

TAP-Expert on the R-Package submitted by the Republic of Congo

Independent TAP-Expert Review¹ on the Rep. of Congo's Self-Assessment Process of the R-Package – August 2016

¹ This TAP Expert Review consisted of a desk study and telephone interviews with a few stakeholders involved in the ROC readiness for REDD+ process. The Review was done by Jürgen Blaser, independent TAP Expert; the Review was undertaken between August 15 and 25, 2016.

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Core Tasks of the TAP Expert Review

(1) The present document contains the independent TAP-review of the Self-Assessment Process of the R-Package² undertaken by the Republic of Congo (RoC) through a participatory multi-stakeholder consultation process. The purpose of the review is to assess both the process of self-assessment the achievements of REDD+ Readiness in the country (as assessed by the process), as well as potential remaining challenges (if any) that will need to be addressed moving forward and transitioning from Readiness to implementation of performance-based REDD+ activities.

(2) The TAP-review is a background document for the Participants Committee (PC) in its decision-making process to endorse the R-Package. The endorsement of the R-Package is a prerequisite for the submission of the RoC ER-PD to the Carbon Fund Participants (CFP). The RoC ER-PD, to be implemented at a jurisdictional level (in two departments of Northern Congo: Sangha and Likouala) aims at establishing the Republic of Congo's low carbon development vision by demonstrating the feasibility of alternative development approaches at scale to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance sustainable landscape management, improve and diversify local livelihoods, and conserve biodiversity.

Methods Applied for the TAP Expert Review

(3) This is the fourth TAP Expert Review of the multi-stakeholder self-assessment process of REDD+ in a REDD+ Participant Country of the FCPF using the R-Package. It is developed on the review template proposed on the first TAP expert review (DRC, April 2015). The TORs prepared for the TAP expert review specify the following:

- Perform an independent review of RoC's progress in Readiness for REDD+; the review is guided by the FCPF Assessment Framework (FCPF 2013) for consistency;
- Review RoC's documentation of stakeholders' self-assessment, including the process that was used for the self-assessment and the reported outcome;
- Review key outputs and documents that are referenced in the R-Package, including documents pertaining to the national REDD+ strategy and ESMF, reference levels and forest monitoring, and national institutional structures;
- Provide constructive and targeted feedback, highlighting strengths and weaknesses in subcomponents, and propose actions going forward.

(4) To perform this task, a simple methodology has been applied which consists of the following steps:

² *The purposes of the R-Package are to: (i) Provide an opportunity to REDD Country Participants to self-assess the progress on REDD+ implementation; (ii) Demonstrate a REDD Country Participant's commitment to REDD+ Readiness; and (iii) Generate feedback and guidance to REDD Country Participants through a national multi-stakeholder self-assessment and PC assessment processes (FCPF 2013).*

- Step A: Review of the self-assessment process of REDD+ Readiness as outlined in chapter 4 of the RoC R-Package submitted by CN-REDD³ and the Report of WCS, the independent facilitator in the process⁴.
- Step B: Review of the results from the multi-stakeholder R-Package self-assessment as described in the CN-REDD and the WCS reports.
- Step C: Assess what still needs to be done to further develop the Readiness Process (assessing of a work plan prepared by the CN-REDD of RoC and endorsed by stakeholders).

Box 1: Outline of the RoC R-Package and Self-Assessment Process

Participatory Self-Assessment of the REDD+ Readiness Package in the RoC (CN-REDD, July 2016)

- 1 Introduction
 - 2 The Republic of Congo's vision for REDD+
 - 3 Summary of REDD+ Readiness Process by component
 - 4 Summary of the Participatory Self-Assessment Process
 - 5 Work program to complete REDD+ Readiness
- Annexes: (i) Summary of recommendations from the Mid-term progress review; (ii) summary of consultations 2010-15 on REDD+ Readiness

Report on the consultation/self-assessment process (WCS, July 2016)

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Methodology
- 3 Organization of consultations
- 4 Results of consultations on the stakeholder self-assessment process
(self-assessment and process indicators as assessed by stakeholder groups)
- 5 Annexes, including list of participants and results of the various consultation meetings

(5) The purpose of the TAP's expert review is not to second-guess the country's self-assessment (as it is based on a comprehensive multi-stakeholder process that was guided by the FCPF's readiness assessment framework). The review should rather focus on determining whether a due process and approach was followed while performing the self-assessment, and provide constructive feedback to the FCPF Participants Committee.

(6) The TAP expert's role thus is to assess completeness of the R-Package, including:

- the summary of the readiness preparation process;
- the process of the multi-stakeholder self-assessment process;
- the results of the national multi-stakeholder assessment;
- the references provided to document results pertinent to R-Package.

³ *Participatory Self-Assessment of REDD+ Readiness in the Republic of Congo. Report prepared by CN-REDD on the R-Package. July 2016.*

⁴ *Participatory Self-Assessment of REDD+ Readiness in the Republic of Congo. Report prepared by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) on the consultation process prepared for the FCPF, July 2016.*

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

This part of the TAP report provides feedback on the multi-stakeholder self-assessment process, including the summary of the multi-stakeholder exchange and discussions (Chapters under Item 4 in the two Self-Assessment Reports, July 2016).

