

Independent TAP Review of the R-Package prepared by Lao
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INTRODUCTION: THE CORE TASK OF THE TAP REVIEW

1. This document provides a review of the R-Package Self-Assessment Report prepared by Lao, by way of a participatory self-assessment process, in the month of December 2017 which was conducted with key REDD+ stakeholder groups in Lao, Core REDD+ Country Team and Technical Advisors, the 6 Technical Working Groups, development partners, civil society and private sector representatives. At the end of December 2017, the self-assessment report was put through a validation process by the National REDD+ Task Force (NRTF).
2. The preparation of an R-Package provides an opportunity to a REDD Country Participant to self-assess the progress on REDD+, demonstrates a REDD Country Participant’s commitment to REDD+ Readiness; and generates feedback and further guidance to a REDD Country Participant through a national multi-stakeholder self-assessment and PC assessment processes on readiness. In the case of Lao, it is important to recognize its key milestones in the context of REDD+ Readiness. The National REDD+ Strategy was expected to be submitted to the Minister for approval in February 2018, a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) final draft is ready, a first draft of its Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM) document has been prepared and a reference level was actually submitted to the UNFCCC in January 2018.
3. The purpose of the review is primarily to assess both progress and achievements of REDD+ Readiness in the country using a Readiness Assessment Framework (<http://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/fcp/files/2013/July2013/FCPC%20framework%20text%207-25-13%20ENG%20web.pdf>), which consists of a set of 34 readiness criteria, distributed under four main readiness components, and their respective sub-components.

TAP ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

4. To perform the assessment, the TAP conducted a desk review of key documents starting with the R-Package document itself, Lao's Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), Draft Emission Reduction Program Document (ER-PD), Reference Level/Reference Emissions Level (RL/REL), and SESA reports. The terms of reference issued to the TAP by the FCPF Facility Management Team stated the following:
 - i. Perform a review of Lao's progress and the self-assessment report, based on guidelines in the R-Package Assessment Framework.
 - ii. Review Lao's documentation of stakeholders' self-assessment, including the process that was used for the self-assessment and the reported outcome.
 - iii. Review key outputs and documents that underpin, and are referenced in, the R-Package, including documents pertaining to the national REDD strategy and Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), reference levels and forest monitoring, and national institutional structures.
 - iv. Provide constructive and targeted feedback, as required to align the processes used for self-assessment and reported outcome, comparing with the R-Package Assessment Framework guidance.

The TAP expert is then required to verify completeness of the R-Package, including:

- i. A summary of the readiness preparation process;
- ii. A report of the multi-stakeholder self-assessment process;
- iii. The results of the national multi-stakeholder assessment;
- iv. References to documentation pertinent to the nine subcomponents, prepared during the readiness preparation process.

PART A. REVIEW OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND THE ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION

Self-Assessment process according to the R-Package guidelines

5. The R-Package starts with a comprehensive introductory section which describes Lao's involvement since 2007 in the REDD+ process with support from the FCPF. The developments started from the preparation of a Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) in 2007, R-PP in 2010, received grant funding for its Forest Investment Program (FIP) in 2012, a Readiness Grant in 2014 and was accepted into the Carbon Fund Pipeline in 2016. Thereafter it received a grant to prepare its ER-PD, a draft of which has been submitted in February 2018 for the first informal assessment. Included are also a series of background studies that culminated in a REDD+ Strategy to be submitted in 2018 and also the R-Package itself. A comprehensive summary of the participation of other donors in REDD+ has been provided in a Table in the Summary Section.
6. The R-Package as submitted is well-written, comprehensive and clearly structured in line with the R-Package Assessment Framework. The progress made against each of the 34 assessment criteria are well described and the self-assessment scores are presented according to each of the

stakeholder group; Core Team and the respective Technical Working Group. Right from the summary section, Lao is quite forthright about its challenges, such as, technical capacity, competing economic development options, conflicting inter-sectoral policies and weak governance in the forest sector.

7. The document is also clear on the various kinds of funding it has received from both bilateral and multilateral sources to support its REDD+ Readiness Process, at both national and sub-national (provincial) levels.

