

REDD+

2022

Reduction of carbon emissions from
deforestation & forest degradation

BELIZE



REDD+ Readiness Package



THE WORLD BANK

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C.A.



REDD+ Readiness Package for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)

BELIZE

Status of what Belize has achieved after the first (readiness) phase of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation through Conservation, Sustainable Development and enhancement of Carbon Stocks. February 2017 to March 2022.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAE	Asesoramiento Ambiental Estratégico
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use
AOP	Annual Operations Plan
BENIC	Belize National Indigenous Council
BFD	Belize Forest Department
BIPFLRM	Belize's Integrated Planning Framework for Land and Resource Management
BNCCC	Belize National Climate Change Committee
BUR	Biennial Update Report
CADS	Centre for Applied Development
CATHALAC	Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (Centro del Agua del Tropicó Humedo para América Latina y El Caribe)
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CfRN	Coalition for Rainforest Nations
COP	Conference of Parties
ECDG	Equal Chances @ Development
ECGD	Equal Chances and Green Development
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FGRM	Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism
FOLU	Forestry and Other Land Use
FREL	Forest Reference Emission Level
FRL	Forest Reference Level
GhG	Green House Gas
GHGi	Greenhouse Gas Inventory
GHGs	Greenhouse Gases
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GoB	Government of Belize
IP	Indigenous People
ITT	Indigenous Technical Committee
JCS	Julian Cho Society
KBA	Key Biodiversity Areas
LTA	Land Tenure Assessment
LULUC	Land Use Land Use Change

LULUCF	Land Use Land Use Change and Forestry
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MLA	Maya Leaders Alliance
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRV	Measurement, Verification and Reporting
MRV	Measuring, Reporting, and Verification
MSDCCDRM	Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, Disaster Risk Management
NCCO	Belize National Climate Change Office
NGC	National Garifuna Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PA	Paris Agreement
PACT	Protect Areas Conservation Trust
PACT	Protected Areas Conservation Trust
PAs	Protected Areas
PDO	Project Development Objective
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Program
PSP	Permanent Sample Plots
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
REDD+	Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
REDD+ CU	REDD+ Coordination Unit
SESA	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
SESA	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
TA	Technical Annex
TAA	Toledo Alcaldes Association
TEG	Technical Expert Group
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TORs	Terms of References
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WB	World Bank

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Executive Summary

This report outlines Belize's implementation of its REDD+ Readiness Phase. It is drafted using the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) readiness assessment framework, which is designed to measure countries' relative progress on core readiness activities. As such, it includes a summary of Belize's REDD+ Readiness process for the period 2017 to 2022, overview of the performance of FCPF Process Indicators, assessment of each REDD+ Readiness component and sub-components as outlined under the process indicators as well as recommendations for future REDD+ implementation as it relates to the respective activities in the first phase.

The compilation of the R-Package was conducted with the support of the NCCO and Forest Department. The process commenced with the compilation of reports from the various components of the project that occurred during the project's implementation.

As part of Belize's climate change action and commitments, on March 15, 2013, the Government of Belize (GOB) indicated its wishes to work with the World Bank (WB) as Delivery Partner for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) for implementation of its REDD+ Preparation Proposal (R-PP). In July 2013, the GOB submitted the R-PP to the Participants Committee (PC) of the FCPF.

The total grant financing was signed for US\$4.08 million, with US\$3.80 million from the FCPF and country/recipient contribution valued at US\$0.283 million (in-kind counterpart financing by the GOB). Parallel financing from complementary investments, included the REDD/CCAD-GIZ Regional Program for Belize (US\$ 0.38 million) and the Management and Protection of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) Project financed by the WB (US\$ 6.09 million) also supported the R-PP development.

Belize has completed the development and implementation of REDD+ readiness activities, guided by a national framework, which includes Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) through funding from the FCPF. Belize has also received assistance from other outside partners through trainings, communication, media development etc.

