

TAP Review of the Readiness Package submitted by Guyana

Independent TAP Expert Review on the Self-assessment process of Guyana's R-Package

April 2021

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1. Objectives

This report has two objectives:

- To provide an independent technical review of the REDD+ Readiness Package (R-Package) elaborated by the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (hereafter: Guyana) and of the Self-Assessment Process that Guyana conducted to develop its R-package
- To inform the FCPF Participants' Committee decision regarding endorsement of the R-Package

2. Methodological approach

This chapter presents the scope of the work performed for the TAP review, as per the Terms of Reference provided by the World Bank:

- Desk review of Guyana's R-Package report, based on the guidelines provided in the R-Package Assessment Framework, and of the key documents underpinning the R-Package report (National REDD strategy, Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment, Environmental and Social Management Framework, Forest reference levels and Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System, among others)
- Desk review of Guyana's documentation regarding the self-assessment process, including stakeholder involvement
- Provision of targeted feedback and recommendations for moving forward with REDD+ Readiness

The TAP assessment started with a review of the completeness of the R-Package provided in February 2021, including:

- i. A summary of the REDD+ readiness preparation process
- ii. A report of the national multi-stakeholder self-assessment process
- iii. The results of the national multi-stakeholder assessment; and
- iv. References to the key supporting documents for each of the nine REDD+ Readiness sub-components

As a result of this initial review, Guyana provided a revised R-Package on 7 March 2021, including additional information on the national multi-stakeholder self-assessment process and additional references to supporting documentation.

The TAP assessment is presented in three parts:

- Review of Guyana's self-assessment process and documentation, as contained in Guyana's R-Package (Chapter 3.a)
- Review of Guyana's progress on REDD+ readiness, based on the R-Package submitted as well as the supporting documentation referenced in the R-Package, for each of the REDD+ Readiness sub-components (Chapter 3.b)
- Summary Assessment and Recommendations (Chapter 4)

3. TAP Review

Guyana submitted the REDD+ Readiness Package (R-Package) report, which was prepared according to FCPF's 2013 Readiness Assessment Framework to the FCPF in February 2021. The country then submitted a revised version of the R-Package, including some additional documentation on the self-assessment process and some clarifications, in March 2021. The main body of the R-Package report provides a summary of the REDD+ Readiness process, and of the country's progress with reference to the four REDD+ Readiness components.

a. Review of Self-assessment process and documentation

Background

This section reviews the process that Guyana followed to conduct its multi-stakeholder self-assessment. The TAP review is based on the description of the self-assessment process contained in the R-Package report, and on supporting documents referenced there. The review takes into account the documentation prepared for the assessment, the process for selecting and involving stakeholders, and for reflecting their opinions in the R-Package report.

Prior to reporting the results of the TAP review, it is important to recognize that Guyana has engaged in numerous multi-stakeholder consultations on different REDD+ components and sub-components since 2009, and that it is impossible to do full justice to this extended process in the frame of the R-Package report.

Process and methodology

The multistakeholder Self-assessment process followed the recommendations of the Guide to the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework, concerning the selection of participants, preparation of the event, facilitation of the assessment process, synthesis and dissemination of results, and validation.

The multi-stakeholder self-assessment included the following steps: (i) Review of secondary information¹; (ii) Interviews with selected stakeholders, including representatives from the Guyana FCPF Project Steering Committee; (iii) Preparation of the consultation document, which was made available to the stakeholders at least two weeks in advance of the self-assessment workshop; (iv) Holding of the self-assessment workshop; and (v) Preparation of the final report.

A consultant was hired by the FCPF PEU to convene and moderate the stakeholder validation workshop in Georgetown on 14 July 2020. This two-hour workshop was held virtually via Zoom. The objective of the workshop was to receive feedback on the multi-stakeholder self-assessment report. A total of 18 stakeholders participated, out of 51 invited. The stakeholder groups represented included government (13), FCPF delivery partner (3), civil society (1), and indigenous peoples (1).²

¹ The self-assessment process also benefited from the 2015 version of Guyana R-Package, available on <https://forestry.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/FCPF-Guyanas-Readiness-Package-June-2015.pdf>

² The low participation rate was thought to be due in part to the COVID-19 crisis.

The workshop methodology consisted of a presentation on progress achieved for each component, sub-component and criterion. Participants were asked to express their perception on progress to date, and to validate the rating of each subcomponent and criterion according to the traffic light indicators (red, orange, yellow, green) provided in the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework. In addition, the stakeholder workshop participants validated five substantive recommendations to deal with the main shortcomings of the REDD+ readiness process so far, which are discussed in section 4, Conclusions.

Results

Guyana had already achieved significant progress in Components 3, Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level, and 4, Monitoring Systems for Forests and Safeguards prior to the implementation of the FCPF Technical Cooperation Agreement (TCA), which was signed in 2014 and implementation started in 2016. This is because these two Components benefited from multi-partner funding (from the national budget, Norway, the European Union and the Government of the Netherlands) during the 2009-2015 period. Since the Mid-Term Review was carried out in 2018, Guyana has achieved considerable additional progress, with financial support from the national budget and the FCPF Readiness Fund. Progress was especially meaningful for sub-components 2b, REDD+ Strategy Options and 2d, SESA and ESMF.

Overall, the self-assessment showed that 91% of the indicators were found to have achieved significant progress (**GREEN**) or have progressed well but require further development (**YELLOW**). Components 3, Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level, and 4, Monitoring Systems for Forests and Safeguards had achieved most consistent progress, whereas Components 1, Readiness organization and consultation, and 2, REDD+ Strategy Preparation, showed more mixed results. Twenty (20) criteria were scored **GREEN**, 11 **YELLOW**, 2 **ORANGE** and 1 **RED**. The only criterion scored **RED** was No. 22, the National REDD+ registry.

