



# Executive Summary of Joint FCPF & UN-REDD Programme Country Needs Assessment

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### **Background to the study**

The country needs assessment on REDD+ was commissioned by the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (UN-REDD) following a decision of its Policy Board that such an assessment be conducted to enable it to review its policies and align the Programme's support with the priority needs of countries. In the process, the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank joined the UN-REDD Programme to co-sponsor the country needs assessment exercise. In line with that decision, an initial team of three independent consultants was recruited to start the exercise. The first part of the exercise focused on the development of a methodology, which was approved in March 2012 at a joint meeting of the Policy Board and the Participants Committee of the UN-REDD Programme and FCPF, respectively. The methodology was largely based on a matrix of the key components of REDD+ as defined at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Cancun. All components except that on reference scenario have sub-components that are shown in the results section. The methodology was developed in close cooperation with the secretariats of both the FCPF and the UN-REDD Programme, as well as a Working Group, which comprised members of the UN-REDD Programme Policy Board, to advise and oversee the process. The collection of data and information covered Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean and consisted of three key exercises that focused on the assessment of technical, institutional and financial needs of countries in completing Phases I and II of REDD+, as outlined in the Cancun Agreements and as defined by UNFCCC COP decisions.

Specifically, the country needs assessment process entailed the development of a methodology, which was formally approved, a desk assessment of country needs on REDD+, and a global needs assessment which used a response matrix and covered 22 countries, of which six were visited by the consultants for more in-depth treatment. The methodology used a framework based on the key REDD+ components as identified in the UNFCCC decisions, especially the Cancun Agreements, and which are the basis for the FCPF and UN-REDD Programme national templates. An additional component on transition to a development framework with REDD+ (green economy) was added. In the detailed response matrix, the components were sub-divided, where necessary, into sub-components and also into elements under each sub-component. These elements formed the basis for specific questions, which guided respondents in expressing their needs

Once the overarching framework to guide the country needs assessment had been defined, the execution of the study comprised four main steps:

- i. A literature review to compile background data for the assessment;
- ii. Administration of the response matrix and six overview questions mailed to the 52 UN-REDD Programme and FCPF REDD+ partner countries to solicit their response;
- iii. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with six partner countries of the UN-REDD Programme and/or FCPF, which were visited by the consultants. They were the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania in Africa, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea in Asia and Colombia and Ecuador in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- iv. Analysis of collected data interpretation and grouping of needs, discussion and the formulation of recommendations derived from the stated needs.

In the matrix, countries were requested to give an indication of where within each component they had need of support. For each need, the countries were required to specify the level of urgency associated with the need, the type of support they required to meet the need and the preferred mechanisms of delivery. In addition, they were requested to estimate the costs of their needs but without any reference within the methodology on how to make those estimates. In-depth assessments during country visits added more information to the types of responses already described. In the report, each country report starts with some background information on the forest sector, REDD+, socioeconomic conditions and REDD+ governance.

Since one of the objectives of this exercise was to develop a framework for future needs assessments, this assessment was also to test the approach and methodology and to provide insights on how to refine it for future applications.

### **Treatment of the data**

The output of the country needs assessment was largely based on the response matrix already described. The responses were presented in the form of frequency of expression of needs, urgency, type of support, and preferred method of delivery. The frequency data, which was expressed as the number of countries, was used to generate summary tables.

The data from the matrices were also coded and classified by region, country, component, sub-component and elements and then entered into a database in order to generate outputs in the form of frequencies and percentages, both at global and regional levels. The frequencies and percentages were then used to generate graphs and tables.

Within each of the three regions, countries were divided into two clusters (A and B) according to their relative progress toward readiness. In this regard, Group A refers to more advanced countries that have completed or are about to complete phase I of REDD+ (within 8 to 12 months). The rest, which were in the early or middle stages, were put into Group B. A global analysis comparing both types of country across regions was done.

## Limitations of the data

The country needs assessment exercise depended on the voluntary participation of countries that had signed up to UN-REDD Programme and/or FCPF processes. Of the 52 countries, only 22 responded and, among them, six were visited by the consultants for in-depth assessments. In their response to the assessment materials; the response matrix and a set of six overview questions, countries were supposed to consult widely with stakeholders, but the process had no way of enforcing that requirement, hence the level of consultations tended to vary from country to country. Consultations were also limited by the time allocated to the study.

The assessment was not an evaluation or audit of the REDD+ programmes of participating countries, but merely provided an agreed framework of components, sub-components and their elements to enable countries to evaluate their own programmes and organize information on what they perceived to be their needs for REDD+ support.

This was the methodology approved for assessing needs, in addition to interviews carried out during country visits. The results in the report should be seen in the context of the limitations explained here.