At the date of this report, all activities outlined in the R-PP have been completed or are being implemented and operational. These include establishing engagement protocols with all four Indigenous People groups in Belize, development of communication strategy and establishment of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Technical Expert Group (TEG) under component 1. In addition, the REDD+ Readiness Project was also able to produce a REDD+ Strategy, Social and Environmental Strategic Assessment (SESA), Safeguard Information Systems (SIS), draft Benefit Sharing Mechanism (BSM), development and launch of the Feedback, Grievance and Redress Mechanism (FGRM) as well as a Land Tenure Assessment for Toledo District under component 2. For component 3 and 4, the Development of Belize's Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL), a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS), and the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification tool

(MRV) were also completed and currently being managed and updated by the Belize Forest Department.

The Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) outlines the pathways for the completion of the remaining work under these activities. The Proposal also includes recommendations for further work to be considered to fulfil the requirements of the assessment framework. These recommendations include further development of the BSM in phase 2 of REDD+ which includes more extensive communication and consultations with the key stakeholders of the project and those not intensively engaged in phase 1. While a BSM is not a mandate under the FCPF, it is encouraged and is viewed as an essential deliverable to ensure fair and equitable distributions of carbon credit. The project unfortunately was not able to produce a final BSM document due to several factors; these included the setbacks on consultations due to COVID 19 along with the request from the GOB for time to develop a Carbon Rights Framework which would feed into the BSM. This Carbon Rights Framework goes beyond the scope of the REDD+ initiative.

In addition, the REDD+ Strategy indicates the need for the GOB to finalize the REDD+ implementation framework for phase 2 as it will be essential if phase 2 is to function smoothly without delays as what occurred in phase 1. A third recommendation is that there needs to be continued growth in regard to the data sharing and collaborative efforts across ministries and departments. In order for REDD+ to function successfully, all relevant agencies must be united and supportive as information housed within their units is essential to the REDD+ assessments. Lastly, the readiness process in Belize and related work also indicated that the country needs to continue to update its legislations as well and implement new legislations that will allow for Belize to be fully engaged in the REDD+ implementation.

Background and Introduction

Recognized as a world biodiversity hotspot, Belize stands out in Central America for largely meeting global protection targets for almost all ecosystems, maintaining the majority as viable, functioning systems. Located on the Caribbean coast of Central America, it is bounded to the north by Mexico, to the west and south by Guatemala and to the east by the Caribbean Sea which includes Belize's large extension of territorial sea. It has a great variety of terrestrial, marine, and freshwater ecosystems. According to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan from Belize (2018), Belize has five global ecoregions, with fourteen broad natural and two anthropogenically altered ecosystem types identified under the national ecosystem mapping.

Belize has one of the highest percentages of forest cover in both Central America and the Caribbean. In 2018 Belize retained 64.19% of its natural forest cover largely intact (CATHALAC, 2020)¹, providing habitats for keystone species such as jaguar and white-lipped peccary, absent from many forests in other Central American countries (GOB 2016), however, despite Belize having one of the highest percentages of forest cover in Central America and the Caribbean, the average forest cover loss between 2000-2018 was 0.7%, with conversion to grassland, settlements, and wetlands (CATHALAC, 2020).

In addition, Belize has large areas of low-lying wetlands and is very rich in both surface and groundwater. The importance of Belize's wetlands is reflected in the declaration of two Ramsar sites: (1) Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (1998), a 165 km² wetland complex connected to the Belize River via two streams in northern Belize, and more recently (2) Sarstoon Temash National Park (2005) in the south, a 35 km² wetland surrounded by tropical wet broadleaf forest ecosystems and land cover (AAE_CADS, 2021) (Belize, Belize Second National Communication to UNFCCC, 2011). Belize has 16 major watersheds and numerous smaller ones. The headwaters of fourteen of these watersheds originate within the Maya Mountains, providing water security for 55% of the total landmass of Belize and over 128 communities, as well as supplying water to over 180 communities in Guatemala (Z. Walker, 2008). The coastal lowlands and the amount of rain favoured the formation of an important interlocking network of waterways and water bodies: rivers, creeks, and lagoons. Belize has a tropical climate, strongly governed by seasonal variations in rainfall rather than in temperature. Average rainfall varies considerably, and a strong precipitation gradient exists from north to south. Tropical storms and hurricanes have historically affected the country once every three years and are more likely to hit the northern districts than those in the south. More recently, however, hurricanes and tropical storms have increased in the western district.