- **TAP assessment.** *The participatory Self-assessment process in Guyana followed the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. The R-Package Report includes information on the Self-assessment process (in Annex 1) as well as its results. The response rate of the 51 stakeholders invited to participate in the self-assessment validation workshop on 14 July 2020 was somewhat disappointing, with only 18 people attending (35%), but this was likely caused in part by the COVID-19 crisis.³ The R-Package report did not permit an assessment of whether there were major differences in perception on REDD+ Readiness between stakeholder groups.*

³ The consultant facilitator judged it likely that many stakeholders felt they had already contributed sufficiently, and therefore decided not to join the virtual workshop.

b. Review of Progress on REDD+ Readiness

This section assesses the progress on REDD+ Readiness for each of the four Readiness components: (i) Readiness arrangements and organization; (ii) National REDD+ Strategy Preparation; (iii) Reference Emissions Level; and (iv) Monitoring systems and Safeguards, and the nine sub-components. The assessment is based on the criteria that Guyana used for its self-assessment, which follow the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework guidelines. The TAP assessment discusses both the strengths and weaknesses of each Readiness component and sub-component.

The current TAP review is based on the REDD+ Readiness Package (R-Package) document prepared for FCPF by Guyana and on the supporting documents referenced in the R-Package, which are available from Guyana's REDD+ website <https://reddplusguyana.org/>.

It is important to note that the political context for Guyana's REDD+ Readiness process evolved considerably over time. From 2009 onwards, the country worked simultaneously on REDD+ Readiness and Implementation, through support and performance-based payments provided by the Norwegian government⁴, under the overall heading of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS)⁵ adopted by the Government of Guyana in 2009. The country made major progress in establishing a functional Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS), generating annual reporting on forest change from 2010-11, with accuracy assessments and independent, third-party verification.

Following national elections and a change of government in 2015, the country developed a Green State Development Strategy (GSDS) Vision 2040, a 20-year development framework document that is aligned with Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, and is broader in scope than the LCDS, aiming to provide a better quality of life for all Guyanese on the basis of the country's natural wealth. In 2016, Guyana started implementing the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) with funding from the FCPF Readiness Fund. While from 2009-2015 the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) was the agency responsible for REDD+ Readiness preparation, through the REDD+ Secretariat it hosted, in 2016 this responsibility was transferred to GFC's parent Ministry of Natural Resources, which established the FCPF Project Execution Unit for this purpose.

Component 1: Readiness, Organization and Consultation

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

This part of the Readiness Assessment Framework focuses on national REDD+ management arrangements and their effectiveness in fulfilling core functions.

⁴ Norway made the final performance-based payment, of USD 50 million, in September 2019.

⁵ The key underlying principle of the LCDS is the Economic Value to the Nation of standing forests, see <https://www.lcds.gov.gy/>

Accountability and Transparency, Operating Mandate and Budget (Criteria 1-2: **GREEN**) Multi-sector coordination mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration (Criterion 3: **YELLOW**) Technical supervision capacity and Fund management capacity (Criterion 4-5: **GREEN**)

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), which has oversight and coordination functions for agencies responsible for forestry (Guyana Forestry Commission, GFC) and mining (Guyana Geology and Mining Commission, GGMC) was designated to be responsible for overseeing technical aspects of REDD+, including the National Forest Management System, Forest Carbon Management System (FCS), Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS, and of other activities outlined in the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP). The responsibility for implementing most of these technical REDD+ activities was attributed to the REDD+ Secretariat under GFC from 2009-2015, and to the FCPF Project Execution Unit (PEU) directly under MNR from 2016 to 2020.

In addition to the above-mentioned agencies, a wide range of State and non-State actors supported REDD+ implementation, including representatives from indigenous people (National Tshaos Council, NTC⁶, and Amerindian NGOs), private sector producer associations, Civil Society Organizations and Academia. A number of multi-stakeholder Committees were formed to provide oversight (e.g. MRVS Steering Committee) and to function as deliberative bodies, e.g. the National Climate Change Committee.

All REDD+ institutions have clear, mutually supportive operating mandates, under the guidance of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), The Guyana-Norway Joint Concept Note, The Readiness Preparation Proposal to FCPF (R-PP) and the Green State Development Strategy. So far, REDD+ activities in Guyana have been funded by the national government, by the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF)⁷ and by the FCPF Readiness Fund.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements have operated in an open, accountable and transparent manner. This was achieved through: (i) clear mandates for all institutions and oversight committees involved; (ii) independent third-party audits of the work of agencies involved in REDD+; (iii) public disclosure of findings of audits and verifications, through the reports of the National Assembly and public consultations; and (iv) minutes of meetings of REDD+ related Steering Committees made available through public websites. Mandates of the various REDD+ institutions have been mutually supportive, and budget has been adequate for implementing planned REDD+ activities.

Guyana has demonstrated the quality of its technical supervision capacity through the implementation of interim REDD+ measures under the Guyana-Norway agreement since 2009, and through the successful completion of a number of REDD+ Readiness deliverables, such as the National REDD+ Strategy, under the R-PP, funded by the FCPF Readiness Fund. Guyana built considerable fund management capacity through the establishment of its GRIF and more recently, it has set up a Natural Resources Fund through an act of parliament adopted in 2019.⁸

⁶ The NTC is a semi-autonomous body comprising all Tshaos, the elected Amerindian community leaders.

⁷ GRIF was originally established in 2009 to provide financing for projects identified in the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. It received the performance payments under the Guyana-Norway REDD+ agreement. The World Bank is the Trustee for GRIF, see <http://www.guyanareddfund.org/>

⁸ <https://finance.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NRF-Act.pdf>

Cross-sectoral coordination has been hindered, however, by the absence of a comprehensive land use policy.⁹ The Cabinet of the Government of Guyana set up a Special Land Use Committee (SLUC) in 2010, in response to protests by miners fearing the negative effects of the 2009 Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) on their industry, but the SLUC appears to have had little impact. In 2018, the Commissioner of the Guyana Land Survey Commission (GLSC) concluded that the expansion of forestry, agriculture and mining investments on public lands had led to overlapping responsibilities and conflicts. The Sustainable Land Development and Management Project launched in 2018, funded by the GRIF, is expected to generate a land use policy to guide more sustainable management of Guyana's land-based natural capital.

