



## REDD+ Country Participant Completion Report Template for the Readiness Fund of the FCPF

### About this template

The Grant Agreements for the Readiness Fund of the FCPF with the World Bank require the grant recipients to prepare and furnish to the World Bank a Completion Report in accordance with the provision of Section 2.06(b) (ii) of the Standard Conditions not later than six (6) months after the Closing Date of the grant. The REDD+ Country Participants who entered into a Grant Agreement with the World Bank should prepare the Completion Report using this template, and submit it to the World Bank Task Teams not later than six (6) months after the Closing Date of the grant.

**Submission Date: 22 November 2022**

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>FCPF Readiness Project</b>
<b>Country</b>	Vanuatu
<b>Implementing Agency</b>	Recipient (Department of Forestry)
<b>Grant Objectives</b>	The Project Development Objective of the Grant is to assist Vanuatu to carry out the Readiness Preparation Activities by supporting the preparation of its REDD+ strategy through a participatory and inclusive process and by producing technical and policy advice to help strengthen sustainable land and forest management practices.
<b>Original Amount (US\$)</b>	US\$ 3,600,000
<b>Revised Amount (US\$)</b>	US\$ 6,100,000
<b>Actual Disbursed (US\$)</b>	US\$ 5,865,416.48
<b>Effectiveness Date</b>	20 April 2015
<b>Original Closing Date</b>	30 June 2019
<b>Actual Closing Date</b>	31 May 2022

### 1. Overall Outcome and its Sustainability

This section provides overall accomplishment of the objectives of the Grant and a plan designed to ensure the sustainability of the Project's achievements.

#### Overall Outcome

The overall outcome of the Grant Development Objective has been satisfactorily achieved.

Vanuatu is one of the countries in South Pacific region that has committed to pursue REDD+ program as part of its agenda for sustainable forest sector development. With the support of the REDD+ Readiness Grant, Vanuatu has achieved all the objectives outlined in the Project document by utilizing innovative approaches to manage its forest sustainably including reducing the deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing the carbon stock.

The project overcame challenges posed by natural calamities such as the Tropical Cyclone PAM in 2015 and was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020. Despite these challenges, the project successfully achieved the Project Development Objective (PDO).

The project enabled preparation of the analytical studies to inform the preparation of national REDD+ strategy. After completing the preparation of NRS report, the project concentrated on other activities such as strengthening the national and provincial institutions, establishing the REDD+ Office in Port Vila, setting up the Technical Committee (TC), and Ad-hoc working groups to support implementation of the REDD+ activities.

In addition to the above, Vanuatu conducted multi-stakeholder self-assessment of the progress of the REDD+ Readiness and presented its R-Package to the FCPF Participants Committee (PC) in October 2020. The PC endorsed the document through its resolution PC/29/2020/1.

The other key achievements of the project include conduct of national forest inventory, development of social and environmental safeguards and safeguard information system, establishment of National Forest Reference Level, design of the National Forest Monitoring System, national REDD+ nesting guidelines, and establishment of national and provincial institutions required for implementation of REDD+ activities.

### Sustainability

The project activities contribute to project sustainability in the following ways.

#### **a) Organization of REDD+ Institutions and operations**

The project supported the establishment and organization of key REDD+ institutions at national and provincial levels to advance the REDD+ readiness. The REDD+ management institutions include the national REDD+ unit, Technical Committee at the national level, Provincial Technical Committees, Technical Working Groups, The National Advisory Board (NAB), and the CSO Platform. The National REDD+ Strategy developed under the project is expected to guide the REDD+ implementation beyond the project period.

#### **b) Capacity Development**

The capacity of the Department of Forestry (DoF) to implement REDD+ activities has significantly increased due to the implementation of capacity development activities of the project. The staffs of the Department of Forestry have been trained in operational and technical aspects of REDD+ implementation, including the conduct of National Forestry Inventory, operation of the NFMS, organization of feedback and grievances. The capacity of CSOs has increased and they have better capacity to support REDD+ implementation at national and provincial levels.

#### **c) Knowledge sharing**

The project enabled knowledge sharing through study tours and other learning events on REDD+ with the active support from FCPF. The study tours organized by the project in the Pacific region as part of the south-south cooperation to Papua New Guinea, Fiji and other countries. The project also hosted the visit of foresters from Solomon Island to observe the NFI fieldwork. The study tours and field trips improved the knowledge and comprehension of Vanuatu staff on technical and operational aspects of REDD+ implementation as well as exchange of information and experience on forestry aspects in the Pacific region.

