

PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID) CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: PIDC72906

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Project Name	Central African Republic REDD+ Readiness (P156721)
Region	AFRICA
Country	Central African Republic
Project ID	P156721
Borrower(s)	Ministère de l'Economie, du Plan et de la Coopération
Implementing Agency	Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Sustainable Development
Environmental Category	B-Partial Assessment
Date PID Prepared/ Updated	27-Sep-2016
Date PID Approved/ Disclosed	06-Dec-2016
Estimated Date of Board Approval	

I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

The purpose of this Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) Assessment Note is to describe the technical and fiduciary aspects of World Bank assistance to the REDD+ readiness process in the Central African Republic (CAR). In particular, the purpose of the note is to: (i) discuss the technical quality of the R-PP activities, assessed by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Participants Committee (PC) in May 2013; (ii) describe the assistance the Bank will provide to the government of the Central African Republic in the implementation of its R-PP; and (iii) assess if and how the proposed REDD+ Readiness Support activity complies with Safeguard Policies, and the Bank's policies on Procurement and Financial Management.

The World Bank became the delivery partner after a request from the CAR Government, in March 2015. For the preparation of its Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), CAR was financially and technically supported by the French Development Agency. The R-PP was submitted for assessment by the FCPF PC at its 10th meeting held in October 2011 in Berlin, Germany. Following revisions to the R-PP, requested by the FCPF PC CAR was allocated financial resources with UNDP as the delivery partner. UNDP took the decision that their engagement in CAR would focus more on post-crisis recovery and that it was acceptable to them for the World Bank to be the delivery partner for the REDD+ readiness grant in CAR. After consultation with FCPF and UNDP, as well as other development partners, the Bank confirmed its acceptance in July 2015 and the WB started internal due diligence process, reflected in this document. The activities identified were based on the R-PP and consultations with stakeholders in CAR particular attention paid to avoiding duplication of activities supported by other partners.

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Pernicious history of instability. Poverty in the CAR was already widespread and severe before the 2013 crisis, when a combination of economic and social upheaval drove poverty levels even higher. The poverty rate was estimated at 62 percent in 2008, the year of the last nationally representative household survey, with 50 percent of the urban population and 69 percent of the rural population living in poverty. Gross national income (GNI) per capita fell by 37 percent between 2012 and 2013, from US\$917.4 to US\$574.5, and by 2014 GNI per capita of US\$569.3 was the lowest in the world. Recent estimates based on these trends indicate that the poverty rate in the CAR (at the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day in 2011 purchasing-power parity terms) surged from 66 percent in 2008 to more than 76 percent in 2013.

Conflicts are exacerbated by poverty and lack of governance. The recent conflict in the CAR is the result of several unresolved and overlooked structural problems including, but not limited to: (a) unequal geographic distribution of public investment; (b) very limited state presence outside of the capital; (c) chronic poverty and high unemployment; and (d) weak institutions, both formal and informal. For the people of the CAR, this situation translates into political instability, decreasing socio-economic indicators, limited or no access to basic services, marginalization of most rural areas, loss of investments and livelihoods, and dramatic violence. Rural, mostly poor, populations continue to rely largely on natural resources to meet basic livelihood needs.

An improving political context. The Transitional Government's priorities are outlined in the Libreville Roadmap (August 2014) and focus on: (i) local and national reconciliation; (ii) cessation of hostilities and demobilization of armed groups; (iii) restoration of state authority and redeployment to rural areas; and (iv) rebuilding the economy. Building upon the Roadmap, and also drawing from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the Government has established a two-year emergency strategic plan: the Programme d'Urgence et de Relèvement Durable (PURD). The PURD aims at restoring peace, security, constitutional order, and governance in the CAR, while putting the country back on a trajectory for sustainable development. To this end, it outlines a strategy that aims to combine humanitarian assistance and early recovery, in order to reinforce the fight against poverty by restoring the capacities of national institutions and communities. As part of the efforts to resolve the crisis the Transitional Authorities organized a process of national dialogue and reconciliation that was formalized during a national Forum in August 2015. Subsequently, Presidential and parliamentary elections took place on December 30, 2015 and an ensuing runoff election for President occurred in March 2016. The selection of a President through a democratic process was an important step in the emergence from crisis. Despite the positive progress however, the country remains unstable.