- **TAP assessment.** *Guyana had already made much progress under this sub-component prior to the start of R-PP implementation with FCPF Readiness Fund support, through the impetus of the bilateral REDD+ agreement with Norway – which emphasized transparency (through independent third-party verification and audits) and stakeholder consultation among other key elements. A REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF) has been established to receive performance-based REDD+ payments and fund key REDD+ activities, with the World Bank as the Trustee. The main challenge under this sub-component has been cross-sectoral coordination, despite the inclusion of key sector Ministries such as Natural Resources (responsible for mining as well as forestry), Agriculture and Public Infrastructure in the overall REDD+ institutional architecture as well as key REDD+ Committees. The ongoing restructuring of the Office of Climate Change (OCC) will need to take this issue into account. The land use policy that is to be produced by the Sustainable Land Development and Management Project would also be helpful in improving cross-sectoral coordination. Concur with the rating.*

Feedback and grievance redress mechanism (criterion 6: **YELLOW**)

In 2018, Guyana completed the development of a Grievance and Redress Mechanism (GRM) to receive and log grievances on land and forestry issues, and facilitate the dissemination of information to the public, including the following elements: (i) GRM website (currently down for maintenance); (ii) Grievance analysis assessment of mechanisms; (iii) Joint action plan; (iv) Implementation framework; (v) Operations manual; (vi) Database user manual and Grievance registry; (vii) Plan for consultation and information sharing; and (viii) Posters for education and awareness. The GRM was developed in a participatory way, with stakeholder consultations in 12 locations outside the capital, followed by a wrap-up workshop in Georgetown.¹⁰ The GRIF also funded the development of a GRM for Amerindian land titling, which is highly relevant to REDD+ and which was operationalized in 2017 by the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MoIPA), under the supervision of the GLSC. There is no current plan or effort to harmonise the two GRMs.

To date, the REDD+ GRM has not been operationalized. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) intends to establish a Grievance and Redress Secretariat to address the increasing number of concerns and complaints from stakeholders in the natural resources sector. The GRM will allow government agencies, particularly those under the purview of the MNR (the GGMC, the Guyana Forestry Commission and the Guyana Gold Board) to respond to stakeholder concerns about their

⁹ One area in which cross-sectoral coordination has been effective is in the storage of spatial datasets, which has been coordinated by GFC since 2010, see also discussion under criterion 11 below.

¹⁰ Details on the stakeholder consultations held for the GRM are provided in Annex 2 of the R-Package Report.

policies, programmes and operations. It remains unclear, however, how the implementation of the GRM is to be resourced.

Self-assessment. The R-Package noted that while the development of the GRM had been completed and the stakeholders had been consulted, many stakeholders still lack a full understanding of REDD+. It also noted the need for translating complex REDD+ concepts and measures into simpler concepts that can be translated into local languages – in addition to the videos, radio programmes, brochures and posters that have already been prepared in the four main indigenous languages (Akawaio, Patamona, Makushi and Wapishan)¹¹.

- **TAP assessment.** *The fact that the GRM, while completed, has not been rolled out, and that no source of funding has been identified for this, is a matter of some concern. Harmonization of the REDD+ GRM with the already operational GRM for Amerindian land titling could be usefully explored. Concur with the rating.*

Sub-component 1b: Consultation, participation and outreach (Criteria 7-10)

This part of the Readiness Assessment Framework reviews how consultations with key stakeholders are performed to ensure participation of different social groups, transparency, and accountability of decision-making.

Participation and engagement of key stakeholders, Consultation process (criteria 7-8: **GREEN**) Guyana engaged in dozens of consultation meetings and workshops on REDD+ from 2009 to 2020, with indigenous and forest-dependent communities, as well as regional stakeholders.¹² The country faces a number of challenges in engaging with REDD+ stakeholders, due to the need to reach out to people in sparsely populated, remote areas with poor communication infrastructure and high cost of travel, and the need to use local languages in interactions with indigenous communities. The government agencies involved in REDD+ are not allowed to approach indigenous stakeholders in the hinterland directly, but have to obtain prior consent from the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs (MoIPA) first – a process that may take months.

The APA and the Forest Peoples Programme called on the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) to ensure that consultation approaches and official information materials on REDD were fair, balanced and transparent, with full information on risks, disadvantages and potential costs of REDD for communities – and not just potential benefits and possible advantages. In response, the Government, in collaboration with Conservation International (CI), convened a joint expert workshop to produce a paper “Practical approaches to ensuring full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in REDD+: assessing experiences and lessons”. This approach has since been adopted to ensure that national and local consultation processes are clear, inclusive, transparent and facilitate timely access to information in a culturally appropriate form.¹³

Self-assessment. Guyana engaged in a sustained effort to consult the different REDD+ stakeholder groups, over an extended period of time (2009-2020). By working closely with the National Toshias Council (NTC) of elected Amerindian leaders, Guyana ensured that indigenous rights holders and

¹¹ Videos and radio programmes in local languages can be accessed through

<https://reddplusguyana.org/audiovisual-resources/>

¹² Details on the various stakeholder consultations held are provided in Annex 3 of the R-Package Report.

¹³ See also Government of Guyana and Conservation International 2015, <https://forestry.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/REDD-Outreach-2015-Final-Report.pdf>

stakeholders were able to self-select their representatives in the consultations and that Indigenous Peoples' institutions and decision-making processes were used to enhance their engagement.¹⁴ While a considerable investment was made in translating consultation and outreach materials into the four Amerindian languages, it turned out to be difficult to simplify complex REDD+-related concepts and procedures sufficiently for local stakeholders to fully grasp them. The self-assessment also concluded that while the consultation process had focused primarily on indigenous communities, non-indigenous communities – many of whom depend on forestry and mining – had received much less attention. This fact, in combination with the lack of trust among stakeholder groups and the linking by some actors of the REDD+ Readiness process to resolving indigenous land tenure issues, led to an (erroneous) expectation that available REDD+ funds would be used exclusively for the benefits of indigenous communities.

