detailed ToR and phases for MRV System development.

Data Access

To get full satellite data access and technical help, I recommend that Congo consider joining the Forest Carbon Tracking task of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) as a National Demonstrator. This can be done by way of a government request to the GEO secretariat in Geneva. Such access will offer and opportunity for Congo to access long-term remote sensing data which, in combination with in situ data, will contribute to forest carbon estimations and at the same time will contribute to forest conservation goals. Cameroon and Tanzania are both National Demonstrator sites, and are benefiting from this interaction.

Regional Cooperation

It may well be possible to benefit from regional cooperation in developing an MRV system. FAO has, through the Congo Basin Forest Fund, and on behalf of UN-REDD and the Brazilian Space Agency INPE, proposed a regional MRV activity for Congo Basin countries. The regional activity involves a space component based on technology from INPE, and JRC/FAO methodologies for estimating land use change with ground measurements. This approach includes capacity development to strengthen the technical capacities of countries' national institutions with the ultimate objective to make them autonomous and able to set up and run national MRV systems. In this context, three regional centres have been proposed for capacity building: one for national forest inventories, one for satellite land monitoring systems and one for greenhouse gas inventories. The MRV plan should include reaching out to neighboring countries.

Flooded Forests

The fact that 37% of the Congolese forests are permanently flooded suggests both challenges and opportunities for technical developments of MRV. Even though this part of the forest may not be under development consideration at this time, some careful thought should be given now as to how the various measurement techniques can be adapted to this wet environment. In the end, it will be important to have measurement systems that are optimized for such environments.

The standard for component 4a has yet not been met.

4b. Other Benefits and Impacts

The R-PP only provides a short list of nonspecific intentions and refers to other Components (1a, 1b, 2b, 2c, 2d) of the document stating that the development of this MRV aspect is scheduled for the beginning of 2011. The Republic of Congo may take this opportunity to improve the overall appearance of Component 4 addressing the issues mentioned under 4a, especially with respect to:

- effective involvement of civil society,
- the attention to the monitoring of drivers, governance and social and environmental impacts,
- the linkage between the MRV system and the national REDD strategy,

as these factors are of key importance for Component 4b anyway.

The standard for component 4b has yet not been met.

Component 5. Schedule and Budget

Standard 5: Completeness of information and resource requirements

The R-PP proposes a full suite of activities to achieve REDD readiness, and identifies capacity building and financial resources needed to accomplish these activities. A budget and schedule for funding and technical support requested from the FCPF, as well as from other international sources (e.g., UN-REDD or bilateral assistance) are summarized by year and by potential donor. The information presented reflects the priorities in the R-PP, and is sufficient to meet the costs associated with REDD readiness activities identified in the R-PP, or gaps in funding are clearly noted.

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

The TAP recognizes the transparency in the budget and the sources. However, the TAP was unsure if, besides FCPF, the funds from the other mentioned sources are secured (GoC, UN-REDD, CBPF, AFD).

The Schedule could be shown in a shorter and clearer way as it would be commendable to present an overall budget only showing the major budget components and subcomponents so that the reader can clearly identify the cost centres.

A more detailed and understandable timeline type schedule by yearly quarters would be helpful to follow the anticipated flow of implementation activities over the 3+ year period.

Notes:

- 1. There is no budget for 4 b - monitoring other benefits and impacts - there should be some financial provisions for this.**
- 2. It also isn't clear where provisions are made for monitoring implementation of the ESIA findings and recommendations (component 2d).**
- 3. As noted previously the relatively large "lump sum" allocation for departmental consultations should be better described and justified.**

Component 6. Design a Program Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Standard 6: Adequately describes the indicators that will be used to monitor program performance of the Readiness process and R-PP activities, and to identify in a timely manner any shortfalls in performance timing or quality. The R-PP demonstrates that the framework will assist in transparent management of financial and other resources, to meet the activity schedule.

Reviewer's assessment of how well R-PP meets this standard, and recommendations:

No text has been prepared for this component; it is suggested that it would be helpful to introduce a comprehensive table to make it more readable.

The number of pilot projects (24 initiated over 2 years) seems unrealistically ambitious unless these are to be quite small scale. And if small, they are probably too numerous to manage properly.

The monitoring matrix could probably be reduced by 70% by focusing on key indicators only related to critical path elements of programme success, without losing relevance for overall performance monitoring.