#### **d) Replicability**

The project helped to adopt the global experience on REDD+ issues to Vanuatu context in terms of assessing the risk of deforestation and forest degradation, preparation of national REDD+ strategy, establishment of forest reference emission level/forest reference level, and design of national forest monitoring system to monitor progress on forest resource management. The elements of readiness program enable the DoF to replicate the project activities on different islands.

## 2. Outcome of each Readiness Grant Activity

This section outlines assessment of outcomes of each Activity referred in the Grant Agreement.

### Component 1: Institutional Strengthening for REDD+ Management Arrangements at the National and Decentralized levels

Activities under this component supported the establishment of institutions that are required for supporting the implementation of the REDD+ readiness activities at national and provincial levels. All the institutions established for the purpose have been functioning smoothly and supported (i) management arrangements at the national level (ii) cross sector coordination, and (iii) strengthening the technical supervision capacity.

**Management arrangements at the national level:** The institutions established at the national level include (i) National Advisory Board (NAB) (ii) REDD+ Unit (iii) Technical Committee (iv) Ad-hoc Thematic Working Groups (v) CSO Platform, and the (vi) Project Management Unit.

The National Advisory Board (NAB) provides policy advice regarding the implementation of project activities both at national and provincial levels.

The National REDD+ Unit has the mandate to coordinate project implementation in collaboration with the DOF, PMU, the CSO Platform, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) and Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy and Disaster Management (MCCA).

**Cross-sector Coordination:** The cross-sectoral coordination committee has been strengthened with support of participating agencies.

**Technical Supervision:** The Technical supervision capacity of the staff at national and provincial levels has been strengthened. The REDD+ Project also supported the coordination of the REDD+ readiness process and consultations, including capacity building of various agencies involved in REDD+ coordination.

**Status:** All activities were successfully completed

### Component 2: Strengthening of Stakeholder Engagement Process at Decentralized Levels

The following are the outcomes of the component 2 of the project.

**Organizational Strengthening of the Decentralized Offices:** The additional funding received from the FCPF was used to renovate the Regional Forestry Offices in the islands of Tanna, Erromango and Malekula. These offices with improved capacity are supporting Regional Forest Offices and the CSO Network offices on the islands.

**Consultation on FGRM:** The project supported consultations leading to the development of the FGRM framework for Vanuatu.

The CSO Platform supported the REDD+ Project in organizing consultations to inform the development of national REDD+ Strategy. The CSO Platform also supported the conduct of trainings and workshops throughout the project period in all the REDD+ islands.

The CSO Platform members consisted representatives from various private sector organizations, women groups, youth groups, churches and from the government departments relevant to the project. The CSO Platform meetings enabled active participation of the CSOs in communication and outreach activities involving different stakeholder groups and in implementing the readiness activities in the field.

Out-reach and awareness raising: The project supported various activities to raise awareness about REDD+ activities through various people-friendly activities and events such as celebration of International Day of Forests, national tree planting activities and activities supporting the use of non-timber forest products and outreach and awareness amongst school children.

Dissemination of information: Dissemination of REDD+ information was carried out with the support of the CSO Platform and the CSO Networks in provinces.

Communication activities: Information sharing with various stakeholder was accorded high priority. Radio Vanuatu and Television were contracted for information sharing with the stakeholders.

Strengthen the Farmers Associations in the Provinces: Considering the land and forests are owned by the ni-Vanuatu people, the support of the farmers' association is critical for successful implementation of the program. The project supported Farmers associations on different islands.

Status: All activities were successfully completed

### Component 3: Development of REDD+ Strategy for Vanuatu

The following outcomes were achieved under the component 3 of the project.

*National REDD+ Strategy (NRS):* The preparation of NRS was participatory, inclusive and consultative building on existing institutional and forest management processes. The NRS was finalized based on the inputs received through the validation workshop organized on October 1, 2021. The project advised the DoF to seek Government endorsement of the final version of the NRS.

*Strategic Environmental and Social assessment (SESA) and Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF):* The Grant supported the development of SESA and ESMF, including the Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) and Process Framework (PF) reports. The ESMF was prepared following the SESA process and consultations with various diverse stakeholders. The ESMF can be used to inform the operation of other safeguards systems for REDD+ in Vanuatu such as the Feedback and Grievance Redressal Mechanism (FGRM). The executive summaries of the SESA and ESMF reports were translated into the local language Bislama. The SESA, ESMF and all other relevant documents were publicly disclosed at the Vanuatu's REDD+ website.

*Safeguard Information System:* The Grant also supported the development Safeguard Information System (SIS). The SIS is designed to be accessible to domestic and international stakeholders and demonstrates that the seven Cancun safeguards are being "addressed" and "respected" throughout REDD+ implementation. The data from SIS facilitates preparation of periodic summaries of information (SOI) on how all the Cancun Safeguards are addressed and respected. The SIS report has been publicly disclosed at the Vanuatu REDD+ website.