(7) Self-Assessment process conducted according to the R-Package guidelines. The RoC CN-REDD prepared a full report on the R-Package according to the FCPF 2013 methodological guidelines (FCPF 2013). All required elements have been addressed in a document that is easily readable and that contains a number of hyperlinks informing the reader on all necessary background documents and processes. From the documentation reviewed it appears that the important inputs have been made available to stakeholders in advance of the multi-stakeholder self-assessment validation process. The process included four stakeholder meetings and one final national validation workshop, which were held between May 18 (first stakeholder workshop) and 5 July (validation workshop). The four stakeholder workshops were attended by a total of 60 people; 47 people attended the validation workshop (see numbers of attendees in Table 1). On request of the TAP reviewer, the gender ratio of meeting participants was added (see annex of this report). Four key stakeholder groups were identified for the consultation process and separate meetings were organized for each of these groups: (i) Civil society via the CACO-REDD Platform⁵; (ii) the public sector comprising various ministries and administrations including CONA-REDD (National REDD+ Committee); (iii) Representatives from decentralized administrations and local stakeholders, including CODEPA-REDD (Departmental REDD+ Committees); and (iv) technical and financial partners. Representation of individual stakeholder organizations in the various workshops was generally well balanced, but the validation workshop had limited representation of departmental stakeholders and technical and financial partners (Table 1).

→ *Overall, a well-designed and complete Self-Assessment Report of the REDD+ Readiness Process; some stakeholder groups were underrepresented in the validation workshop and, according to the WCS report, women were not sufficiently represented (though the statistics provided in the annex of this report show some different figures)*

(8) Self-Assessment Process facilitated by an independent facilitator. The RoC CN-REDD, in an effort to respect impartiality and methodological rigor of the stakeholder consultation process for the self-evaluation entrusted the process to an outside party, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). While this process had its advantages in respect to impartiality, the downside was that nobody from CN-REDD was in the consultations to provide technical and process information on some of the criteria in which stakeholder had insufficient knowledge; to a number of critical criteria, clarification was only given in the validation workshop. WCS prepared the methodology for the stakeholder consultation process, enabled the stakeholder facilitation process and elaborated a final process report. As indicated in the background material and cross-checked through some discussions, the relevant stakeholders in the RoC have been informed of the assessment methodology, and provided with access to the relevant background material, however with some limitations (see item 9). In the view of the TAP expert, the multi-stakeholder assessment process reached its goals in general terms; it agreed upon progress indicators (color scores) for all of the subcomponents; it discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the country's progress related to the 34 assessment criteria; and it established actions (and priorities, as defined in a work plan that addresses the open issues in the

⁵ CACO-REDD : REDD+ Consultation Platform of Civil Society Organizations and Indigenous Peoples

REDD+ readiness process) for further improvements. However, in the view of the TAP expert, participation (in number and knowledge) of certain stakeholder groups, including stakeholders from outside Brazzaville was rather limited (see also lists of participants in the Annex of the Self-Assessment Report).

→ *A well-facilitated self-assessment process on REDD+ Readiness was conducted. Separate meetings of the various stakeholder groups have been held, which led, in an initial stage, to a quite different rating in the scoring of the achievements mainly because of the fact that CN-REDD representatives were not present at the workshops to clarify on some of the issues on which stakeholders had insufficient knowledge. While progress in many technical aspects was confirmed (see Part B of this report), communication and participation need improvement in the framework of the further course of actions.*

(9) **Communication and information exchange.** In the self-assessment process it was noted that additional efforts are still needed to strengthen the sharing of information with all stakeholders in an equal way, to ensure that documents are passed on with sufficient time for consultation and to improve the traceability of comments and the return of documents (WCS 2015). Thus, stakeholders recommended the creation of an easily accessible national website, the intensification of efforts to communicate particularly with local populations at departmental level and the dissemination of information within reasonable time periods in order to improve participation and the transparency of the consultations.

→ *In the finalization of the Readiness Process and national approval process in the framework of the preparation, it is recommended to improve the consultation process and to provide easy access to relevant information for all stakeholders.*

(10) **Time frame and development of the Readiness Process in DRC.** The RoC has been engaged in REDD+ readiness since 2008 through FCPF and complemented in 2010 through an additional support by UN-REDD. The RoC's R-PP was officially released in September 2011. It is generally agreed in the RoC that the R-PP contains the main strategic, technical, financial and methodological considerations to prepare for the implementation of REDD+ in the country. A status report on the implementation of the R-PP and respective financial resources was provided in the Mid-Term Progress Report (MTR) in March 2015. A number of recommendations have been formulated in response to the MTR, amongst others to make additional efforts to involve indigenous peoples, local communities, and other key stakeholders, with particular attention to women, in the REDD+ process.

→ *The self-assessment process has well described the R-PP Readiness development since 2008. The documentation is complete, transparent and easily accessible. Hyperlinks have been provided to key documents which are all posted on the FCPF website. However, the TAP expert also noted that many of the planned activities and studies have not been completed yet and that there is some time needed to finalize the ongoing work on all REDD+ components – carefully estimated – at least 8-14 months, which is covered by the period of the additional readiness grant.*

(11) **Self-assessment of the readiness process.** Preparing RoC for REDD+ is a joint effort of the Government of RoC, FCPF and UN-REDD, and some bilateral donors for specific issues. It took 28 months (June 2010 to October 2012) to complete the applications that facilitated the mobilization of initial US\$8 million to finance the different activities as identified in the R-PP. The FCPF provided US\$ 0.2 R-PP preparation fund and US\$3.4 million for Readiness implementation; the UN-REDD provided

an additional US\$4 million, and the RoC US\$0.6 million. The R-PP defined the framework of all these initiatives and additional funding (e.g. from World Bank, EU REDD facility and FAO) and constitutes the building block for REDD+ Readiness in the country. A comprehensive mid-term progress report, submitted in March 2015 concluded that a number of the formulated objectives in the RPP have been achieved, either fully or in part. However, the report also concluded that, for full completion, an additional financial request was submitted to the FCPF with a view to ensuring achievement of the objectives of the REDD+ readiness phase. A total amount of US\$ 5.2 million has been requested