The Forest sector is uniquely placed to support growth in the delicate post-crisis circumstances, through the ability to contribute to national revenues as well provide local livelihood benefits. Years of conflict have left the newly elected government with a hindered national economy and few prospects for enhancing revenues rapidly; at the same time there are significant expectations from the population to improve living conditions. The forest sector is well positioned to provide a relatively rapid source of revenue through commercial exploitation that was stalled during the crisis and through the provision of non-commercial uses to local beneficiaries. The extent to which this potential can be rapidly harnessed will depend largely on the ability to provide adequate stability and security and institutional arrangements that support stability and transparency.

Local, often isolated, rural populations depend heavily upon the country's natural resources to ensure basic livelihoods. While the spatial distribution of poverty varies by region, poor households are overwhelmingly located in rural areas. In 2008 nearly two-thirds of the population in the CAR lived in rural areas including about 70 percent of the country's poor. Overall, 58 percent of the CAR's poor population was concentrated in the three predominantly rural regions of Yadeo, Kagas and Plateaux. Livelihoods are heavily dependent on agriculture and other income-generating activities that are poorly connected to markets, if at all, and often in direct or indirect relationship with forests (non-timber forest products, small-scale mining, charcoal, fisheries). Population growth, estimated at 2.8 percent per annum, has increased demand for agricultural land both for subsistence production and for cash crops and has consequently increased the pressure on forests. Poor soil management in areas outside of forests reinforces expansive land clearing and incursions into forest areas where the soil is more fertile.

Focusing on strengthening the Central African Republic's institutions for forest landscape management will promote more effective natural resource usage with the aim of ensuring future livelihoods. REDD+ in the CAR promotes a broad and dynamic approach to forest landscape management by focusing on strengthening institutions at the national as well as regional levels. Previous efforts to conserve natural resources have focused largely on defining well-managed and financially sustainable timber exploitation businesses; the REDD+ approach extends the approach to producing an integrated vision of natural resource management that is inclusive of local populations and their livelihoods.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

Forest Sector and Drivers of Deforestation

In the Central African Republic forest cover comprises approximately 28.3 million hectares, representing approximately 45 percent of the national territory. Forest cover is generally categorized by dense and semi-deciduous forests (roughly one-third of the territory) and forest-savanna mosaics (roughly two-thirds of the territory). Forest cover is very diverse and varies widely according to climatic zones. Humid dense forests are found in the Southwest, and are commercially logged, and in the Southeast where they are not commercially logged. The central part of the country is covered by dry forests and the northern part of the country is characterized by savannas. Net annual deforestation between 1990 and 2005 is estimated at 0.14 percent nationally and 0.13 percent for the southwestern dense forests .

Forests make an important contribution to the national economy and to local livelihoods. Prior to the 2013 crisis the forestry sector represented over 6 percent of GDP, roughly half of total exports and about 10 percent of state revenues and estimated with 4,000 directly employed and 6,000 indirectly employed by the sector. The formal forestry sector in the CAR is characterized by 11 large concessions from which 99.8 percent of the formal forest production come. In 2011, 424,447 m³ were produced. The majority of products for export in the formal sector were rough lumber or rough lumber equivalent (147,893 and 239,536 m³ per annum in 2010) with some sawn wood (54,176 m³ in 2011), indicating a potential for increasing added value through increased capacity for processing. The European Union (EU) and Asia are the primary export destinations and the CAR has a Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT-VPA) signed with the EU. Artisanal annual sawn wood production is around 67,000 m³ on which 33-34,000 m³ are consumed in Bangui and at least 6,000 m³ are intended for Chad .