- **TAP assessment.** *Guyana invested considerable energy and resources in its REDD+ stakeholder consultations and outreach, including in ensuring that REDD+ stakeholder groups were able to self-select their representatives and participate fully – for example through translation of outreach materials into the four major Amerindian languages. The consultations ran into some structural problems with regards to simplifying complex REDD+ concepts and procedures sufficiently for local stakeholders to grasp them fully, an issue that can hopefully be resolved as the REDD+ commitments are translated into concrete actions on the ground. Non-indigenous forest communities dependent on forestry and mining perceive to have been somewhat marginalized in comparison to indigenous communities in the consultation process so far, and it would be important to address this perception as Guyana moves forward with REDD+ implementation. Concur with the rating.*

Information sharing and accessibility of information; Implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes (Criteria 9 and 10: **YELLOW**)

Guyana has attempted to reach REDD+ stakeholders through a variety of channels, including the national REDD+ website.¹⁵ Those people with limited or no internet access are informed through the mass media (radio, newspapers, infomercials) nationally and regionally. Guyana has collaborated with a number of international partners in REDD+ information sharing, including Conservation International (CI), Iwokrama and WWF.

With regards to indigenous communities, consultations must be held, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) obtained prior to any proposed activity, decision, project, legislation, policy and research that may affect their rights, interests, lands and territories, resources and livelihoods. The

National Toshias Council (NTC) protocol/guidelines for FPIC of indigenous peoples requires that the information being communicated must be clear (“in plain English”), whether it is spoken or written. In addition, it is up to the indigenous communities to indicate whether they have had sufficient information and consultation, and they are entitled to independent legal or technical advice of their own choosing at any time during the consultation process. An Indigenous Peoples (IP) Caucus emerged in 2016, when three IP representatives were selected to serve on the Project Steering

¹⁴ As witnessed by the formation of an Indigenous Peoples' REDD+ Caucus discussed under criteria 9-10, among others.

¹⁵ <https://reddplusguyana.org/>

Committee of the FCPF-funded R-PP project. In 2019, the IP Caucus was extended to include 15 IP civil society organizations.¹⁶

Apart from the general consultations referred to under criteria 7-8 above, the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) has also organized annual sessions for a variety of stakeholders on the technical aspects of REDD+, including the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS).

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that generally, information on REDD+ is accessible to stakeholders and is being received, but not always in a format and language understandable to them. During the 2019 consultation workshops, the government discovered that the majority of stakeholders were unaware that Guyana had started the implementation of REDD+ and they were anxious to see tangible benefits from the implementation process. While generally speaking, the government has taken into account the outcomes of public consultations in the design of REDD+ policy and management arrangements, there has been inadequate public disclosure of consultation outcomes related to technical activities, such as reference level, monitoring and information systems development, and national land use planning. Further development is required to ensure that national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements are able to continually demonstrate transparent, consistent, comprehensive and timely sharing and disclosure of information – related to all readiness activities, including the development of REDD+ strategy, reference levels and monitoring systems) in a culturally appropriate form.

- **TAP assessment.** *While there have been significant efforts to share information with all REDD+ stakeholders, the information has not always been provided in a format or language that is understandable to these stakeholders. The required compliance with FPIC is time-consuming and sets a high bar for engagement with remote indigenous communities, both in terms of translation into local languages and of the clear explanation of concrete implications of REDD+ implementation for their livelihoods. Further efforts to simplify complex REDD+ concepts and procedures for local stakeholders will be essential. In addition, as noted by the self-assessment, there is room for improvement in the sharing of the results of stakeholder consultation processes. Concur with the rating.*

Component 2: REDD+ Strategy Preparation

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

This part of the Readiness Assessment Framework focuses on how the REDD+ strategy preparation process integrated the causal relationships between the economic, legal and policy context of the country on the one hand, and the associated patterns of land-use change, deforestation and forest degradation on the other.

Assessment and analysis, Prioritization of direct and indirect drivers/barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement (criteria 11-12: **GREEN**)

Guyana had already assessed and analyzed deforestation and forest degradation, and prioritized direct and indirect drivers as well as barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement under the Guyana-

¹⁶ Priority issues for the IP Caucus are: land rights; governance and leadership; right to FPIC; enhancing indigenous women and youth rights; and representation and participation in national decision-making.

Norway Agreement, as independently reported in 2012 in the Interim Measures Report.¹⁷ In accordance with the Marrakech Accords, Guyana elected to classify land as forests if it meets the following criteria: (i) tree cover of 30% minimum; (ii) tree height 5 m minimum; (iii) area of 1 ha minimum.

The analysis of the cover-to-cover satellite imagery obtained showed that Guyana had a forest cover of approximately 18.5 million ha, or 87% of its land area in September 2009, and that it had lost 74,917 ha of forests between 1990 and 2009, of which 63,646 ha was within the State Forest Area. Annual deforestation rates have been relatively low, with 0.1-0.3% rates being reported. This estimate did not include forest degradation caused by selective timber harvesting, fire or shifting agriculture. This data has been refined progressively, as Landsat 30 m resolution imagery was replaced by high-resolution RapidEye imagery, with a 5 m resolution. GFC has coordinated the storage of the different spatial datasets held by the various sector agencies¹⁸, and the progressive updating of these datasets, as necessary.

From the historical analysis of spatial data, it emerged that mining, forestry and agriculture (not including shifting agriculture¹⁹) account for 95% of Guyana's deforestation and for 97% of GHG emissions from the land use sector. Mining is the most important driver accounting for 55.2% of forest-related GHG emissions, followed by forestry with 35.7%²⁰, and agriculture a distant third with 6.5%.²¹ Infrastructure opening up new forest areas is largely driven by the same three sectors. The indirect drivers were identified as follows: (i) high international price for gold; (ii) insufficient methods and techniques; (iii) lack of geological data leading to unnecessary clearing of forests; (iv) lack of monitoring and enforcement; (v) varying conditions for granting forestry concessions; (vi) lack of a land policy; and (vii) shifting cultivation. A number of barriers to enhancing forest carbon stocks were also identified, including carbon ownership, land tenure and titling, policy and governance issues, inter-agency coordination, which are further discussed under sub-component 2.b below.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that the historical analysis of spatial data was effective in prioritizing key direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation to be addressed by the programmes and policies included in the REDD+ strategy.

- **TAP assessment.** *The analysis of deforestation and forest degradation was done using a robust methodology, and higher-resolution datasets were progressively introduced. Direct drivers were quantified, and direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation prioritized. Major barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement were also clearly identified. Concur with the rating.*

¹⁷ GFC 2012. Guyana REDD+ Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System Interim Measures Report, see <https://forestry.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Guyana-MRVS-Interim-Measures-Report-Year-2-V3.pdf>

¹⁸ Including those of Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), Guyana Lands & Surveys Commission (GL&SC), Protected Areas Commission (PAC) as well as GFC itself.