→ *The self-assessment process of readiness implementation using the R-Package has been conducted only 1 year after the mid-term review. The requested work program as proposed in the mid-term review is still work in progress. While the self-assessment based on the R-Package criteria is comprehensive, it needs to be stressed that it remains somewhat vague, as important activities defined by the mid-term could not be completed yet.*

(12) **National ownership for REDD+ Readiness process.** After reviewing a number of documents, including the progress reports of CN-REDD at the FCPF website since the effective start of readiness work in 2010, it can be concluded that there is generally a good understanding of the REDD+ development at the national level. The REDD+ Readiness process in RoC placed a certain emphasis on consultations (see also Annex 2 of the self-assessment report), which were, however, critically viewed in some of the stakeholder meetings in the self-assessment process of REDD+ readiness. Nonetheless, through the Readiness process a REDD+ Consultation Platform was created in 2011 (*Cadre de Concertation REDD société civile et populations autochtones*, CACO-REDD) to ensure monitoring of the REDD+ process by civil society and the indigenous peoples. It is governed by a 29-member Steering Committee, 16 members representing civil society and 13 members representing the indigenous peoples, themselves grouped within RENAPAC (National Network of Indigenous Peoples of Congo). The private sector, although an important player in the RoC mainly on forest and agricultural concessions, has also been involved in the process, however, to a much lesser degree.

→ *The self-assessment process has shown that the development of the REDD+ process is well understood by diverse stakeholder groups at national level. Civil society, through CACO-REDD, is well embedded in the process, although some critical voices on their effective involvement in the process remain. Difficulties seem to exist to recruit the private sector for Readiness processes and REDD+ relevant investments.*

(13) The key elements that still need to be addressed to consolidate the REDD+ Readiness process have been comprehensively summarized in the Self-Assessment Report. The Work Plan proposed in the Mid-term review has been completed based on the self-assessment process. Clearly important work still needs to be done to complete the REDD+ readiness phase. The work program presented in the R-Package mainly reflects the activities proposed in the MTR for additional funding. The TAP experts proposes that the CN-REDD, preferably at the 22nd Meeting of the Participants Committee, provides a more detailed work plan than what is currently presented in Chapter 5 of the R-Package, including milestones and expected results.

→ *The Self-Assessment Report lists a number of issues in the various criteria that still need to be addressed to complete the readiness phase. For the TAP reviewer, it was difficult to assess how stakeholders have perceived the proposed work program because only few comments have been made in the two assessment reports.*

TAP Review Part B: Summary of the REDD+ Processes - Strengths and Weaknesses of the R-Package as highlighted by the RoC's self-assessment

This part of the TAP review focuses on the self-assessment results; progress indicators (color scores) for the nine subcomponents, significant achievements and areas requiring further development.

(13) An impressive list of documentation was made available to assess progress in RoC's REDD+ Readiness⁶. While the R-package self-assessment report prepared by CN-REDD provided a narrative description of all 34 assessment criteria, the narrative of the Stakeholder self-assessment report written by the independent process facilitator (WCS) was organized according to the four components of REDD Readiness. The stakeholder self-assessment processes through the four stakeholder workshops examined the majority of the 34 criteria (but not all, as they left out the more technical parts, e.g. those relating to RL and MRV). In the validation workshop, however, all 34 assessment criteria were scored. The R-Package self-assessment report contains a number of hyperlinks to REDD+ Readiness outputs, all of which can be accessed through the links. A number of additional documents consulted by the TAP Expert are listed in the final section of the document. In the following, R-Package components and subcomponents are commented based on the two aforementioned self-assessment reports.

→ *The two Self-Assessment Reports give a good idea on the REDD+ Readiness progress in the RoC. The documentation is ample and accessible. However, it remains surprising that not all aspects of the REDD+ readiness approach are sufficiently known by all stakeholders so that they were able to make a clear „scoring/rating“ in a number of criteria. As said before, this is mainly related to insufficient communication in the process than on real lack of outcome in the readiness process.*

(14) Table 1 summarizes the scores given on the 34 assessment criteria by the different stakeholder groups and the final score that has been compromised in the validation workshop.

The major discrepancies on knowledge and information about progress in the readiness process among the main stakeholder groups on RoC's are immediately apparent from Table 1. The well-informed public sector (focal points of Ministries and to a certain extent the mixed groups of the decentralized units⁷) take a more positive view (majority scores green and yellow) and Civil Society and Technical and Development partners, not having all the information at their disposal, take a more critical view, with majority of scores orange and red.

The variation between the different stakeholder scores is considerable, nonetheless with focus on yellow (good progress, more effort required) and orange scoring (more effort required). All 4 stakeholder groups had rated some of the criteria "not been met" (red). The rating based on the validation workshop, however, shows a different picture, now green and yellow rating. Out of the 34

⁶ See <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/republic-congo-r-package-reference-documents>

⁷ What is meant here are the 12 Departmental REDD+ Committees (CODEPA-REDD), which each include 26 delegates from all stakeholder groups (public sector, civil society, Indigenous Peoples and the private sector) have been in place only since March 2015. They have been involved in consultations on the REDD+ strategy, the SESA process and other topics. Financial support for the functioning of CODEPA-REDD is foreseen under the additional FCFP grant operational since January 2016. The participation of CODEA-REDD representatives was rather meager in the valuation workshop).

assessment criteria, the Self-Assessment process of the REDD+ Readiness indicates that Twelve (12) criteria have been fully met (green color score) and sixteen (16) criteria still need further work (yellow). None of the criteria was rated with “not been met” in the validation workshop (red).