The global financial crisis led to a diminished demand for forest resources nationally and internationally which has had an impact on the economy, and livelihoods, in the CAR although accurate data is lacking. The main constraints of the formal forest sector include:

- ▶ (¢ Insecurity resulting in the reduction of forestry logging activity;
- ▶ (¢ Deficit of production tools resulting in weak production yield;
- ▶ (¢ Weak forestry administration resulting in reduction of forestry oversight;
- ▶ (¢ Higher transportation costs, averaging US\$ 180 to US\$ 250 per m³.

As the security situation stabilizes and economic growth resumes, CAR's forestry sector has considerable potential to attract private investment and contribute to economic development. The productive capacity of CAR's forests is well known and sustainable management plans are in place, and the forestry sector still offers a wealth of harvestable species. The forestry sector's legal and regulatory framework is strong, both by the standards of comparable countries and relative to other economic sectors in CAR. The country has actively participated in international certification systems and multilateral efforts to combat climate change. However, the crisis largely halted activity in the forestry sector. Nearly all forestry companies suspended operations, and most suffered a significant degree of property damage and looting. The forestry road network has for example deteriorated significantly and the forestry firms do not always have the necessary means to rehabilitate it. The Government of the CAR has accumulated significant tax arrears owed by the forestry firms and no settlement has yet been found making firms hesitant to invest further in the sector. Only six of eleven logging companies are currently active. Finding solutions concerning tax arrears and reattribution under transparent conditions of passive concessions to new investors will consequently be determinant for the positive evolution of the sector in the future.

Sustainably managing the Central African Republic's forests will contribute to the country's crisis response and early recovery. Managing and addressing the principal drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, which are currently predominantly linked to anthropogenic activities, are important to developing a successful REDD+ program. Also critically important is supporting sustainable forest management practices that contribute to successful recovery of the state as well as a contribution to supporting basic livelihoods of the population. In this spirit the REDD+ readiness activities will seek to align with the Country Engagement Note that outlines a priority focus on reestablishing basic fiscal management and supporting economic recovery through targeted support to key sectors of growth. The readiness grant will support capacity building for institutions and civil society, seek to improve governance and investment climate and support the design of a grievance redress mechanism, and identify and design investments that will contribute to environmentally and socially sound forest resource management. (See Annex F for more information about the direct and indirect drivers of deforestation in Central African Republic).

Strategic policy priorities for addressing the major drivers of deforestation and forest degradation will be developed as part of a national REDD+ strategy. The national strategy will seek to address drivers through different activities related to the differentiated pressures in the different areas of the country. According to broad consultations and in depth analysis of the causes of deforestation in the CAR there is a mix of governance and technical dimensions that lead to deforestation and forest degradation. The strategic priorities identified for REDD+, as defined in the CAR's R-PP, are: (i) Finalization of the zoning process; (ii) Technical improvements and increased agricultural, silvicultural and livestock productivity; (iii) Promotion of sustainable forest management; and (iv)

Strengthening institutions and governance. In the emergence from the crisis a renewed emphasis has been placed on taking steps towards improving the conditions for a return to economic performance of the forestry sector. Furthermore, it will be incumbent to understand how a more stable and resilient context will lead to different challenges and pressures on forest resources in the future in order to promote strategic sustainable development opportunities.

Forest resources are of crucial importance to a majority of rural household as sources of fuel, food, materials, medicine and income. Ensuring the sustainable management of these resources for rural livelihoods will be a central aspect of REDD+ activities in CAR. Forest linked activities such as harvesting and trading non-timber forest products and bushmeat hunting are part of traditional culture and are generally widespread and/or profitable or life-sustaining. These activities are nevertheless poorly managed and often unsustainably practiced. Enhancing the sustainability of these activities is an opportunity to enhance livelihoods, increase well-being economically and environmentally and provide opportunities for future generations.