¹ https://governmentofbelize-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/personal/po_redd_environment_gov_bz/Documents/Belize%20REDD+%20readiness%20PACT/REPORTS/R-Package/REDD+%20Package/RPP%20Annexes?csf=1&web=1&e=QYcJpa

Lastly, the reefs of Belize form a significant component of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System, the largest barrier in the western hemisphere - 220km - running parallel to the shore (GOB 2011). Their unique values and importance are recognized through the designation of seven of Belize’s marine protected areas as a serial World Heritage Site – the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System. “The coastal lagoon lying between the reef and the mainland has extensive interconnected seagrass beds and mangrove-lined cayes that provide the essential ecosystem connectivity for the maintenance of Belize’s exceptionally diverse marine life” (GOB 2016, p.27).

The country faces serious challenges that not only threaten the natural ecosystems but also adversely affect Indigenous Peoples and poorer communities that are dependent upon forests and forest resources and the national economic growth prospects. Belize, however, has an opportunity to utilize climate finance via the REDD+ mechanism to address the issues and reverse the trends while improving livelihoods, building resilience, and reducing poverty.



Figure 1 shows Belize’s land use and land cover as of 2018 (CATHALAC 2020).

Belize's REDD+ Readiness Process 2017 to 2022

The REDD+ Project saw many setbacks over its four-year implementation though it has successfully overcome them. Initially implemented by the Belize Forest Department, the project saw delays in execution and movement of funds in year one and so with consultation with the GOB through the then MFFASDI, now MSDCCDRM, the decision was made to have the project implementing body be changed to the National Climate Change Office (NCCO) which fell under the same ministry.

With this change in 2018, Belize was able to make significant strides in accelerating the process of REDD+ across all five components. The project still faced setbacks due to the lengthy procurement process and development of the relevant terms of references for the consultations needed to complete activities. In addition, it also struggled with the hiring of relevant staff needed to implement the project.

The year 2020 specifically was an extremely difficult year for the project. In March 2020 the country of Belize experienced a nationwide lockdown due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. This lockdown, which consisted of several phases of restrictions, lasted for a period of nineteen (19) months, with the country only partially reopening in October of 2021; this resulted in a halting of approximately 90% of REDD+ activities during this time.

With the lockdown came a complete postponement of consultation sessions with stakeholders; all in-person meetings were cancelled, and offices were closed. The country of Belize and the REDD+ CU had to adjust to this new notion of working remotely and engaging only via virtual meetings which it had not experienced on this scale prior. Needless to say, stakeholder consultations and education and awareness activities were also cancelled.

These were further compounded by the national elections which were held in November 2020 which resulted in a change in government. In addition, the project continued to experience turnover of staff to the very end of 2020 and into the first quarter of 2021. A new Project Officer, Communications Officer and Indigenous People Coordinator was hired in the first quarter of 2021.

As with any change in government, and turning over of staff, the project execution slowed, however, did not cause any major changes to the strategic development trajectory of Belize as it relates to the implementation of REDD+ nor the climate change goals. With the changes in government and staff, a period of adjustment and familiarization was needed.

The new administration embraced the work of the REDD+ CU and built on the existing elements geared to a more resilient Belize. With the buy in by the new administration and the injection of new staff, the project saw significant strides in communication and awareness as well as the execution of consultations and other activities.

Key achievements made by the project over its four-year life span by the respective components include:

Component 1: REDD+ Organization Framework, Consultations, and Grievance Redress

- R+CU and PSC established as part of the stakeholder platform.
- TEG Established and meetings held,
- REDD+ Coordination Unit complete – with the addition of a Project Officer, Indigenous People Coordinator and an Environmental and Social Expert.
- Carrying out of a Stakeholder Mapping Exercise, Stakeholder Mapping Protocol completed and utilized to guide stakeholder engagements.
- Development of Communications Strategy. The strategy is a fluid document that can be updated as needed.
- Awareness and Communication with Protected Areas and Co-Managers on REDD+ to enhance capacity of integrating into planning and development of management plans for Protected Areas which are Forest Reserves.