Table 1: Summary of scoring of the 34 assessment criteria by stakeholder group meeting and in the validation workshop

Group [number of attendees]	Consultation	GREEN	YELLOW	ORANGE	RED	Not assessed
Civil Society (CACO-REDD) [24]	May 18, 2016	03	06	13	06	06
Focal points of Ministries [19]	May 20, 2016	02	17	07	02	06
Technical and financial partners [09]	May 24, 2016	00	09	14	06	05
Decentralized representatives [08]	May 26, 2016	05	13	07	02	07
<i>Average scoring stakeholder meeting</i>		3	11	10	4	6
National Validation Workshop [47]	July 05, 2016	12	16	06	0	0

→ *The differences in the scores attributed by the four stakeholder groups to the various sub-components of REDD+ Readiness are considerable. In addition, the fact that in the validation workshop compromises have been found and that the majority of rating is positive is notable. As mentioned above, the explanation is that there obviously was lack of information, of knowledge about what has been done thus far, and on how these results were communicated. Thus, the difference between the individual stakeholder group’s assessments and the final rating in the validation workshop is not necessarily a sign of any misunderstandings of REDD+ Readiness or of the Self-assessment process on behalf of any of the stakeholders. It may reflect different understanding of REDD+ readiness of the different stakeholders, and possibly in the clarity of the roles and responsibilities they expect to take on in REDD+ implementation. The TAP expert thus recommends that the CN-REDD explores further these divergences for the future facilitation of the REDD+ Readiness process and beyond and formulates some particular measures for communication and knowledge exchange in the work-plan on the completion of the REDD+ readiness process.*

The following comments regarding the Self-Assessment for each main component of the R-Package are focused in particular on the results of the consultations for each sub-component and is differentiated by stakeholder groups consulted, in particular the strengths, weaknesses and recommendations, as assessed in the two Self-assessment reports: CN-REDD (2016) and WCS (2016).

Component 1: Readiness Organization and Consultation

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

(15) **Institutional arrangements for REDD+ (criterion 1 green, criteria 2-5 yellow).** All stakeholder groups recognize the importance of the establishment of institutions and structures for the management of REDD+, made effective in February 2015 through Degree 260-2015. These official structures include CONA-REDD, the national REDD+ committee under the responsibility of the Presidency of the RoC; the 12 Departmental REDD+ Committees (see also footnote 7); and the National REDD+ coordination (CN-REDD), operating under the Ministry (MEFDDE). Based on the

observations of the self-assessment, these units offers a means of supervising the REDD+ readiness process, cross-sector coordination, representation at various levels and information feedback. For some stakeholder groups, however, the lack of budget allocation for these platforms has hindered their effective operation in the past (e.g. CODEPA-REDD). This has been taken into consideration in the MTR and additional FCPF grant, which is operational since January 2016. The importance of ensuring that CONA-REDD is embedded in the new government , in liaison with the Prime Minister in particular, has been pointed out by at least two stakeholder groups. It has also been noted that CN-REDD has effective technical supervision and budget management capacities, although the empowerment of the fiduciary unit remains a challenge.

(16) Feedback and grievance redress mechanism (criteria 6, yellow). The Self-Assessment process recognizes that up to today, an adequate feedback and grievance redress mechanism at the national, subnational and local levels for REDD+ that operates in a transparent and impartial manner have not been put in place. Substantial work also needs to be done on how potentially impacted communities by REDD+ will become aware of and have access to such mechanisms.

→ *Notable progress was made, but only recently (creation of major REDD+ structures only made effective in March 2015). There remain challenges in creating capacities and to render the REDD+ framework operational (e.g. at the level of CODEPA-REDD⁸, finalization of the feedback and grievance redress mechanism); a particular challenge here is the strengthening at jurisdictional level for the proposed ER-PD.*

Sub-Component 1b: Consultation, Participation and Outreach (criteria 7-10)

(17) Inclusion of stakeholders through an extended consultation, information and participation process (criteria 7, 9 and 10, yellow, criteria 8 green). With the creation in 2012 of the REDD+ Consultation Platform of Civil Society Organizations and Indigenous Peoples (CACO-REDD) which also includes a strong representation of Indigenous Peoples organization with the participation of RENAPAC⁹ , the national civil society is fully involved in the REDD+ process at the national level. In the Self-Assessment process, the role of civil society to inform and strengthen the Readiness process was fully recognized. In addition, all stakeholders recognize the existing institutional arrangement as effective with clear and transparent mechanisms for the self-appointment of representatives within these platforms. Yet, as stressed in the WCS report, the participation of women appears to be limited and there is no mechanism to ensure the participation of women and also the participation of indigenous peoples varies from department to department. Some difficulties have been observed relating to the lack of continuity of representatives and lack of information sharing between and partly within stakeholder groups. It has been recognized that effective consultation requires efforts to share information , to ensure that documents are passed on with sufficient time for consultation and to improve the traceability of comments and the return of documents. As the problem of communication and diffusion of information is also located within the stakeholder groups who represent their constituencies through networks (e.g. CACO-REDD) there might be a need to support civil society organization regarding effective organization and network management .

⁸ In the TAP's view, here a clear concentration on creating and maintaining REDD+ capacities should be in those departments where REDD+ implementation is planned to be realized.

⁹ RENAPAC is the National Indigenous Peoples Network of the Republic of Congo. RENAPAC has been engaged in the REDD+ process since 2008 and is a funding member of CACO-REDD.

(18) **Information sharing and accessibility of information (criteria 9, yellow).** The Self-Assessment process recognizes that a national communication plan has been developed but is not fully implemented. There is still need to work on transparent, consistent and timely shared ways of communication by national REDD+ institutions in an appropriate form, including at departmental level in those departments where REDD+ implementation is planned to be realized. In addition, adequate channels of communication need to be further enhanced to ensure that stakeholders are well informed especially those that have limited or no access to relevant information. This is a continuous task that CN-REDD should have in its overall mandate.