Local communities are important stakeholders in natural resource management but links have not been adequately made between national objectives and implementation of natural resources management. While communities living near forests and National Parks have been recognized as key actors in the management of the natural resources they have access to, the link has not been extensively put into practice. Additionally, fiscal mechanisms to deliver benefits from commercial forestry to municipalities and village communities have not translated into local benefits as the funds did not materialize or the structures in place were not adequate to ensure delivery of the resources to the intended beneficiaries. The REDD+ program is seeking to consolidate the link between sustainable natural resources and the well-being of communities as part of a more integrated approach to improving livelihoods and sustainable natural resources management.

Institutional Arrangements for REDD+ Implementation

The REDD+ Technical Coordinating body (Coordination Technique REDD+, or CT REDD+) is the operational entity in charge of implementing REDD+ Readiness activities, as part of the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries (MEDDEFPCP). The institutional arrangements include three main bodies: (i) National REDD+ Steering Committee (CN-REDD+), presided by the Ministry of Planning, Economy and International Cooperation; (ii) Inter Prefectural Committees (CIP), numbering three in total (Southwest, Southeast, and North) and: (iii) CT REDD+ that includes a secretariat as well as technical groups that will be responsible for the different components of the REDD+ Readiness process such as Monitoring and Evaluation, development of the National REDD+ Strategy and Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA), the legal framework, and reference emissions level (REL) among others. The CT REDD+ will be responsible for coordinating with other agencies as well organizing consultations. Civil Society Platforms will also play a critical role in ensuring a participatory process for engaging different members of civil society at national and sub-national levels. Fiduciary Management will be handled by the Project Implementation Unit for the Transportation Facilitation Project in CEMAC under the Ministry of Public Works. The CT REDD+ will work with the fiduciary to implement the activities in technical sound and operationally effective and efficient manner.

The Central African Republic will use FCPF resources to implement key activities that will contribute to building a robust REDD+ program. This includes reinforcing institutional capacity, developing a national strategy and a national reference level for emissions from deforestation, and forest degradation and other aspects necessary for implementing REDD+ at a national scale. The

strategic options mentioned above will be developed based on each one's effectiveness at addressing the drivers of deforestation as well as potential for modification and/or scaling up. Additionally, the grant will be used to build institutional capacity at the national level as well as in inter-sectoral planning and more integrated planning around forest landscape management at the sub-national levels. Specific capacities related to forest and deforestation monitoring and the development of safeguards mechanisms for the national strategy will be addressed in the form of a SESA. The analytical work under the REDD+ readiness grant will be carried out in a way that is synergistic with promoting enhanced governance and sustainable revenue generation as part of the country's economic development emerging from the political crisis.

Relationship to CAS

Relationship to Interim Strategy Note

Due to the political situation in the country since December 2012, the Central African Republic was under OP 7.30 (Dealing with De Facto Governments). The Country Partnership Strategy which covered the period from 2008 to 2012 was prepared jointly by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank (AFDB), and contained a clear message that, following a protracted absence from the country, the two institutions are ready to support the country's efforts to achieve sustainable development results. Prior to the time of the political instability, the Bank was preparing a new country interim strategy note (ISN). In July 2015, the Country Engagement Note for FY2016-2017 was prepared and highlighted the need for the country team to undertake some analytical work on the priorities for the forestry sector. The Turnaround Engagement Note (TEN) outlines the strategic program that the WB will support between FY17 and FY19 including a thematic focus on governance which includes natural resource management. The present FCPF/REDD+ grant is consistent with the forest related activities identified in the TEN and medium-term goals including institutional strengthening and capacity building that will contribute to sustainable economic growth in the forestry sector.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The development objective is the design of a socially and environmentally sound national REDD+ strategy to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and to inform the development of a national reference emission level for REDD+.