Component 2: Prepare the REDD+ Strategy

- Completion of the REDD+ Strategy
- Identification of Deforestation/Degradation factors for Belize
- Completion of the SESA (inclusive of the SIS, SIS website, ESMF)
- Draft Benefit Sharing Mechanism
- Ethno-mapping of 4 villages in southern Belize
- Land Tenure Assessment/ Report for Southern Belize
- Feedback Grievance and Redress Protocol established as well as the FGRM website launched in January 2020
- Launch of FPIC Protocol by the GOB.

Component 3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level

- National Land Use Land Use Change Report 2018.
- Sentinel 2 imagery maps of Belize
- Submission of Belize's FREL (2020) to UNFCCC.

Component 4: Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Safeguards Systems

- National Forest Inventory for Belize based on Permanent Sample Plots (PSP)
- Establishing of Destructive Sample Plots (DSP) including Mangroves
- Development of a MRV System using tier 1, 2 and 3 data for Belize.

Overview of REDD+ Readiness Activities in Belize

The REDD+ Readiness Preparation Project of Belize was a project funded by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) in the amount of \$3.8 million USD. Counter-part financing from the GOB as per the grant agreement stood at US\$0.283 million. At the end of the REDD+ Readiness Phase in March 2022, the total counterpart/in-kind contributions made by the GOB and other donor agencies through projects and trainings such as KBA, GIZ, UNFCCC, FAO among others; amounted to 1.93 mil USD with the GOB alone providing 1.27 mil, bypassing its commitment of 0.283 mil in counterpart.

Table 1 provides an estimated break down of the counterpart / In-Kind Contribution by GOB and other donor organizations for the REDD+ Readiness Project for the period 2017 to 2022

REDD+ Readiness Project Counterpart/ In-Kind Contribution, 2017 to 2022, breakdown in USD					
		Total GOB Co-financing	Total KBA Co-financing	Total Other (FAO/Rainforest Coil/UNFCCC/Land Tenure Facility /GEF) Co-financing	Overall Total Co-financing
Component	Sub-Components/Activities				
Component 1: REDD+ Organization Framework, Consultations, and Grievance Redress					
1a: National Readiness Management Arrangements	1.1a: A Multi-stakeholder Participation Platform for REDD+	703,550.00	0.00	0.00	703,550.00
	1.1b: A Redd+ Coordination Unit (R+CU)	547,900.00	0.00	0.00	547,900.00
	1.2a: National Redd+ Communications and Information Dissemination Strategy	0.00	20,000.00	6,000.00	26,000.00
Total Component 1		1,251,450.00	20,000.00	6,000.00	1,277,450.00
Component 2: Prepare the REDD+ Strategy					
2b: REDD+ Strategy	2.2a Effective Strategic Options for REDD+	0.00	220,000.00	0.00	220,000.00
2d: Consultation and Participation	2.3- Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)	0.00	40,000.00	0.00	40,000.00
Total Component 2		0.00	260,000.00	0.00	260,000.00
Component 3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level					
3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level	3.2a: Develop reference models	7,500.00		250,000.00	257,500.00
Total Component 3		7,500.00	0.00	250,000.00	257,500.00
Component 4: Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Safeguards Systems					
4a: MRV	4.1a: A National Forest Monitoring System for the Measurement, Verification and Reporting (MRV)	12,000.00	132,000.00	0.00	144,000.00
Total Component 4		12,000.00	132,000.00	0.00	144,000.00
Overall Total Counterpart / In-kind Contribution		1,270,950.00	412,000.00	256,000.00	1,938,950.00

The Government of Belize (GOB) signed the Grant Agreement (GA) on March 14, 2012, with the World Bank (WB) acting as the Delivery Partner for the FCPF to implement the R-PP. On April 3, 2017, the GOB through its Ministry of Finance, signed a Subsidiary Agreement with the Protected Area Conservation Trust (PACT), to act as the fiduciary manager for the project.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) was “to assist Belize in carrying out key Readiness Preparation activities in order to strengthen their capacity to participate in future REDD+ carbon payment transactions”. The project was implemented under five components, including four main technical components mentioned above and a fifth supporting project monitoring and evaluation.