→ *Generally well assessed by stakeholders. A number of issues identified in the various could be easily addressed, including inter alia (i) the rather modest participation of private sector; (ii) representation of indigenous peoples; (iii) organizational problems in the consultation process including delays in distributing document; (iv) , short notice for consultation; (v) the quality of information exchange in the workshops; (vi) lack of documents and information sources; and (vii) lack of website information.*

Component 2: REDD+ Strategy Preparation

Sub-Component 2a: Assessment of land use, land use change drivers, forest law, policy and governance (criteria 11-13 and 15 green, criterion 14 yellow)

(19) **Analysis of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.** Several quantitative and qualitative studies¹⁰ have been conducted to assess land use, land use change drivers and forest degradation in RoC. The studies and reports emphasized on the causal relationship between the economic, legal, policy setting of RoC and associated patterns of land-use change, deforestation and forest degradation. As highlighted in the Self-Assessment process, that when combined, these studies offer a common understanding of the major issues applicable for developing an effective REDD+ strategy. Stakeholders noted the efforts made to access the several strategies and policies in the various sectors, which have to be taken into account. The links between REDD+ and other political processes and laws (land laws, forest laws, and environmental laws) have been established but still need to be developed further for implementation. Some stakeholders observed that there is a lack of coordination between the various sectoral issues in the studies. In addition, it was stressed that the drivers of deforestation in the non-forest sector (agriculture) and the links between the main drivers and the actions proposed have not been sufficiently addressed.

(20) **Natural resources rights, land tenure, governance (Criteria 14, yellow).** According to the self-assessment report, REDD+ has unfolded a catalytic function in many respects, including momentum regarding the development of the PNAT as well as the revisions of the Act on the Environment and the Forest Code to take account of deforestation. The finalization of the PNAT (National Land Use Plan) is key to addressing issues related to land tenure and rights to natural resources in the medium

¹⁰ Including in particular : BRLI 2014. *Etude de la spatialisation et de la pondération des causes de la déforestation et la dégradation forestière et une étude sur les options stratégique REDD+ proposée par le R - PP. Juillet 2014.* Boundzanga et al 2014. *Rapport d'étude de l'enquête ménage sur la consommation du bois-énergie en République du Congo. Oct. 2014;*

and long term¹¹. It deals with land use zoning according to development and management goals as defined in national processes led by the Ministry of Planning and Land Management and involving the public sector, civil society and the private sector.

→ Overall well assessed. What has been mentioned is that there still are discrepancies between the various sectoral policies that need to be addressed. In addition, the stakeholders agreed on prioritizing the work on finalizing the PNAT. Overall, the validation workshop concluded that the analysis of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and their prioritization is completed

Sub-Component 2b: REDD+ Strategy options (criteria 16 green, 17 and 18, yellow)

(21) **The REDD+ strategy.** The National REDD+ strategy in its final version was made public in July 2016¹². Stakeholder groups were involved in a consultation process (public sector, CODEPAs) according to the two assessment reports, however, civil society stakeholders remarked that there was low participation by their group in the national REDD+ strategy development thus far. As stated in the WCS report, stakeholders underscored the failure to take account of agriculture¹³ and fuelwood issues and observed a mismatch between certain strategic REDD+ options and the actions proposed. Stakeholders also recommended that coordination between sectors be strengthened, to allow improved integration of the national REDD+ strategy with other sectoral policies.

→ Substantial discussions have been held since the drafting of the first priorities of a REDD+ strategy. An advanced draft (“final”) of the National REDD+ strategy is available. As recognized in the CN-REDD (2015) Self-Assessment Report, since the SESA process is still ongoing, there will be further updates and adjustments made on the REDD+ strategy of the country in the near future.

Sub-Component 2c: Implementation Framework (criteria 19 & 21 yellow, criteria 20 & 22 orange)

(23) **Adoption and implementation of legislation/regulations (criteria 19 & 20, yellow/orange).** The RoC is in a continuous process to define institutional, economic, legal and governance arrangements necessary to implement the evolving REDD+ strategy options. The adoption of legislation and/or regulations related to REDD+ programs still requires more time and effort, but according to the Self-Assessment is progressing well. A comprehensive list of laws and policies that are being developed and amended was provided in the Assessment Report (CN-REDD 2016, pp. 19-21). The WCS reports refers to a “remarkable progress made in the adoption of laws and regulations for REDD+, although a number of laws (environment, forest framework, mining framework) and implementation decrees

¹¹ See also new law on land, Loi n° 43-2014 du 10 octobre 2014 d’orientation pour l’aménagement et le développement du territoire: <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/fcp/files/2016/Aug/Law%2043-2014%20on%20land%20use%20planning.pdf>

¹² See document on <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/fcp/files/2016/Aug/National%20REDD%2B%20Strategy.%20validated%20version%2016%20July%202016.pdf>

¹³ However, the R-Package is explicit that this work has been done. In the discussion with ROC and World Bank, it was noted that additional work and consultation has been made on emerging drivers: on industrial agricultural plantations and mining.

have yet to be adopted in order to render the legal framework enforceable, in particular the inclusion of REDD+ in the new draft Forest Code”.

(24) **Benefit sharing mechanism (criteria 21, yellow).** An initial study was undertaken in 2015 and prepared a pathway for the legal orientation for REDD+ benefit sharing (*Mécanisme de partage des bénéfices multiples du processus REDD+ en République du Congo, Mars, 2015*). However, national guidelines on benefit sharing have not yet been developed, which is also due to the fact that there is no practical experience on benefit sharing in the NRM sector in the country. The proposed mechanism for sharing multiple benefits will be subject to further consultations with stakeholders to ensure transparency and full and effective participation over the coming months.