Key Results

The key results of this preparation grant are specifically related to key aspects of readiness for implementing REDD+ at a national level. The grant is not supporting direct investments and is more specifically focused on technical assistance. Indicators have been proposed by the FCPF to measure key results related to progress in achieving strategic areas of REDD+. These indicators align with different aspects outlined in the Central African Republic's R-PP and are used throughout the REDD+ Readiness process corresponding to the implementation of the R-PP. This preparation grant will not be used to address all of the areas and indicators of REDD+ readiness. Nevertheless, the preparation grant will help the Government in the monitoring of the Readiness Package Assessment Framework Results Indicators. The results indicators for the PDO are related to the measures defined by the FCPF that are indicative of substantive progress towards REDD+ Readiness and are areas where the World Bank has a comparative advantage in providing support:

- National REDD+ Strategy designed through a consultative process (Yes/No);

- Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) validated through a broad consultation process (Yes/No);
- Feedback and Grievance Mechanism designed and operational (Yes/No);
- Multi-sector coordination mechanism and cross-collaboration in place (Yes/No).

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

This REDD+ Readiness Preparation grant will provide financing for several of the major components of the R-PP to ensure a basic level of REDD+ Readiness. The R-PP approved by the FCPF in May 2013 is organized into six sections: 1) Organization and Consultation; 2) Development of the national REDD+ strategy; 3) Development of a baseline scenario; 4) Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Systems; 5) Budget and Timeline, and; 6) Monitoring Plan and Productive Measurement Framework. Other partners are supporting key aspects of these elements (notably the EU and FAO on MRV and assessment of strategic options), however some budget is allocated to each aspect of REDD+ readiness to complement planned activities. Table 1 presents a consolidated view of funding under this grant for activities across the main sections as outlined in the R-PP. Activities to be financed by the proposed grant are explained in more detail below.

The evolution of REDD+ in the Central African Republic has been informed by past experience, including development and conservation projects, the development of the protected areas, the development of the R-PP, and the evolution of international dialogue about REDD+ over the past years. While the FCPF financing is not enough to cover all of the activities envisaged in the R-PP, it will be used to implement key components which represent strategic entry points to building capacity in certain areas. Other sources of funding from bilateral donors are being identified and will be used to enhance the ongoing activities. Particular attention will be given to the development of the institutional and governance framework for REDD+ readiness.

Resources from the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) will be used to develop a National Investment Framework for the implementation of activities that address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the CAR. Preparation resources of US\$ 1 million were agreed upon by CAFI's Executive Board on February 22 2016, and will be used complementarily to the readiness resources of this grant to identify strategic investments that are consistent with the national REDD+ strategy. Maximum effort will be used to harmonize the different resources so as not to duplicate work, while at the same time being consistent with the particular objectives of each funding source. Appropriate fiduciary mechanisms will be established in order to allow for clear and effective monitoring of the different resources.

Readiness Preparation Activity Components

Component 1: Institutional Arrangements for REDD+ Readiness (US\$ 1.3M). This activity corresponds to sections 1a and 1c of the R-PP. This component will support the structures that will lead the coordination and implementation of the REDD+ Readiness process in CAR. Notably this will include support for the operationalization and functioning of the REDD+ Technical Coordination agency (CT REDD+), including the hiring of staff and technical specialists; operational and travel costs; personnel management tools and training; office supplies (including computers), furniture and maintenance; technical trainings and other capacity building; communications. Support for institutional arrangements of the national strategy preparation process

aims to complete the operationalization of the proposed entities responsible for REDD+ readiness process and also enable the implementation of the process of consultation and stakeholder participation. Component 1 activities are grouped into two sub-components.

Sub-component 1.1 - Support for governance structures for national REDD+ strategy development. This activity will provide resources for holding regular sessions of the National REDD+ Committee chaired by the Ministry of Planning, Economy and International Cooperation, (MEPCI) Inter Prefectural Committees at the sub-national level, and strengthening financial and technical functions of the REDD+ Technical Coordination agency. This activity will support the recruitment of technical consultants, fiduciary management consultants and the procurement of goods and materials to enable proper functioning of the CT REDD+. This activity will also support audits and monitoring and evaluation of the grant.