Facilitated Self-Assessment Process

8. From the description of the process, Lao has made it clear that it was guided by the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework. The process was facilitated by both national and international technical advisors, and was based on the 34 assessment criteria and a set of diagnostic questions.
9. The assessment was effected through three main meetings; the Core REDD+ Team and Development Partners, the Technical Working Group Members and the National REDD+ Task Force. Each group discussed the criteria and thereafter agreed on the colour rating. For the meeting of the 6 Technical Working Groups, each group discussed criteria in which they felt technically competent and thereafter, their ratings were combined to generate overall ratings for each set of criteria. Most importantly, the key achievements were identified and areas that needed additional action were agreed upon and listed after each summary rating. The degree of achievement under each criterion were agreed upon in each workshop with green being the highest level, yellow representing medium progress, orange just below medium and red representing the lowest degree of achievement.

Time frame and development of the Readiness Process in Lao

10. The next four paragraphs provide a summary of the events and milestones, gleaned from some key early documents that have preceded the development of both the R-Package Document that is assessed herein.
11. Lao first engaged in the REDD+ readiness process in 2007, with funding from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), and a national REDD+ Technical Working Group (RTWG) was established as a platform for government and non-governmental organizations to engage in the preparation of a Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) which was submitted to the FCPF in May 2008. This was followed by the draft Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), finalized in April 2010. In 2012, it also joined the Forest Investment Program (FIP) as one of its pilot countries. A second readiness grant to implement the R-PP was provided in 2014. At the time of this self-assessment in December 2017, Lao has produced a number of key documents that are milestones toward REDD+ Readiness. These include, a National REDD+ Strategy that has been submitted to the Minister for approval in February 2018, a SESA final draft is ready, a first draft of its FGRM document, and a reference level was actually submitted to the UNFCCC in January 2018 and the recent production of a Draft ER-PD.

National ownership for REDD+ Readiness Process

12. The self- assessment report provides a clear picture of stakeholder participation and also what appears to be, an honest view of what the weaknesses are, particularly on institutional arrangements for implementing REDD+. In that regard, a list of planned actions are listed in a work plan for readiness which will be concluded in 2020.
13. Another important evidence of national ownership are the key milestones on institutional arrangements listed and explained in Table 1.1 of the R-Package Document. In addition, is the fact that the Prime Minister, in his attempt to improve governance in the forest sector, made a decision; Prime Minister Order Number 15 which appears to have reduced illegal timber exports by 75% since its promulgation.
14. From the documentation on REDD+ in Lao there seems to be a strong interest understanding of REDD+ based on earlier work facilitated by its various bilateral and multilateral partners and the work of its six Technical Working Groups which report to the National REDD+ Task Force.

PART B1. SUMMARY OF REDD+ PROCESSES – STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE R-PACKAGE FROM THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

An overview

15. Part I of the R-Package describes a chronology of events, processes and achievements, as well as international aid that has supplemented efforts of the Government toward REDD+ Readiness.
16. On its Strategic Vision on the implementation of REDD+ in Lao, it is worth noting what the country has proposed. Developed in parallel with the ER-PD, the National REDD+ Strategy specifies programs and strategic interventions over three phases, (2018-2020), (2021-2025), and (2026-2030) targeting five core interventions areas namely:
 - Development of sustainable agriculture in coordination with forest protection
 - Infrastructure and mining development including resettlement and urban expansion in coordination with forest protection
 - Sustainable timber harvesting and forest management (wood and forest products)
 - Turning pioneering shifting cultivation to sedentary cultivation, controlling forest fires and forest restoration (carbon stock enhancement)
 - Development of sustainable commercial tree plantation
17. The key achievements that have been registered between 2007 and 2017 are listed herein as follows:
 - Development of an R-PP which laid the foundation for the national REDD+ Strategy
 - Preparation of a National REDD+ Strategy (currently undergoing an approval process)
 - Provincial REDD+ Action Plans (PRAPs) and Study of Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation
 - Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)
 - Readiness Organization and Consultation
 - Establishment of a Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL)/ Reference Level (RL) and submission of the same to the UNFCCC in January of 2018.