A study of the country responses as expressed in the response matrices show a tendency, particularly among those countries that were not directly visited, to express needs in virtually all REDD+ components, and often without any clear separation of priority needs from others. In comparison, countries visited for in-depth assessments generally permitted a deeper analysis of specific country circumstances, provided context for the expressed needs and a better sense of focus on priorities, than those that were not visited. Furthermore, since the country needs assessment did not provide a framework for budgeting, the estimation of costs of the expressed needs also tended to vary widely among the countries that responded.

## Key Results

The main results summarized here show the main areas of priority needs on REDD+ among the 22 countries that participated in the study:

Governance: This component has three sub-components: i) institutional capacity, coordination mechanism and legal frameworks; ii) benefit sharing; iii) consultation and participation process. In this study, needs were expressed in all of the three key sub-components. A majority of countries prioritized institutional strengthening and reforms, benefit sharing and legal frameworks for REDD+. Of interest is that a number of countries also prioritized elements such as development of effective institutions, identification of institutional strengthening, effective coordination mechanisms across ministries, and effective coordination mechanisms with civil society, indigenous peoples and private sector.

REDD+ Strategy Development: In expressing their needs, countries included work on drivers of deforestation, development and testing of safeguards, establishment of pilot projects.

Work on safeguards: There were strong indications from country responses that capacity to develop and mainstream safeguards in REDD+ programmes is inadequate and support is required to improve it.

Measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) and Reference levels: On this vital component of any REDD+ programme, technical support was sought by all but two countries.

More detailed results are provided in the Chapters 3 and 4 of the report.

**Key needs of countries in REDD+ based on the analysis of data and information from in-country visits**

As would be expected and as already discussed, the needs of countries differed in type and scale, depending on size of forest cover, stages of readiness, socioeconomic conditions, and drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. However, some general needs emerged, which are listed below.

- i. The response matrices showed that 80 percent of all countries prioritized governance (institutional strengthening, legal frameworks and benefit sharing) for support. This lends credence to the findings of in-depth studies for the six countries, which revealed that the capacities (systemic, institutional and individual) of sub-national structures at both provincial or district levels should be prioritized since that is where REDD+ programmes will be implemented. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, calls this priority “the decentralization of REDD+”, and likewise, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia also identified this as a priority;
- ii. Further on governance, legal frameworks to support the implementation of REDD+ and to resolve ‘land tenure’ and ‘carbon rights’ issues in the REDD+ context are needed in virtually all existing and future REDD+ country strategies. This need is particularly important as it helps countries to develop incentive-based models that will generate stewardship over forests and wooded landscapes. For example, the need for legal frameworks and guidelines for pilot REDD+ projects is clear in the Latin American Region, owing to ongoing complaints, particularly from indigenous peoples, of some abusive contracts sometimes imposed on indigenous groups without the involvement of their mother organizations or government;
- iii. For the benefit sharing, consultation and participation process, 86 percent of the countries required procedures for stakeholder consultations, 73 percent required capacity to improve information dissemination to stakeholders, 48 percent required assessment of previous experiences related to REDD+, and 46 percent required implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms;
- iv. The sub-component on safeguards was also an area of high priority, particularly by Asian and Latin American countries. This is also linked to the observed increase of REDD+ funding going to consultations in Latin America because of indigenous people’s participation and ownership of forest lands. Likewise, Asian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) stressed the need to pilot the implementation of safeguards, as well as free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) principles;
- v. The need for more support to be given in REDD+ strategies was the second highest priority after governance for countries, irrespective of region. This is quite consistent with countries in Africa and Asia expressing the need for REDD+ pilot projects, since they offer opportunities for testing and learning and also help to create buy-in by local communities and also within local and central governments;
- vi. There was also an expressed need across all three regions for more support on the core technical aspects of setting reference levels and the setting of MRV systems. This need implies an imperative to help build national technical capacities to enable more substantive participation in the setting of reference levels/reference emission levels than is currently the case and to be able to test models and build expertise in monitoring and maintenance of national forest and carbon databases.