Sub-component 1.2 - Support for consultation and participation processes. This activity will support the implementation of consultation and participation processes for REDD+ readiness. Resources will be used to strengthen the inclusive and participatory nature of the REDD + process in the CAR by funding the consultation and communication plans and the plan for capacity building of stakeholders (National Committee, Technical Coordination, Platform of Civil Society, Indigenous Peoples and private sector). Specific actions will be funded to strengthen the integration of the gender approach and also ensure greater engagement of vulnerable groups and the private sector involved in REDD+ issues as a key partner in the implementation of development actions.

Sub-component 1.3 - Support for the design of a Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism. During the Readiness preparation phase, numerous questions, inquiries, and grievances may arise about the REDD+ Readiness strategy and the process of developing it (i.e. process of consultation and participation processes). The consultative part of the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) should help to identify issues and stakeholders and provide a forum for discussion. Nevertheless it is deemed important that during the Readiness preparation phase, effective mechanisms and capacity will need to be put in place to address grievances that may arise, and build the base for future forest investments. This will be done in alignment with the objectives identified in the RPBA under Pillar 1: Support peace, reconciliation and security, notably on the implementation of national mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of civil conflicts.

Component 2: Support for preparation of the National REDD+ Strategy (US\$ 2.5M), this activity corresponds to sections 2a, 2b and 3 of the R-PP. This component aims to supplement the actions already undertaken by the CAR and its partners in the process of building the national REDD+ strategy. Resources will be used to finance additional studies to deepen the understanding of strategic options for addressing the deforestation and forest degradation and conduct a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment of the proposed policy options including the development of an Environmental and Social Management Framework. This component will also support and supplement, in synergy with the other technical and financial partners, the activities leading up to the proposal of a reference emissions level compliant with international requirements in this area. It is organized into three sub-components. To the extent possible these activities will be bundled into one or several large contracts to reduce the transaction costs of multiple procurement processes and to maintain consistent between the different outputs.

Sub-component 2.1 - Analysis of strategic options to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. This activity will finance analytical studies on addressing the drivers of deforestation

and forest degradation in order to inform the national REDD+ strategy. This will improve the understanding of the dynamics of developing agricultural and livestock activities at national level, to better understand the pressures such as the issues associated with fuelwood as well as the development of the mining sector. Additionally, analysis will be conducted to better understand how to increase the economic performance of the forestry sector so that it can contribute to sustainable economic growth and development that provides local and national benefits in line with recommendations from the Forest Sector Policy Note. A full list of the studies to be carried out can be found in Annex D.

Sub-component 2.2 - Development of an environmental and social management framework adapted to REDD+-This activity will finance the preparation of a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) of the strategic options of the national REDD+ strategy with all the instruments that will be used in the implementation of this strategy. This sub-component will also include the development of an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and other instruments required to comply with safeguards policies to adequately address potential impacts of an eventual national REDD+ strategy. The SESA will be informed by, and complementary to, the process of developing an FGRM, as supported in sub-component 1.3. The activity will also finance analyses and studies for the establishment of benefit sharing mechanism for potential revenues from REDD+ and will also be used to develop a feedback and grievance redress mechanism to handle complaints that might arise from the implementation of REDD+ activities in the country.

Sub-component 2.3 - Support for the development of a national Reference Emissions Level (REL)
 ➤(This activity will be used to complement actions already undertaken by the REDD+ Technical Coordination agency as well as all technical and financial partners for the development of a REL.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No	TBD
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	✗		
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	✗		
Forests OP/BP 4.36	✗		
Pest Management OP 4.09	✗		
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	✗		
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	✗		
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	✗		
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		✗	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		✗	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		✗	

V. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	3.80	Total Bank Financing:	0.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
Financing Source			Amount
Borrower			0.00

Readiness Fund of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility	3.80
Total	3.80

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