¹⁹ Shifting agriculture is estimated to account for less than 1% of total deforestation, as forest regrowth rapidly colonizes abandoned fields. Thus shifting agriculture tends to cause forest degradation (reduction of carbon stocks) rather than deforestation.

²⁰ GHG emissions from forestry are mainly due to degradation rather than deforestation, as forest management systems in Guyana are based on selective felling. The majority of illegal logging is the result of legal concessions extracting more than the allowable cut specified by the GFC – so no additional infrastructure, such as skid trails, are developed for illegal logging.

²¹ Percentages of emissions caused by the different sectors are provided in Table 11 on page 69. Forestry emissions are due to degradation, as selective timber harvesting does not lead to deforestation.

Links between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities, Action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure, governance (criteria 13-14: **YELLOW**)

Guyana's REDD+ Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS) tracks forest change, both deforestation and forest degradation, by change driver. This makes it possible to develop tailored interventions for different forest areas with different drivers of deforestation and degradation.

Guyana's recognition of indigenous peoples' rights is much advanced compared with many other countries. Over 3 million ha (approximately 14%) of the country's land mass is held by indigenous peoples under ownership rights, while an additional 500,000 ha of State Forest Land are allocated to Community Forest Associations.²² Furthermore, Guyana has already gone beyond the formulation of action plans to start the implementation of various REDD+ initiatives related to natural resource rights, land tenure and governance. These initiatives, which have been financed by the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF), include the Amerindian Land Titling and Amerindian Development Fund projects (together with UNDP); and the Sustainable Land Development and Management project, which aims to develop a harmonized national land policy and legislative framework and strengthen the capacity of the Guyana Lands & Surveys Commission (GLSC) and partner Ministries and agencies.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that while REDD+ project-based activities have addressed relevant land use, land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods and governance issues in priority regions of the country, they have not adequately addressed broader natural resource rights and participatory governance issues.

- **TAP assessment.** *As noted in the self-assessment, while ongoing REDD+ initiatives address some of the drivers of deforestation and degradation, natural resource rights and participatory governance issues have not been addressed systematically as yet. This would require improved cross-sectoral coordination, among others, as indicated under the discussion of criterion 3 above. Concur with the rating.*

Implications for forest law and policy (criterion 15: **GREEN**)

Guyana has updated a number of key documents governing forests in 2018, including the National Forest Policy Statement, the National Forest Plan, the Forest Regulations, and the Code of Practice for Forest Operations.²³ Key laws, such as the Forest Act (2009) and the Guyana Forestry Commission Act (2007), are also relatively recent. The R-Package has identified a number of legal and policy documents that would need to be updated to enable REDD+ implementation, including: (i) the Guyana Lands & Surveys Commission (GLSC) Act (1999); (ii) the Guyana National Land Use Plan (NLUP, 2013), which provides a strategic framework to guide land development, but is not an operational land use plan; and (iii) the Amerindian Act (2006), which would have to be revised to include more secure carbon rights and ownership for indigenous peoples. GLSC is currently leading an effort to develop a National Land Policy and revise the NLUP. The new Land Policy needs to include "the development of a national inter-sectoral land use planning system", which is a legal requirement under the Guyana-Norway MoU on REDD+.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that Guyana had made significant progress with this criterion.

²² Benn et al. 2020, p. 45.

²³ See document references and hyperlinks in Chapter 5.

- **TAP assessment.** *Guyana has indeed identified the key legal and policy reforms necessary for REDD+ implementation. Concur with the rating.*

Sub-component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options (criteria 16-18)

This part of the Readiness Assessment Framework focuses on the adequacy of selected REDD+ strategy options vis-à-vis identified drivers, and their implementability.

Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategy options, Feasibility assessment, Implications of strategy options (criteria 16-18: **GREEN**)

The availability of detailed data on the GHG emissions caused by different sectors enabled the clear prioritization of drivers (see discussion of criteria 11-12 above), which in turn facilitated the selection and prioritization of REDD+ options. The latter were prioritized in an iterative process, with each subsequent draft REDD+ strategy benefiting from stakeholder feedback, and from progress made with the social and environmental assessment and safeguards, which were developed in parallel with the refinement of the REDD+ strategy options. Social, environmental and economic risks to each of the strategy options were identified and a feasibility assessment carried out by comparing implementation and opportunity costs of each of the strategy options with their carbon benefits. Strong implementation of all five REDD+ strategy options would imply an annual loss of government revenue from forestry and mining of around USD35 million, which is significant, but weak implementation would only have a modest impact on reducing GHG emissions.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that the process for selecting and prioritizing REDD+ strategy options had been evidence-based and participatory. A significant effort has been made to identify trade-offs between REDD+ implementation and development objectives in other sectors, particularly forestry and mining. The potential impact of the proposed REDD+ strategy options has been identified, however additional work is required to agree on a timeline and process to resolve inconsistencies and integrate REDD+ strategy options with relevant development policies. The five strategy options are supportive of broader development objectives but are yet to garner broad community support.

- **TAP assessment.** *Guyana has made considerable progress with selecting and prioritizing REDD+ strategy options, and has made trade-offs between REDD+ implementation and Business as Usual extractive industries policies (mining and forestry) explicit through economic cost-benefit analysis, which is a good practice. Concur with the green ratings for criteria 16 and 17, but the language of the self-assessment regarding criterion 18 (“additional work is required.....to resolve inconsistencies and integrate REDD+ strategy options with relevant development policies”) would suggest that a yellow score might be more appropriate for the latter criterion.*

Sub-component 2c. Implementation framework (criteria 19-22)

This part of the assessment framework focuses on the structural legal, policy and institutional measures taken to facilitate implementation of the REDD+ strategy.