Key Gaps identified and a work plan up to 2020

18. The bullets below represent the areas under each of the five components where Lao would like to do more work. The bullets represent a work plan which Lao would like to implement up to 2020.

National and Provincial REDD+ Management Arrangements

- Additional capacity building for the REDD+ Division, NRTF and TWG members on REDD+ strategy and action plans
- Technical support and capacity building for sub-national institutions for implementation of ER-Program interventions

REDD+ strategy and interventions

- Cross-sector capacity needs assessment for the implementation of National REDD Strategy (NRS), ER-PD, and PRAP interventions and preparation of a Capacity Development Plan
- Strategic and economic analysis of NRS interventions
- Development of a cross-sector spatial analysis framework for land suitability analysis to support the land use and forestry planning and economic analysis of REDD+ interventions
- National and sub-national cross sector knowledge sharing, consultation, awareness raising and dissemination of NRS

Stakeholder Engagement

- Workshops, training and capacity building in line with identified capacity needs and specifically for cross-sector land use planning and management in the context of REDD+ as identified in the Capacity Needs Assessment
- Awareness raising and dissemination of REDD+ material at national level (workshops, campaigns, pamphlets and other publications)

Implementation and monitoring

- Preparation and finalization of benefit sharing plan including stakeholder consultation and awareness raising
- Development of a national REDD+ monitoring system
- Establishment and capacity building of field monitoring units in selected districts to establish a framework for REDD+ progress monitoring

Social and Environmental Impacts

- Design of national Safeguards Information System
- Capacity building and mainstreaming REDD+ at National and Sub-national level within and across key sectors (forestry, agriculture and energy)

Reference Emission Level and Monitoring Systems

- Updating and improvement of the FREL/FRL and Design and implementation of the MMR/MRV
- Building sectoral capacity for data management and data sharing
- Procurement and updating of hardware and software for GIS and remote sensing
- Design and setup of knowledge management system for REDD+ impact monitoring across key sectors

Summary of the self-assessment process shown by component

| REDD READINESS COMPONENT AND SUB-COMPONENT | SUMMARY SCORE |
|--|---------------|
| Component 1. Readiness Organization and Consultation | |
| Sub-component 1a | |
| Sub-component 1b | |
| | |
| Component 2 REDD+ Strategy Preparation | |
| Sub-component 2a Assessment of land use, Land use changers, Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance | |
| Sub-component 2b REDD+ Strategy Options | |
| Sub-component 2c Implementation Framework | |
| Sub-component 2d Social and Environmental Impacts | |
| | |
| Component 3 Reference Emissions Level/ Reference Levels | |
| | |
| Component 4 Monitoring systems for Forests and Safeguards | |
| Sub-component 4a National Forest Monitoring System | |
| Sub-component 4b Information System for Multiple Benefits, other Impacts, Governance and Safeguards | |

Proposed REDD+ Readiness Preparation Action Plan

19. While the TAP generally agrees with the above work plan as listed, the TAP has added additional comments to each component.

PART B2. ASSESSMENT BY THE TAP

COMPONENT 1. READINESS ORGANIZATION AND CONSULTATIONS

Sub-component 1a. National REDD+ Management Arrangements (Criteria 1-6, Yellow)