Status: All activities successfully completed

### Component 4: National Forest Inventory and National Forest Monitoring System

The outcomes of the component 4 are as follows.

*National Forest Inventory (NFI):* The REDD+ project supported the conduct of NFI. The NFI facilitated generation of data on forest resources and formed the basis for national Forest Emissions Reference Level (FREL)/Forest Reference Level (FRL) as well as forest resource management and planning. The NFI field work has been completed on 13 islands that cover about 97 percent of national forest area. The NFI data has been used for preparation of the national FREL/FRL.

*Activity Data:* The analysis of remote sensing data was carried out for the reference period 2008

to 2017 to assess areas subject to deforestation, forest degradation and forest gain. A sample based approach was followed in which the sample plots were distributed throughout the country to detect and estimate land cover and land cover change during the reference period.

*Forest Reference Emission Level/Forest Reference Level (FREL/FRL):* Using the NFI and Activity data information, the Project developed comprehensive report on FREL/FRL. The REDD+ project in collaboration with the DoF and the Department of Climate Change (DoCC) plans to submit the FREL report to UNFCCC by the end of 2022 and follow up with the UNFCCC technical assessment during 2023.

*National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS):* The project supported the design and development of NFMS to measure the emissions from forest cover and forest cover change and for reporting the emissions to the UNFCCC. The system has been tested and operationalized within the DoF. The capacity of the DoF staff to manage and operate the NFMS system has been Strengthened through trainings, and the DoF staffs are able to manage the system.

*National REDD+ Nesting Guidelines:* The REDD+ Project supported the development of national REDD+ Nesting Guidelines to facilitate the implementation of REDD+ projects and programs funded through public and private sector, enable implementation of benefit sharing mechanisms, align project-level GHG monitoring and reporting with national GHG monitoring and reporting framework of the NFMS, and facilitate local stakeholder engagement.

*Database Management System:* The NFI and activity data are managed through a database management system embedded with the NFMS and can be accessed online. The database enables public access to data through the Open Foris/Collect using a login. To complement the database, an online wiki has been developed to archive all documents related to the project such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), training videos and reports.

*Capacity Development Plan:* The project has developed capacity development plan for the Department of Forestry. The activities outlined in this plan will help the DoF to undertake various trainings and workshops to strengthen the capacity of the DoF staff.

**Project Management:** The national REDD+ Unit and Project Management supported the project supervision, financial management, audits, procuring equipment and hiring of staff as well as monitoring and evaluation.

**Status:** All activities were successfully completed

### 3. Lessons Learned

This section briefly presents the most significant lessons learned from the project implementation.

On positive side, the REDD+ project implementation was successful in raising the awareness through the implementation of the project.

The Project supported implementation of National Forest Inventory after a gap of almost 30 years. The data will be useful in planning and sustainable management of the forest resources of Vanuatu.

Communities at the local level have become aware on the importance of managing the forest resources on a sustainable basis.

Coordination mechanisms amongst various government organizations, CSOs and private sector have been strengthened through the project. This will help to manage the resources in a coordinated manner.

However, the REDD+ has also created high expectations especially amongst some stakeholder-

groups regarding financial inflows from REDD+. In order to ensure the effective management of expectations, efforts would be made to emphasize the co-benefits from REDD+ implementation, and that payments for REDD+ implementation will be performance-based and require continual support of all stakeholders.

Although coordination mechanisms have been established, there is a need for further strengthening coordination amongst various Ministries of the Government of Vanuatu including the Departments under them to help find ways of dealing with competing preferences for forest and other land uses.

The benefits sharing mechanism developed with the support of the project needs further testing in the field for its operational suitability and to make suitable refinements to the mechanism t.

#### 4. Project Cost by Readiness Grant Activity

The project activities implemented under the four components along with the approved project funding, actual project expenditure and percent of the component wise fund utilization at the project closure is presented in the table below.

Activities	Amount at Approval (US\$)	Actual disbursement at Project Closing (US\$)	Percentage of Approval
Component 1 – Institutional strengthening	1820000	2,305,291	126.66
Component 2 – Stakeholder engagement	1000000	690,944	69.09
Component 3 – National REDD Strategy	1410000	773,819	54.88
Component 4 – NFMS	1870000	2,095,362	112.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,100,000</b>	<b>5,865,416</b>	<b>96.15</b>

**Note:** The actual disbursement at the project closure has been adjusted to reflect the refund of unspent balance from Government of Vanuatu to FCPF Readiness Fund of the World Bank.