Adoption and implementation of legislation/regulations, Guidelines for implementation, Benefit sharing mechanism (criteria 19-21: **YELLOW**)

In Guyana as in other countries, REDD+ is a multi-sectoral effort that requires cross-sectoral coordination and specific institutional arrangements to ensure that the drivers of deforestation and

forest degradation, and the barriers for more sustainable land use, are fully and effectively addressed. A number of new or reinforced institutional arrangements have been proposed, including the new REDD+ Executive Board for strategic coordination among Ministries, led by the OCC; the REDD+ Coordination Office (a strengthened version of the existing REDD+ Secretariat), for day-to-day coordination and execution of REDD+ activities; the new Grievance Redress Desk; the new Multi-stakeholder seller's entity (MSE) for representing forest owners in carbon transactions; and the new Safeguards Committee, overseeing Safeguards implementation.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that a number of new institutions needed to be created (or existing institutions strengthened). Regarding carbon rights, the necessary clarification of these is emphasized in the REDD+ strategy and some necessary legal reforms have been identified, but not yet implemented. The Benefit Sharing Plan will be implemented by the MSE, but the latter institution has not been created yet. The Opt-in Mechanism (OIM) for participation of titled Amerindian villages in any forest carbon payment schemes is yet to be finalized.

- **TAP assessment.** *As noted by the self-assessment, Guyana still has a considerable amount of work to do on the improvement of the policy, legal and institutional environment needed for REDD+ implementation. This state of affairs may appear paradoxical for a country that started implementing REDD+, through the Guyana-Norway agreement, over a decade ago. Concur with the rating.*

National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities (criterion 22: **RED**)

Other than for the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS), there is no national geo-referenced REDD+ information system in Guyana. The OCC, which will determine the way forward regarding the National REDD+ Registry, is currently under restructuring.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that there was no progress yet under this criterion. It also noted that the Carbon Assets Tracking System (CATS)²⁴ maintained by the World Bank offers an opportunity to Guyana to model its issuance and transaction of ER units on, under the future national REDD+ Registry.

- **TAP assessment.** *No progress as yet. Concur with the rating.*

Analysis of social and environmental safeguards issues, Environmental and Social Management Framework (criteria 23 and 25: **YELLOW**)

Guyana is making progress in complying with the so-called Cancun safeguards adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to which Guyana is a State Party. GFC has prepared the first Summary of Safeguards Information (SOI) for submission to UNFCCC through the OCC. For the implementation of the Safeguards Information System (SIS), as required by UNFCCC's Warsaw Framework for REDD+, Guyana's REDD+ Coordination Office will be supported by a Safeguards Committee. The Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) lays out applicable safeguards policies and procedures that Guyana will have to put in place in order to assess, manage and mitigate (potential) environmental and social risks associated with

²⁴ The Carbon Assets Tracking System (CATS) is an Emission Reduction (ER) Transaction Registry, designed and implemented to support the issuance and transactions of ER units generated under the World Bank Programs, see <https://cats.worldbank.org/>

future REDD+ policies, measures and actions. The proposed budget for ESMF implementation for a five-year period is USD 1,393,830, covering the cost for the government's institutional capacity building and for training relevant non-government actors. Further analysis of social and environmental safeguards issues may be required during the implementation of the REDD+ strategy.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that significant progress had been made. Outstanding work on the SIS and SOI is anticipated for early 2021.

- **TAP assessment.** *Significant progress has been made, but further work on the SIS and SOI is needed, and further analysis of social and environmental safeguards will likely be required once specific REDD+ activities are identified for implementation in specific geographic areas. Concur with the rating.*

REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts (criterion 24: **GREEN**)

The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) was guided by inputs and feedback received from four one-day stakeholder workshops held in June 2019, involving regions and populations that would be most impacted by REDD+. Stakeholders represented included government, private sector, civil society and indigenous peoples. The workshops reviewed the potential social and environmental impacts of implementation of the REDD+ strategy options, and possible response measures or potential mitigation actions. In addition, as noted under criteria 16-18 above, the REDD+ strategy options were prioritized in an iterative process, with each subsequent draft REDD+ strategy benefiting from stakeholder feedback, and from progress made with the social and environmental assessment and safeguards, which were developed in parallel with the refinement of the REDD+ strategy options.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that the REDD+ Strategy development and the SESA process were conducted in an inclusive, participatory and transparent manner, and that there had been multiple opportunities for stakeholders to learn about potential REDD+ strategy impacts and to influence the REDD+ strategy design.

- **TAP assessment.** *Guyana invested considerable effort in engaging stakeholders to identify potential social and environmental impacts of implementing REDD+ Strategy Options, and to suggest ways to avoid or mitigate the negative impacts. Concur with the rating.*

Component 3: Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level (criteria 26-28)

Demonstration of methodology; Use of historical data, adjusted for national circumstances; Technical feasibility of the methodological approach and consistency with UNFCCC/IPCC guidance and guidelines (criteria 26-28: **GREEN**)

Guyana is a High Forest Low Deforestation (HFLD) country, meaning it has high forest cover (over 85%) and a low deforestation rate. UNFCCC allows HFLD countries to use a so-called "combined reference level", in which the average rate of global tropical forest carbon emissions (0.435%/year) is combined with the rate of annual emissions from forests in Guyana (0.049%/year over the 2001-2012 period) to obtain an average emissions rate of 0.242%, corresponding to a reference emissions level of 46,301,251 tCO₂/year. The activities covered by Guyana's Forest Reference Level (FRL) are

deforestation from conversion to agriculture, mining and infrastructure expansion, as well as forest degradation from timber harvesting.

Historical emission over the 2001-2012 period were estimated at 140.0 million tCO₂, with 53% of emissions due to mining (deforestation), 40% of emissions due to forestry (including emissions due to degradation from timber harvest and deforestation from forestry infrastructure) and 6% from agriculture (deforestation). Guyana's National Forest Monitoring System is composed of the Forest Area Assessment System (FAAS) and the Forest Carbon Monitoring System (FCMS), and enables consistency in data on changes in forest cover, forest carbon stocks and related emissions.

Guyana used the 2003 IPCC Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry (GPG-LULUCF) and the IPCC 2006 Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories from Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU), for its national GHG inventory. Guyana submitted its first national RL to UNFCCC in December 2014 and submitted a revised RL in September 2015.²⁵ The independent technical assessment of Guyana's Reference Level for UNFCCC noted that the data and information used by Guyana in constructing its FREL are transparent and complete, and are in overall accordance with relevant UNFCCC guidelines.²⁶ The assessment report also identified a few areas for further technical improvement.