- 1) Accountability and transparency
 - 2) Operating mandate and budget
 - 3) Multi-sector coordination mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration
 - 4) Technical supervision capacity
 - 5) Funds management capacity
 - 6) Feedback and grievance redress mechanism
20. In terms of the management of REDD+, the proposed institutional and management arrangements are well described and appear more straightforward, than in many countries, with complex webs of hierarchical governance structures and systems. The description of national and sub-national entities that will manage REDD+ are clear, including the replication of the National REDD+ Task Forces and respective Technical Working Groups in each of the six Provinces which constitutes the accounting area for the ER Program.
21. From the self-assessment, stakeholders appreciate the level of accountability and transparency on REDD+ that is addressed under Criterion 1.
22. Criterion 2 on operating mandates and budget has been well described in the R-Package and seems to have satisfied stakeholders during the self-assessment process.
23. On Criterion 3 which addresses the critical issue of coordination, the self-assessment suggests a high level of satisfaction but at the same time it has admitted under additional work that “multi-sectoral coordination and general coordination remains weak” – and calls for a more coherent policy implementation across the major sectors (forestry, agriculture, energy and lands). Given the ‘institutional architecture’ that has both national and provincial institutions to implement REDD+ the TAP agrees with the observation made during the self-assessment process that coordination with other sectors which are crucial to REDD+ such as agriculture, mining, transport infra-structure and others is still a challenge. These challenges should be more accurately reflected in the self-assessment.
24. On Criterion 4, on technical supervision capacity, the self-assessment by Lao has observed that technical supervisory capacity for REDD+ still needs to be strengthened at national and sub-national levels, since that is a weak point at the moment. The TAP suggests that this, together with Criterion 3, are issues that should be reflected in National REDD+ Strategy, and certainly in the ER-PD, with clear road maps.
25. On Criterion 5, the R-package has also observed that more capacity development is required, particularly at the provincial levels. This is accurately reflected in the scoring.
26. On Criterion 6 dealing with FGRM issues, the TAP notes what the R-Package has admitted that more work could be done. This includes; analyzing the institutional frameworks for implementing FGRM, assessment of the legal and regulatory frameworks for facilitating FGRM, safeguarding FGRM, identification of capacity gaps and strengthening for the effective implementation of FGRM, stakeholder consultations and social mobilization campaign to

sensitize relevant stakeholders on how to utilize FGRM, among others. Again the scoring appears to be in line with the points raised.

1b. Consultation, Participation, and Outreach (Criteria 7-10, Green)

- 7) Participation and engagement of key stakeholders
- 8) Consultation processes
- 9) Information sharing and accessibility of information
- 10) Implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes

27. The self-assessment process described in the R-Package demonstrates a clear and structured system of consultations that Lao has conducted at all levels for the purposes of awareness. The document asserts that a wide range of consultations were conducted during the preparation of forest and REDD+ sector programs and processes. These include the R-PP, FIP, ER-PIN, SESA, ESMF, the National REDD+ Strategy and most recently, the ER-PD. Consultations were also held in meetings organized by the 6 Technical Working Groups.
28. On Criterion 7 on participation, the R-Package has stated that private sector involvement has been minimal, including the mobilization of commitments for climate-smart and REDD+ investments. This is an area of concern and it is important that Lao develop a strategy for engaging the private sector, just as it has developed a community engagement framework (CEF).
29. On implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes, what is significant is that stakeholder concerns and opinions expressed in consultations, such as in the SESA review process should be seriously considered and reflected in the design or modification of strategy options. From the assessment, the aspects of implementation and public disclosure appear to be weak and more should be done.

COMPONENT 2. REDD+ STRATEGY PREPARATION

2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance (Criteria 11-15, Green)

- 11) Assessment and analysis of land use and land use change drivers
- 12) Prioritization of direct and indirect drivers/barriers to forest enhancement
- 13) Links between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities
- 14) Action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure, governance
- 15) Implications for forest law and policy

30. On Criteria 11, 12 and 13 which are on drivers, the TAP notes that the REDD+ Strategy includes an action plan which sets out key activities that address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. In addition, the TAP has noted that the analyses of drivers was done for each of the six northern provinces which constitute the accounting area of the ER Program. This is a good development as it recognizes differences in how direct and underlying drivers may play out in the provinces. In addition appropriate interventions to address the drivers have been identified. Furthermore barriers that need to be overcome to reduce emissions from the forest sector have also been identified and described. The drivers, barriers have been sufficiently analysed and used to formulate a National REDD+ Strategy with five programs covering, i) sustainable agriculture, ii) infra-structure and mining, resettlement and urban

expansion, iii) sustainable timber harvesting in the context of SFM, conversion from shifting to sedentary cultivation, and v) sustainable commercial tree plantations. The process will be concluded with the official approval of Lao's National REDD+ Strategy.