- vii. It is also an important capacity for monitoring safeguards, co-benefits and the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

In addition to the above needs, which are core to the REDD+ concept, there are also other issues for which countries need support to address, but which are not normally expressed under the readiness components. They could however be described as supporting measures to managing REDD+ and, while this study cannot claim any authority on them, the country visits suggested that attention should be paid to the following:

- i. Overcoming what appears to be a waning political interest in REDD+ within countries, caused in large part by the slow disbursement of REDD+ funds and the lengthy processes before accrued benefits reach local people, protracted international negotiations, and limitations of voluntary markets, among others. These led to the suggestion that countries need support to demonstrate 'strong business cases for REDD+' in relation to other competing land policies.
- ii. This could be supported by quantitative methods that can demonstrate the mid- to long-term deleterious effects of and the economic potential of reversing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in both ecological and economic terms. Both of these could help create a sense of urgency and the level of investment required for REDD+;
- iii. In all countries visited, particularly in Africa and Asia, there was an urgent need to strengthen local NGOs and community groups and improve their capacities to participate in REDD+ alongside decentralized government institutions. This should however be done without alienating central governments. It seems that stronger in-country voices outside governments will eventually be of interest of forest administrations, which are largely responsible for the mitigation of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation;
- iv. For a number of countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia, there is a strong desire to link pilot projects to carbon markets and – in the process – build capacity and experiences in performance and results-based payments;
- v. Another issue worthy of further investigation is the setting of minimum investment thresholds needed to create the desired impact for REDD+ at the national level and thus produce transformative changes. Without a robust economic analysis, the Democratic Republic of the Congo suggested a threshold of US\$500 million for itself. It would be worthwhile to look into such a threshold across a few representative REDD+ countries,
- vi. In countries where forest land is under pressure of conversion to accommodate commercial, agricultural and other ventures in a manner that would inhibit the success of REDD+, suitable mechanisms need to be devised that would strengthen forestry administrations, protect fragile and high conservation value forests and also enhance the potential for the rural poor to share in the benefits of legitimate investments that are associated with conversion of forest lands.

Countries had the option to choose among three types of support namely financial, technical and administrative. Overall, the majority (50–88 percent) of countries preferred technical followed by financial support.

Financial and technical support was particularly preferred in Africa and Asia where at least 50% of the countries require both supports in all the elements. This is not the case of LA where in each element at least one country answered that administrative support has the same importance. Administrative support was much less popular with countries across the three regions, with only a few choosing it. In the analysis, the type of support was cross-tabulated with the preferred method of delivery, such as specific expertise, direct funding, guidelines and or workshops. The results show no clear preference across countries but it nonetheless shows interesting choices, which are discussed in more detail in the report.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations section is based on the key results that are summarized in section 7.2. of the full report, with a focus on the areas of priority needs revealed during the exercise. The results are discussed in greater detail in sections 7.2.1., 7.2.2., 7.3. and 7.4. Based on the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Given that a majority of countries in the study, including those that did not respond, are still in the early or middle stages of Phase I of REDD+ readiness, a support system of multidisciplinary groups of professionals that can assist the progress of these countries by providing technical support in the areas where countries have expressed their priority needs is strongly recommended. In this regard, it is important to realize that technical support may be just as valuable as financial support;
- ii. Countries that are already in Phase II, or will be within 12 months, can provide a good base for South-South cooperation in areas where they have greater implementation experience. For example, Mexico and Costa Rica can formally share their experiences with other countries in the areas of payments for environmental services (PES) and benefit distribution. Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are also currently collaborating on forest resource monitoring, a development that is vital to the two countries. The facilitation of such South-South collaboration is therefore recommended across a range of approaches;
- iii. The participation and consultation process is creating additional unforeseen needs and requires better assessment and support. The guidelines on FPIC developed by the UN-REDD Programme are very useful, but more work needs to be done to support countries on that issue;
- iv. Clear guidelines would be beneficial for REDD+ early projects and programmes to facilitate the participation of indigenous and forest dependent peoples and others to ensure that they get their fair share of any accrued or expected benefits;
- v. The experiences of Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Fiji, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guyana, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic in integrating REDD+ as part of their development strategies, plans and actions seem to show reasonable steps towards readiness, but also show a different set of challenges and needs that continue to require support at the technical and strategic or policy levels. When considering other REDD+ countries in each region, this area offers an interesting opportunity for South-South cooperation, which would be beneficial for countries that are in early stages of the REDD+ process;

- vi. From the responses of countries to the six overview questions, it is evident that the establishment of more REDD+ pilot programmes is an important learning opportunity, particularly for sub-national structures of government and civil society. A possible support mechanism to this end is therefore recommended and will primarily entail the development of clear guidelines for REDD+ Pilots Projects to enable a systematic learning process, with flexibility for adaption to national circumstances;
- vii. In countries that are initiating REDD+ strategy programmes, it is recommended that support be provided to enable them to evaluate how REDD+ options can be aligned with their national development strategies and what possible trade-offs they could consider. The component on a transition to a green economy tried to extract some specific needs under this key element, and work done by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in UN-REDD Programme partner countries is very much in line with technical support needs in this context;
- viii. It is recommended that more resources also be allocated to economic studies that can demonstrate 'strong business cases' for REDD+, as it could be a good way to generate political capital in favour of REDD+ within countries.