Self-assessment. Guyana used historical data, adjusted for national circumstances to calculate its Reference Emissions Level. It used the "Combined Reference Level" approach, as permitted under UNFCCC guidance for HFLD countries. The self-assessment concluded that Guyana's REL/RL is consistent with UNFCCC/IPCC guidance and guidelines.

- **TAP assessment.** *Guyana's Reference Emissions Level is measured using IPCC Tier 2 (intermediate) and Tier 3 (highest technical standard) methods. The soundness of Guyana's RL was confirmed by the independent technical assessment carried out for UNFCCC in October 2015. Concur with the rating.*

Component 4. Monitoring systems for Forests, and Safeguards

Sub-component 4a: National Forest Monitoring System (criteria 29-31)

This part of the Readiness Assessment Framework focuses on progress made in designing and developing operational forest monitoring systems.

Documentation of monitoring approach, Demonstration of early system implementation, Institutional arrangements and capacities (criteria 29-31: **GREEN**)

Guyana began development of the National Forest Monitoring System in 2009 by establishing an internationally recognized Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS), which has gone through a number of improvements over the last decade, including use of higher-resolution satellite imagery. The NFMS includes five major components: (i) The MRVS Roadmap, Phase 1 – national strategy formulation, Phase 2 – since 2014, country readiness phase; Phase 3 – since 2017, implementation phase; (ii) Annual reporting on forest change, providing activity data, through the MRVS Interim Measures Reports, 2011-2018; (iii) Accuracy assessments of the Interim Measures

²⁵ The 2015 RL submission to UNFCCC can be accessed on

https://redd.unfccc.int/files/guianas_proposal_for_reference_level_for_redd_-_final_sept_2015.pdf

²⁶ <https://unfccc.int/documents/8884>

Reports; (iv) The FCMS which includes the sample design and implementation framework and the development of emission factors; and (v) independent, third-party verification. The latter is carried out through a desk review, field audit, interviewing of staff and stakeholders and further follow-up.

The MRVS Interim Measures Reports are released to the public for stakeholder feedback, review and comments. All stakeholder inputs are incorporated in the final version of the Interim Measures Reports. Improvements to the forest monitoring system are ongoing. These seek to consolidate results of previous efforts to test the use of low and no-cost technology options, and explore new and emerging technology options, including new remote sensing products and Open Source software. If the proposed Benefit Sharing Plan – which envisions allocating the Forest Reference Level to each jurisdictional unit – is adopted, the MRVS would have to be adapted to this. The GFC has confirmed that this is feasible.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that Guyana’s National Forest Monitoring System is effective, even if further improvements are still underway. Independent third-party verification of annual Interim Measures Reports required under the Guyana-Norway agreement has confirmed the high quality of forest and carbon monitoring. MRV capacity of GFC and other key national institutions has been built, so that they can operate autonomously.

- **TAP assessment.** *Guyana has a very robust National Forest Monitoring System, that has improved significantly since it was first launched in 2009. Monitoring results have been independently audited annually over the 2011-18 period, and annual Interim Measures Reports have been publicly shared with stakeholders to solicit feedback. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) have been developed for carbon and forest area assessments, in order to ensure consistent application of processes and methodologies. Guyana has invested considerably in national capacity building, with the result that all the routine MRVS work is now carried out by GFC staff, without assistance from outside consultants. Concur with the rating.*

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

This part of the Readiness Assessment Framework focuses on how data on other aspects of REDD+ implementation are collected and shared.

Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects and social and environmental aspects (criterion 32: GREEN)

During the preparation of the National REDD+ Strategy, three non-carbon environmental benefits were identified: water quality, air quality and biodiversity conservation. A number of studies were carried out to prioritize ecosystem services other than carbon, and what payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes might look like. A report was produced to examine the feasibility of the methodologies for establishing baselines and for monitoring of delivery of ecosystem services other than forest carbon.²⁷ At a validation workshop for this report, there was widespread support for water quality to be developed as the main non-carbon benefit of REDD+ in Guyana.

²⁷ Netzer, M., R. Srinivasan, N. Harris, K. Goslee and S. Brown. 2014. Incorporating Water Quality as a Co-benefit of Guyana’s REDD+ Framework. Report Submitted by Winrock International to the Guyana Forestry Commission.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that significant progress had been made in identifying forest ecosystem services other than carbon and on assessing the potential for PES schemes, especially related to water quality.

- **TAP assessment.** *While forest ecosystem services other than carbon – such as water and air quality, and biodiversity – have been identified and the potential for PES schemes assessed over the 2011-2014 period, it does not appear that any further development has taken place since then.²⁸ It might be good for Guyana to clarify whether any further development is planned on this aspect, or whether it is considered a lower priority. Concur with the rating.*

Monitoring, reporting and information sharing, Institutional arrangements and capacities (criteria 33-34: **ORANGE**)

Guyana makes available some information on: key quantitative and qualitative variables about impacts on rural livelihoods, conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services provision, key governance factors directly pertinent to REDD+ preparations, and the implementation of safeguards and ESMF provisions. Stakeholder participation in the exploration of co-benefits and non-carbon schemes has been encouraged through training sessions and workshops.

Responsibilities for non-carbon aspects and safeguards of REDD+ are spread over a number of different institutions. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which falls under the Department of Environment, has the lead responsibility for the conservation of biodiversity, air and water quality. The EPA shares the responsibility for biodiversity with the Protected Areas Commission (PAC) and the Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission. No single national agency has the overall mandate for freshwater management, which is shared among Hydrometeorological Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Central Housing and Planning Authority of the Ministry of Communities and Guyana Water Inc. While there are legal provisions for the establishment of a National Water Council, and an annual government budget has been allocated since 2016, no action has yet been taken to establish the NWC.