31. On Criterion 14, the R-Package could consider developing and proposing guidelines on carbon rights which has not been adequately resolved, particularly for forest lands under communal ownership. It is hoped the new Land Law, expected to be produced in 2018 will help address issues of land, forest and carbon tenure, including benefit sharing arrangements.
32. On Criterion 15, the policy and legal implications of the proposed strategy options have been described, including the Government's decision to ban illegal timber exports, the decision to join the EUs Voluntary Partnership Agreement to curb illegal activities in the forest sector through law enforcement; FLEGT. However policies and procedures for a grievance redress mechanism (FGRM) framework are still 'work in progress', as mentioned earlier on.

2b. REDD+ Strategy Options (Criteria 16-18, Green)

- 16) Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategy options
- 17) Feasibility assessment
- 18) Implications of strategy options on existing sectoral policies

33. Criteria 16 and 17 clearly state it is the feeling of the stakeholders that the strategy options are feasible for implementation, even in the absence of robust economic analyses, which Lao plans to undertake shortly.
34. On Criterion 18 the TAP notes that the R-Package is not explicit as to whether the policy and legal implications of the strategy options were also analysed and described. In addition, the R-Package has also admitted that the strategy options have yet to be tested using cost-benefit analysis techniques and the scale of their emission reduction potentials. So far, the economics of implementing the strategy option remains a gap which needs to be addressed.
35. In the technical and economic feasibility of the strategy options, it would be useful to identify and describe those likely policy and technological options that would transform Lao's forest sector and enable it to increase ERs without compromising development goals. This would be particularly important as Lao goes to the next stage of preparing an emission reduction programme document (ER-PD). It is therefore reassuring that under criterion 18, the R-Package has recognized this and has also stated that much more needs to be done on cross-sectoral and vertical coordination among sectors and government levels. Hence Lao's capacity to mainstream REDD+ into provincial economic development plans remains important.

2c. Implementation Framework (Criteria 19-22, Orange)

- 19) Adoption and implementation of legislation/regulations
- 20) Guidelines for Implementation
- 21) Benefit sharing mechanism
- 22) National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities

36. On Criteria 20 and 21, the R-Package has a clear understanding of the key issues that constitute an implementation framework and has described what it sees as gaps that need to be addressed. In particular the expected new Land Law should in theory, support REDD+ by

virtue of its timing and official approval of a National REDD+ Strategy. Special reference has been made to the Master Plan for Land Allocation which will be used to among other things, restore Lao's forest cover to 70% and could positively influence REDD+. The document has also explained the implications of the Forestry Law of 2007 on land, forest and by extension, carbon ownership.

37. On Criterion 21, the current ideas on Benefit Sharing Mechanisms indicate that an official document on it will be produced by June 2018 and potential beneficiaries have been identified as rural forest-dependent communities, state bodies and other stakeholders. This is an important document for stakeholders to participate in REDD+ and sustain its objectives and momentum and ought to have strong pro-poor provisions as Lao intends to have. In essence the issue of benefit sharing should be clearly linked to those who incur the opportunity costs of REDD+ and also those with responsibilities to generate and sustain emission reductions, all of which will need to be underpinned in legislation.
38. The need for a REDD+ registry is a gap, but Lao is committed to develop one. For now, a clear road map to achieving that should be clearly stated.

2d. Social and Environmental Impacts (Criteria 23-25, Yellow)

- 23) Analysis of social and environmental safeguard issues
- 24) REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts
- 25) Environmental and Social Management Framework

39. On criterion 23 dealing with analysis on safeguards, the R-Package has clearly stated Lao's comprehensive SESA review process which was supported by donor funded projects such as the CiPAD Project which did a desk study on national safeguards and other REDD+ projects which have looked into issues of the social and environmental risks and impacts of REDD+ projects. The R-Package also states that the SESA process include specific consultations within the provinces including the 6 northern provinces which constitute the accounting area of the ER Program.
40. On criterion 24 and also 25, the social and environmental safeguard assessments provided inputs and feedback that was used to revise draft environmental and social management frameworks (ESMF) and enabled a focus on land tenure issues and also contributed through stakeholder consultations to the prioritization of drivers, and possible interventions.
41. One concern is that despite the fact that a number of REDD+ projects which have considered social and environmental safeguards, the R-Package has not provided practical examples on how those REDD+ projects have handled safeguard issues. It has also been noted that Lao has yet to develop a comprehensive environmental and social management framework for its REDD+ program.