(25) **National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities (criteria 22, orange).** The process to develop a national REDD+ information registry is still in progress but it seems that some of the stakeholders have only limited knowledge about the Registry. CN-REDD+ with technical support from the Information System for Forest Management and Sustainable Development (SIFODD) is in charge of developing the concept, supported by UNDP since February 2015. It is recognized that progress in this regard is currently “rather slow” (CN-REDD 2016 self-assessment report).

→ *CN-REDD is well aware on the importance to advance the implementation framework of REDD+, also in view of the preparation of REDD+ implementation projects (including the ER-Program for Sangha and Likouala).*

Sub-Component 2d: Social and Environmental Impacts (criteria 23 green, 24-25, orange)

(26) **SESA, ESMF and National Environmental and Social Standards.** An emphasis in the reports has been made that national standards, the Principles, Criteria and Indicators for REDD+ (PCI-REDD+) have been developed in the twelve departments. Attention has been paid to respecting UNFCCC guidance on safeguards, the World Bank’s Operational Policies, and other relevant guidance. A national multi-stakeholder workshop to adopt this work was held in December 2014. Field tests are being underway to test verifiers in four locations, including two sites in the program area of the ERPD. Stakeholders however observed that while these instruments have been developed, the participatory process in the SESA was limited and that ownership of environmental and social impacts by civil society was questioned. In addition, the operationalization of PCI-REDD+ was questioned as the lack of coherence between the PCI and the REDD+ strategy.

(27) **The SESA process and ESMF (Cadre de Gestion Environnementale et Sociale)** ¹⁴ aim at creating a sustainable institutional structure that ensures effective management of social and environmental issues beyond the Readiness phase. According to the Self-assessment report (CN-REDD 2016), a preliminary SESA report and models for social and environmental impact analysis are available. Further stakeholder participation will be required to complete the SESA process, planned in the period until the end of 2016. In addition, based on the same report, consultations are ongoing with the CODEPA-REDD at departmental level and with Indigenous Peoples at district level to identify in

¹⁴ The ESMF sets out the principles, rules, guidelines, and procedures to assess potential environmental and social impacts and risks, and contains measures to reduce, mitigate, and/or offset adverse environmental and social impacts and enhance positive impacts and opportunities of said projects, activities, or policies and regulations.

more detail social and environmental impacts of the REDD+ strategy options at decentralized and local levels. Finally, stakeholder mentioned that the REDD+ strategy advanced quite substantially in respect to its strategic options in spite of the fact that the SESA process has not been completed. They mentioned that the strategy needs to be reviewed based on the final SESA assessment.

→ *As recognized by all stakeholder groups and CN-REDD, important work is still to be done to complete the SESA process in a participatory manner and finalize the safeguards instruments (ESMF and sub-frameworks). This is another important part of the Work Plan to resume REDD+ readiness.*

Component 3: Reference Emission Levels/Reference Level (Criteria 26 green; 27-28 yellow)

(28) **Methodological basis for the establishment of Reference Level developed.** The RoC pursues REDD+ Reference level development in a stepwise and iterative approach. In January 2016, the country submitted its forest reference emission level (FREL) to the UNFCCC, where it is currently under review. The proposed national reference level package, includes (i) historical data on deforestation; (ii) a methodological approach for the adjustment according to national circumstances; and (iii) an expected emission estimation related to deforestation and forest degradation in future years (2012-2025). The submission of the FREL at national level is the result of work since 2015 in collaboration of the Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) team of the CN-REDD (supported by FAO), CNIAF and the Marien Ngouabi University in Brazzaville.

(29) **Use of historical data, adjusted for national circumstances; Consistency with UNFCCC/IPCC guidance (criteria 27 & 28).** Overall, the RoC will follow the UNFCCC/IPCC guidance and guidelines as they evolve. According to CN-REDD (2016), the historical average emissions from unplanned deforestation as well as planned and unplanned degradation have been calculated with a total of 21.6 million tons CO₂/year. A map of the country was compiled on the basis of the forest definition. The map shows the loss of forests between 2000 and 2012 and brings together the results of previous deforestation analyses (e.g. GAF Study 2013, Hansen and others 2013 and FACET 2012). The map is conservative in the sense that the loss estimate is lower than estimates of FACET and GFC. The emission factors were calculated on the basis of data from the National Forest Inventory (NFI). An adjustment for national circumstances was made taking into account the National Development Plan in respect to planned deforestation, planned and unplanned forest degradation. Furthermore, the planned work on the allometric equations has yet to be carried out.

→ *Overall, the country has well advanced on the technical issues relating to carbon accounting, including reference levels and MRV. It needs to be noted, however, that there is only limited technical capacity thus far in the country to assess REL/RL adequately. Therefore, CN-REDD, CODEPA-REDD and a considerable part of members of CACO-REDD could not assess this item in the self-assessment process. The TAP experts recommends to include a small activity in the Work Plan on the completion of the Readiness phase to technically inform interested stakeholders on RL and MRV approaches for REDD+ approaches in the country.*

Component 4: Monitoring Systems for forests, and safeguards

Sub-Component 4a: National forest monitoring system (criterion 29 green, 30 orange & 31 yellow)