Self-assessment. The self-assessment concluded that while Guyana shares some information on REDD+ impacts on livelihoods, key governance factors, ecosystem services other than carbon and safeguards implementation, there is no consistent information sharing on non-carbon aspects and safeguards. It also noted that this issue would be addressed through the restructuring of the OCC and that further work will be needed to identify and estimate the resources needed for sharing information on non-carbon and safeguards aspects of REDD+ more systematically, including required capacities, training and budget. Finally, it suggested that the monitoring of non-carbon ecosystem services such as freshwater could be taken on by GFC, as the national focal point for forest monitoring, in line with the mandate of its parent ministry, MNR.

- **TAP assessment.** *It is clear from the self-assessment that the sharing of information on non-carbon aspects and safeguards has not been given the same priority as the information sharing on deforestation, forest degradation and carbon monitoring. The fact that some of these aspects fall under agencies that are not directly involved in REDD+ implementation may constitute a barrier to compiling and sharing this information efficiently. Resolving this*

²⁸ A PES roadmap is mentioned under the discussion of criterion 34, but this was developed in 2013 and it is not clear what its key elements are or what its current status is.

issue will no doubt require a high-level coordination effort by OCC, which is currently being restructured. In addition, most work on payment for ecosystem services (PES) other than carbon appears to have been undertaken during an earlier phase of the REDD+ Readiness process, in 2011-14. It might be good to review this earlier work on PES in the light of new developments in this area, before deciding on how to move forward with it. Concur with the rating.

4. Summary assessment and recommendations

a. Overall REDD+ Readiness progress

Based on the documents provided, the TAP reviewer concludes that Guyana's REDD+ Readiness Package demonstrates the country's firm commitment to REDD+ and paints an accurate and honest picture of its readiness work, including many strengths and a few weaknesses.

Guyana has been engaged in REDD+ readiness and implementation for over a decade, with the performance payments under the Guyana-Norway Agreement as the initial catalyst. Through the support provided by this Agreement, it developed a first-rate Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System that has been independently verified and that has enabled the country to identify and address the key sources of forest-based greenhouse gas emissions, from mining, forestry and agriculture. The REDD+ Strategy Options are well-aligned with the main direct and indirect drivers of forest-based Greenhouse Gas emissions.

b. Self-assessment process

Guyana has executed the Self-assessment process in accordance with the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework, involving the participation of multiple stakeholder groups – building on an extensive series of consultations held with all these stakeholder groups over more than a decade.

The information made available for the Self-assessment workshop included all required REDD+ Readiness Package elements. Stakeholders invited to the workshop also had access to a number of additional documents such as the draft National REDD+ Strategy, SESA and ESMF completed in 2019, which had been the subject of previous consultations.

c. Overall assessment and recommendations

Guyana has made significant progress in REDD+ Readiness. For over 90% of the criteria assessed, Guyana had either achieved significant progress (**GREEN** score) or progressed well but require further development (**YELLOW** score). Some of this progress, especially on Components 3 (Reference Emissions Level) and 4a (Forest Monitoring System), had already been achieved during 2009-2015, benefiting from multi-partner funding from the national budget, Norway, the European Union and the Government of the Netherlands.

Since the Mid-Term Review was carried out in 2018, Guyana has achieved considerable additional progress, with financial support from the national budget and the FCPF Readiness Fund. Progress was especially meaningful for sub-components 2b (REDD+ Strategy Options) and 2d (SESA and ESMF). The iterative process that Guyana used for developing the REDD+ strategy options on the one hand and the SESA/ESMF on the other is an excellent practice that allows key stakeholders to help identify potential social and environmental risks early on and to influence the framing of the REDD+ strategy options in a timely manner.

The stakeholder workshop held to conclude the self-assessment process – in addition to validating the scores of all 34 REDD+ Readiness criteria – validated five substantive recommendations, as follows:

- (i) A “whole of government” approach will be needed for successful REDD+ governance. Such an approach could be led by the Ministry of Finance jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The National REDD+ Working Group (NRWG) requires a legal and accounting mandate, as do the other components of the proposed REDD+ governance architecture.
- (ii) The institutionalization of stakeholder engagement in REDD+ decision making and the improvement of public access to REDD+ information will depend on the successful integration of REDD+ in sub-national (regional and local) governance mechanisms.
- (iii) REDD+ “champions” need to be identified, empowered and deployed at multiple levels to raise awareness and mobilize resources and stakeholders, facilitate adoption of proposed REDD+ instruments²⁹ and help bridge political transitions.
- (iv) REDD+ should be positioned as a central pillar of the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS) Vision 2040. Unless forest conservation revenues outstrip the proceeds from mineral mining, forestry and permanent agriculture, the latter will continue to undermine REDD+ efforts.
- (v) Submit Guyana’s first SOI to the UNFCCC and institutionalize the SIS, ensuring public access to safeguards information and enabling feedback to be received. SIS and SOI will help to unlock access to carbon funds.

In addition to these five recommendations, which appear to be sound, the TAP review would like to highlight the following points to be taken into account by Guyana as it moves forward with REDD+ Readiness and implementation:

- (vi) The challenges of communicating about complex REDD+ interventions with local people whose livelihoods depend on forests will require not just translation into local languages, but also simplification of key REDD+ concepts. This is important not just for indigenous peoples, but also for other local communities, especially those dependent on mining and forestry.
- (vii) Cross-sectoral coordination has proven to be a challenge in Guyana, as in many other REDD+ countries. Unfortunately, there is no “magic bullet” for successful cross-sectoral coordination, but clear institutional mandates and frequent communication are key ingredients. Better cross-sectoral coordination can generate real benefits for Guyana, not just for REDD+ but also for resource use efficiency more generally speaking. For example, preferential allocation of timber harvesting rights on future mining sites would reduce emissions due to forest degradation, as most logging would

²⁹ Currently, several critical instruments for the operationalization of REDD+ have been finalized but not approved by the central government. These include: GRM, REDD+ Strategy, SESA and ESMF.

take place in areas already scheduled for future (planned) deforestation.³⁰ As REDD+ implementation advances and becomes more concrete, this should also help in engaging stakeholders from all relevant sectors and improving coordination among them.

(viii) The national REDD+ Registry is a key element of REDD+ transactions anywhere in the world, but Guyana has not made any progress in establishing this Registry yet. This should be a high priority for the coming years.

³⁰ Benn et al. 2020, p. 43.

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