The REDD+ Readiness project was filled with significant setbacks during the full 4 years of its implementation, these included a change in its implementation partner, significant staff turnover throughout the four years, delays due to approvals required for Terms of References and the COVID Pandemic. These setbacks resulted in the REDD+ Coordination Unit requesting for 2 project extensions as additional time was needed to finalize deliverables. Despite all these impacting the implementation pace of the project, the project was able to overcome and successfully implement and execute all components and sub-component of the readiness phase.

Under Component 1 there has been success in the implementation and operationalization of the REDD+ Organization/Management, Consultation Strategy and Engagement protocols for all 4 Indigenous Person groups in Belize as well as the Feedback, Grievance, Redress Mechanism, In addition to the above mentioned, with the operationalization of an Indigenous Peoples (IP) Desk and the establishment of an Indigenous Technical Team (ITT), which is something that has never been done before, the project was able to ensure meaningful and effective stakeholders’ engagement with the Indigenous People of Belize. The IP Desk is a unique mechanism in the country which was established specifically to engage the IPs of Belize, ensuring the project received ongoing feedback and involvement from this key stakeholder group for REDD+ in Belize. During the last year of the project, the REDD+ Coordination Unit (REDD+ CU) merged outreach and education itineraries among all staff to properly utilize resources, engaging in a great deal of outreach and awareness involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders while adhering to the social distancing restrictions of the nation. This approach was necessary in order to reduce exposure of not only staff but also those stakeholders that were considered to be most at risk and vulnerable due to remoteness, difficulty in accessing health care and who fall within the poverty bracket of the country.

Within Component 2, delays were faced within the first half of the project, in particular related to initiation of the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (AAE-CADS, SESA Final Report, 2020), land tenure assessment studies (Department B. L., 2021) and benefit sharing mechanism (Development E. C., 2022). These delays were as a result of the extensive consultation process with IPs as well as a collaborative approach undertaken in drafting related terms of references

(TORs) as well as challenges in the procurement processes. Nonetheless the SESA and Land Tenure Assessment were completed. The SESA contract was signed in 2020 and completed at the end of December 2021. The REDD+ Strategy, ESMF and SIS have also been successfully completed. The Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM) was also finalized and operational in January 2021. As it relates to the Land tenure Assessment, four (4) Ethno-mapping was completed through funding from this project in 4 villages in Toledo. Along with this, was the completion of the Land Tenure Assessment for the Toledo district carried out by the Lands Department through the Ministry of Natural Resources. These Land Tenure Assessment/Report and Ethno-mapping reports were done with extensive consultations with the relevant national stakeholders, including the representatives of IPs.

Component 3 has been one of the great successes for Belize under this initiative, through the Belize Forest Department has produced its Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL) (Department F. , 2020). This report was completed and submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). There have also developed the National Forest Monitoring System (Mapping for Activity Data and Field Data Collection for Development of Emissions Factors). In addition, the Land Use, Land Use Change and Land Cover Map using SENTINEL, was developed by CATHALAC in 2020. GIS and Collect Earth Tools are utilized to properly monitor Belize's Forests with the REDD+ project supporting this activity heavily in the form of training and equipment. As a result, in the establishment of a Geo-spatial Monitoring Unit under the Forest Department. With this also comes the completion of the Draft BSM, this document had its own share of setbacks due to drafting and approval of its TOR as well as a suspension of consultations sessions that resulted in only a draft to be produced. The finalization of the BSM will need to be completed in the second phase of the REDD+ Initiative.

And finally, in regard to Component 4, the field work carried out supported the National Forest Monitoring System for the Measurement, Verification and Reporting (MRV). It initially progressed at a slower pace than envisioned which resulted in a re- stratification exercise to select additional sampling plots which was added to the existing network in Belize and the development of a comprehensive methodology for the other land use classes. The process of establishing several additional sampling plots (Destructive Sample Plots) to ascertain the emissions factor for different land uses across the country was also carried out. The original aim was to do 4 plots for each class, through the collaboration between REDD+ and FD, there were between 4 to 6 plots sampled for each class.