(30) **Monitoring approach.** The national forest monitoring system is designed to monitor the REDD+ options and to assess performance against the reference level. Thus, it is aimed to generate information that allows comparison of change in forest area and carbon content (and associated greenhouse GHG-emissions) relative to the baseline estimates used for the REL/RL. It is basically grounded on a (i) satellite surveillance system, (ii) the national forest inventory and (ii) the GHG inventory. An MRV unit has been created in the National Center for Inventories and Management of Forests and Wildlife Resources (CNIAF) to support the REDD+ process, in particular to assist the CN-REDD in the processing of satellite data and the forest inventory. A report on the MRV System, the so-called SYNA-MRV report ¹⁵ provides the outline of a MRV system for the country, including at the national REDD+ registry and an independent REDD+ observatory as well as four technical modules. The planned registry is a database of REDD+ activities and projects and will be linked with the national Integrated Forestry Information System (IFIS), which is supported by the MEFDDE and the World Resources Institute (WRI). Discussions are underway with the EU FLEGT initiative regarding the establishment of an independent FLEGT/ REDD+. The four proposed technical modules relate to: (i) the monitoring of policies and measures; (ii) A Satellite Land Monitoring System including the strengthening of the CNIAF regarding to GIS and Remote Sensing, inventory and management of forest and wildlife resources, community development, and research and development. The forest monitoring system is based on the TerraAmazon platform and expected to be operational before end of 2016; (iii) The National Forest Inventory conducted by CNIAF between 2010 and 2015, according to the methodology developed with FAO, i.e. focused on a sample of 1,800 plots clustered around 450 Sampling Units. The SYNA-MRV will use the NFI database to collect biomass data, assess forest carbon stocks and changes in carbon stocks, and update as required the emission factors by forest type; and (iv) the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory; RoC has already published two national communications in 2001 and 2009 and the third communication is currently being prepared.

→ *The RoC has completed a full conceptual approach on the MRV system, but work remains to be done to assure consistency between the proposed tools, coordination and management of a central data bank. Further work remains to be done to operationalize it at national level. Capacities have been built within CNIAF and will be further strengthened in particular on all the technical issues listed above.*

Sub-Component 4b: Information system for multiple benefits, other impacts, governance, and safeguards (criterion 32 yellow, criteria 33-34 orange)

(31) **Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues (criterion 32, yellow).** Non-carbon aspects and social and environmental safeguard issues of REDD+ preparation are being identified in the SESA process. The preliminary study on benefit sharing relates to non-carbon benefit, as well as a spatial study on multiple benefits of REDD+¹⁶. The Self-Assessment raised concern about the collaboration with local communities, as REDD+ might not be sufficiently understood at that level. Stakeholder also noted that there is generally only limited understanding on non-carbon benefits in this stakeholder group. Capacity building and better inclusion of women, local communities, and youth is thus needed.

¹⁵ CN-REDD 2016. Le système national de mesure, de notification et de vérification (SYNA-MRV) du processus REDD+ en République du Congo, Prepared in November 2015 and released in February 2016.

¹⁶ Cartographie des bénéfices multiples de la REDD+ au République du Congo. Version préliminaire, Jan. 2016

(32) **Monitoring, reporting and information sharing (criterion 33, orange).** A transparent system for periodically sharing consistent information on non-carbon aspects and safeguards (SIS) is completely new in the RoC and will need time to be fully developed and implemented. The two assessment reports (CN-REDD and WCS) clearly stated that appropriate information management systems still need to be developed.

(33) **Institutional arrangements and capacities (criterion 34, orange).** The institutional arrangements for the safeguards information system (SIS) need to be well thought through according to the self-assessment process. Also the role of a possible OI-REDD (Independent REDD + Observatory) need to be well defined, in particular by clarifying the objectives in order to take account of the needs of the country and the expectation of REDD+ donors. In addition, based on the experiences in neighboring countries, the responsibilities of the various actors and the involvement of civil society, including the OI-REDD, need to be further explored. The dissemination of information on the SIS to stakeholders was also encouraged by the self-assessment process as the level of knowledge on this subject varies widely between the stakeholders groups.

→ *The TAP reviewer endorses the assessment that in general terms, progress has been made regarding the identification of non-carbon benefits and the mapping of multiple REDD+ benefits. Also, the SIS is under development in parallel with the completion of the SESA and development of the ESMF. The issues dealt here under criteria 32-34 are very similar to those in neighboring DRC and the TAP expert recommends to explore collaboration opportunities to promote mutual learning in respect to SIS and valorization of non-carbon aspects.*

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

(34) **Overall, the RoC has reached a high level of preparation for REDD+ at this time.** Based on the documents consulted, as well as web and phone consultations, the TAP reviewer concludes that the enumerated accomplishments described in the RoC Self-Assessment report and based on the R-Package have been generally achieved, but that some important work still needs to be accomplished in order to fully attend REDD+ readiness. A more specific work plan with milestones for the consolidation of the Readiness phase that will potentially lead to full accomplishment of REDD+ Readiness within a reasonable period is recommended.

(35) **Work plans for reaching REDD+ readiness (MTR and R-Package).** The TAP expert recognizes that the activities proposed in the framework of the Mid-Term Review of the R-PP in March 2015 (CN-REDD 2015) is closely aligned with the work plan proposed in the self-assessment of the R-Package (chapter 5 of the Self-assessment report). It shows the high commitment of the institutions involved in REDD+ readiness to work along a well-defined program in a targeted manner (Table 2). It is obvious that there is still important work to undertake to fulfill the Readiness phase. Due to the high similarity of the two proposed work programs (MTR and R-Package completion), the TAP expert recommends to specify in more detail the work program as identified in the self-assessment of the R-Package building on the MTR, which led subsequently to the FCPF additional readiness grant. The

specific work plan could be complemented with a number of clear milestones and expected results that help to complete the readiness stage. As illustrated in Table 2, based on the Mid-Term Review, the REDD+ readiness activities are in full swing. The R-Package self-assessment confirmed most of the open issues in the readiness phase already identified in the MTR. In addition, the major source of support for the remaining work will be the additional FCPF readiness grant, which covers the period 2016 and 2017.