COMPONENT 3. REFERENCE EMISSIONS LEVEL/REFERENCE LEVELS

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

42. On Criteria 26, 27 and 28. In the R-package, Lao is of the opinion that it has achieved significant progress in terms of methodology development under Component 3, despite the observation by the National REDD+ Task Force that there is limited capacity within the country on REL/RL.
43. On Criterion 26 and 27, on demonstration of methodology, and use of historical data respectively, the self-assessment rated this as well done. This is supported by the fact that Lao has collected data sets covering 5-year periods (2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015). The same data sets were used to derive the national RL and also for the ER Program accounting area; which is important for consistency of the data and the associated estimate of emission reductions and removals.

COMPONENT 4. MONITORING SYSTEMS FOR FORESTS AND SAFEGUARDS

4a. National Forest Monitoring System (Criteria 29-31, Yellow)

- 29) Documentation of monitoring approach
- 30) Demonstration of early system implementation
- 31) Institutional arrangements and capacities - Forests

44. On Criterion 29, it has been noted that Lao has clearly stated and used its forest definitions consistently and has a well-documented national land cover classification.
45. On criterion 30 on early testing and demonstration, Lao plans to conduct its first national MRV in 2019 through support from JICA and the FCPF. The support by JICA will attempt to develop a near real-time deforestation monitoring system, which is an interesting development in itself and will be used to assess and monitor the impacts of direct drivers.
46. On Criterion 31, on institutional arrangements, Lao appears to be clear on a national organization structure for monitoring, even though the involvement of stakeholders outside the government is not clearly spelt out. An issue which has been recognized is the need for capacity building on all aspects of forest monitoring, including the management and manipulation of large data sets.

4b. Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards (Criteria 32-34, Orange)

- 32) Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues
- 33) Monitoring, reporting and information sharing
- 34) Institutional arrangements and capacities – Multiple Benefits and Safeguards
47. In general, Criteria 32 to 34 still need further improvements, particularly a more comprehensive description on non-carbon benefits and their monitoring, development of a safeguards information system, a data registry system on the same and the building of the necessary capacity at both national and provincial levels

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PC

48. Based on the TAPs assessment of the R-Package self-assessment report, and accompanying documents, the process as described in the document appears to have been well managed and documented over a relatively short period of time in December of 2017. The gaps or areas that need further work have been stated by the Country Team. For all that the TAP commends the process, the clarity of reporting and the identification of the needed remedial actions. The TAP has just a few comments in addition to what the R-Package has identified.
49. On matters regarding the coordination of REDD+ at a national level and in the long-term, the R-Package, and certainly the ER-PD, should discuss policy level actions that can enable and enforce cross-sector coordination and collaboration on REDD+ and also in the context of green growth if desired. In fact the identification of mechanisms that can facilitate a REDD+ Programme which reports to a sector ministry will require clear mechanisms which will give the coordination ministry the powers to function. This is not yet clear in the R-Package.
50. Like in many other countries, Lao would be well served were it to identify and describe those likely policy and technological options that would transform Lao's forest sector and enable it to increase ERs without compromising development goals. This would be particularly important as Lao goes to the next stage of preparing an emission reduction programme document (ER-PD) with its six programs.
51. It would appear from comments regarding capacity for RL/REL and MRV, including the monitoring of safeguards, that Lao needs a comprehensive capacity development plan to implement its National REDD+ Strategy and to effectively manage its forest and other sectors in pursuit of a sustainable ER Program.
52. On safeguards it would be useful if the key concerns were more explicitly stated and described. In addition a summary of the experiences of the many projects on REDD+ which have been implemented in Lao would be quite useful.