As of 2022, Belize has made several monumental steps in advancing Belize's status as a REDD+ nation and has completed its readiness phase of the REDD+, as demonstrated in the readiness packaged prepared for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).

Objectives and Scope of the evaluations

The Readiness Assessment was conducted as a thorough self-examination by relevant stakeholders to take stock of the activities implemented during the REDD+ readiness preparation phase and to assess progress on REDD+ readiness.

The outputs of the Readiness Assessment are as follows:

1. Assessment of each of the REDD+ components as well as the activities and deliverables mentioned above. A visual synthesis of overall achievement by sub-component using progress indicators: Green “significant progress”, Yellow “progressing well, further development required”, Orange “Further development required”, and Red “not yet demonstrating progress”.
2. Significant achievements and areas requiring further development related to the corresponding 34 assessment criteria (as identified in ‘A Guide to the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework’), described.
3. Actions that address ‘identified areas’ for further work, identified.

The outputs of the R-Package include:

1. A summary of the readiness preparation process;
2. The assessment results of the national multi-stakeholder assessment, developed;
3. Summary of key outputs of the readiness preparation process (i.e., the REDD+ Strategy, Reference Emission Levels/Reference Levels, etc.).

The R-Package identifies and reports on project results and specifies critical actions that need to be considered in order to guarantee the sustainability of the project outputs, outcomes and future possible impacts initiated by the project. The package also speaks to the key managerial, technical and administrative staff responsible for the project in the CU, as well as staff and authorities from stakeholder institutions and representatives of the project target beneficiaries, who may influence the institutionalisation and future sustainability of the activities initiated by the project.

All inputs to the present assessment process were compiled from the final reports and reviews carried out by consultants and relevant committees of this project, as well as the lessons learned from the implementation of activities and in coordination with a wide group of stakeholders, including Indigenous People (IP) constituents, Non-Indigenous People communities, Private Landowners, Government of Belize (GOB), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), loggers, farmers etc.

The technical reports this package builds and attempts to summarize include: the national REDD+ Strategy; information on the Forest Reference Emissions Level /Forest Reference Level Reports (FREL/FRL, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification Systems (MRVS), safeguards (including the Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA); In addition to these, a preliminary evaluation of the results for each indicator using the colour scores was conducted and is described below. The assessment results as progress indicators (colour scores: Green “significant progress” Yellow “progressing well, further development required”, Orange “Further development required”, and Red “not yet demonstrating progress”) for the nine subcomponents related to the corresponding 34 assessment criteria; and actions that address identified areas for further work.

Performance of FCPF Process Indicators

In preparation of the R-Package, the 34 progress indicators detailed in the Guide to the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework were assessed. 94.1% of the indicators assessed were found to have achieved significant progress or to have progressed well but require further development (Table 2).

Table 2 shows Performance of REDD+ progress indicators for the period 2017 to 2022 in Belize.

Colour Coding for Indicators during Mid-Term Review in 2019					
Completed	Significant progress	Progressing well, further development required	Further development required	Not yet demonstrating progress	Not Applicable
Colour Coding for Indicators during REDD+ Project Self-Assessment 2022.					
Significant Progress	Progressing well, further development required	Further development required	Not yet demonstrating Progress		
R-PP Progress Indicators			Mid-Term Report Assessment 2017 - 2019	R-Package Self-Assessment 2017 to 2022	
Component 1a. National REDD+ Management Arrangements					
1. Accountability and transparency					
2. Operating mandate and budget					
3. Multi-sector coordinating mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration					
4. Technical supervision capacity					
5. Funds management capacity					
6. Feedback and grievance mechanism					
Component 1b. Consultations, Participation and Outreach					
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					
Component 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law and Governance					
11. Assessment and analysis					
12. Prioritisation of direct and indirect drivers/barriers to forest carbon stock 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		
Component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options		
16. Selection and prioritisation of REDD+ strategy options		
17. Feasibility assessment		
18. Implications of strategy options on existing sectoral policies		
Component 2c. REDD+ Implementation Framework		
19. Adoption and implementation of legislation/ regulations		
20. Guidelines for implementation		
21. Benefit sharing mechanism		
22. National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities		
Component 2d. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) in the Formulation of the REDD+ Strategy		
23. Analysis of social and environmental safeguard issues		
24. REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts		
25. Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)		
Component 3. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level		
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		
Component 4a. National Forest Monitoring System		
29. Documentation of monitoring approach		
30. Demonstration of early system implementation		
31. Institutional arrangements and capacities		
Component 4b: Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards		
32. Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues		
33. Monitoring, reporting and information sharing		
34. Institutional arrangements and capacities		