Table 2: Short assessment by the TAP of similarities between the Work Plan proposed in the MTR of March 2015 and the Work Plan proposed in the framework of the R-Package in July 2016

R-PP component	Similarity degree of the work plans proposed	Work Plan Self-Assessment R-Package July 2016 Rounded Budget proposed (K US\$)	Work Plan Self-Assessment MTR March 2015 Rounded Budget proposed (K US\$)
1 a National REDD Management	very similar	2.3	2.7
1 b Consultation, participation	very similar	0.6	0.6
2 a Assessments	fairly similar	0.3	0.2
2 b REDD+ Strategy options	complementary	0.1	0.3
2 c Implementation framework	fairly similar	1.0	0.5
2 d Social and Environmental impacts	very similar	0.2	0.2
3 REL forests	fairly similar	n.d.	0.3
4a MRV and safeguards	fairly similar	0.2	0.2
4 b Multiple benefits, governance and SG	fairly similar	0.2	0.2
TOTAL PROPOSED BUDGET		>5.0	5.2

(36) In summary, the TAP reviewer notes that, as outlined in the Mid-term review report of 2015 and the R-Package report of 2016, there are still considerable activities to be accomplished in the readiness process. This will require still substantial effort in the readiness process that need sufficient attention in parallel to the work undertaken in the framework of the ER-PD.

(37) The TAP expert also concludes from the assessment report that in general terms, stakeholder participation in the review process was general well, in spite of some process remarks in some of the stakeholder groups. While overall the R-Package report provides a well elaborated summary of the REDD+ preparation process and of the self-evaluation process conducted, some elements should be addressed with some emphasis, including: (i) an improved information basis for stakeholder consultations ; (ii) the preparation of a consolidated work plan (MTR and open issues from the self-assessment of the R-Package) with the definition of clear milestones on the completion of the Readiness process.

(38) In the view of the TAP expert, some issues need to be particularly addressed in the completion of the readiness phase as they play an central role in the process of implementing future REDD+ implementation programs, at national, jurisdictional or project level, including, *inter alia*:

- a. Rendering the REDD+ implementation platforms truly operational and, in particular sustainable; in this regard strengthen the nationally coordinated and financed CN-REDD that supports the national REDD+ Registry and acts as clearinghouse for all REDD+ projects and investments aligned to the REDD+ strategy of the country

- b. Fully develop and a functional grievance mechanism
- c. Broader land use aspects, given the importance of land use aspects in general and forest monitoring in the RoC and the fact that these issues are dealt with in a complex way and embarking challenges of effective institutional coordination and collaboration
- d. Improve information sharing platforms and access to information at all levels; particular link the national RL/MRV approach with planned jurisdictional REDD+ implementation programs
- e. Finalize the national REDD+ strategy taking into account the relevant results of the SESA and proper identification of REDD+ implementation areas. In this regard, the TAP reviewer recommends that the RoC reflect further on the fact that the country counts on a secured permanent forest estate, which comprises the largest FSC certified natural forest concessions in the humid tropics. This offers a unique opportunity to develop a methodological approach of Sustainably Managing Forests under REDD+, one of the REDD+ approaches that have yet not been considered in any of the REDD+ strategies worldwide.

(39) All this is not to say that the RoC should refrain from continuing the planning process for the implementation of its proposed jurisdictional Emissions Reductions Program (ER-Program). On the contrary, many of the remaining uncertainties about the critical elements of REDD+ would actually be served by moving forward with the ER-Program, as long as practical solutions can be found to the most pressing problems in the Readiness process (grievance mechanism, SESA, national registry etc). As with all complex natural resource management issues involving multiple stakeholders, “learning-by-doing” is indispensable. While advancing with the ER-Program, the TAP expert recommends to focus efforts on the readiness process over the coming 6-9 months and to continue to process of readiness as it had been outlined in the MTR and the subsequent R-Package assessment.

Documents consulted

(Others than the documents submitted with R-Package and the hyperlink references provided in the document)

List of all documents prepared in the REDD+ Readiness Process:

See <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/republic-congo-r-package-reference-documents>

Documents consulted for the present TAP Report :

AGRER 2014. Cadre juridique et économique de la mise en œuvre du processus REDD+ en République du Congo. CN-REDD. Décembre 2014. 153 p.

CN-REDD 2015. Rapport de Mi-Parcours pour : La République du Congo. 20 Mars 2015. Ministère de l'Economie forestière et du Développement Durable, Coordination Nationale REDD. 108p

CN-REDD 2016. Participatory Self-Assessment of REDD+ Readiness in the Republic of Congo. Report prepared by CN-REDD on the R-Package. July 2016.

CN-REDD 2016. Strategy Nationale REDD+ de la République du Congo. Version finale 16 July 2016.

FCPF 2013. A guide to the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework.

Evaluation environnementale et sociale stratégique du processus REDD+. *Rapport de base : Analyse environnementale et sociale stratégique du processus REDD+*. Oct. 2014.267p

Evaluation environnementale et sociale stratégique du processus REDD+. *Cadre de gestion des pests et pesticides*. (CGPC) O.P 4.09. April 2014.39p

CN-REDD 2016. Note méthodologique pour le Dossier Préparatoire (R-Package) de la République du Congo. Jan. 2016. 8 p.

WCS 2016. Participatory Self-Assessment of REDD+ Readiness in the Republic of Congo. Report on the consultation process prepared for the FCPF by the Wildlife Conservation Society. July 6, 2016. 132 p.

ANNEX 1: Gender Ratio (RoC on request by the TAP expert, 26 August 2016)

Number	Consultations				
	CACOREDD	CODEPA	Public Sector	FTPs	Total consultations
Men	22	8	18	8	56
Women	4	0	1	2	7
Total	26	8	19	10	63
Percentage of women	15.4	0.0	5.3	20.0	11.0

Validation Workshop					
CACOREDD	CACOREDD	CODEPA	CN-REDD	Public Sector	FTPs
Men	6	4	5	18	4
Women	0	0	4	4	2
Total	6	4	9	22	6
Percentage of women	0.0	0.0	44.0	18.0	33.0