As noted above, Belize has made significant progress in all four (4) major Components of REDD+ namely, Component 1: Organization Framework, Consultations, and Grievance Redress, Component 2: Prepare the REDD+ Strategy, Component 3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level, Component 4: Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Safeguards Systems. During the mid-term evaluation, the progress was not measured per indicator but rather by component. The table above reflects the component

evaluation made. The final evaluation at the end of the project was carried out in detail per individual indicator.

Below is a summary of what was achieved within the project per component.

Component 1: REDD+ Organization Framework, Consultations, and Grievance Redress

The Belize REDD+ Readiness Project is a Government of Belize (GOB)-led project spearheaded by the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (MSDCCDRM). MSDCCDRM is the implementing agency for REDD+ activities in Belize. It makes such decisions as requesting funds for further REDD+ activities and deciding where in Belize those activities should be targeted. The MSDCCDRM also oversees the activities of the Forest Department (FD) which has the legal mandate for sustainably managing Belize's forest resources.

In addition to the MSDCCDRM, the following institutions guided the implementation of REDD+ in Belize.

1. Belize National Climate Change Office guides Belize's climate change initiatives.
2. The Belize Forest Department is the national body responsible for the management of Belize's Forest.
3. A Project management Unit was responsible for the execution, implementation, and supervision of key project deliverables.
4. The Cancun Agreements set out the five REDD+ activities, which are considered the 'scope' of REDD+.

The MSDCCDRM and the FD are technically supported by the National Climate Change Office (NCCO) which is responsible for the coordination of Belize's national, regional and international response to Climate Change. This body works closely with other sister agencies such as the FD, Department of the Environment (DOE), Agriculture Department and the Lands and Surveys Departments. The NCCO spearheaded the REDD+ Project on behalf of the Ministry, a responsibility which was previously executed by the FD.

Important to note is that Belize as a country, previous to REDD+, had been a nation guided by conservation and sustainable activities to safeguard their resources, and as such had several policies in place as well as in the works which created an atmosphere for Belize to easily adapt to the REDD+ initiative. Within the existing natural resource management and sustainable development policy framework of Belize, in particular in relation to forests; there are various policies which promote the implementation of REDD+ activities, including:

1. National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan to Address Climate Change in Belize 2014
2. National Development Framework of Belize: Horizon 2030

3. National Forest Policy 2015
4. Forest Department Strategic Action Plan 2019- 2023
5. Belize Rural Area-Based Development Strategy (BRADS) 2012-2030
6. National Protected Areas System Plan 2015
7. Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under UNFCCC
8. National Land Use Policy for Land Resource Development 2011
9. National Agriculture and Food Policy of Belize 2015-2030
10. National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Belize 2030

However, several other institutions whose mandate and legal arrangements performed related functions were also brought in on an advisory capacity to the Belize REDD+ process. These included the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Department of Mining (DoM), Ministry of Economic Development (MED), Belize Lands Department (LD), Environmental Research Institute – University of Belize (ERI-UB), Belize Livestock producers Association (BLPA). Attorney General Office (AG), Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), and Ministry of Human Development and Indigenous Affairs (MoHDIA).

In addition, support was received from several advisory bodies led by Belize Forest Department, the Forest and Land Use Committee (FLOU), The Technical Expert Group, the Steering Committee and the Belize National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC).

In the Mid-Term assessment of 2019, the report established that an adaptive management to stakeholder engagement had allowed for the creation of the Indigenous Peoples Desk within the REDD+ CU. This desk was created in response to the need that developed for more meaningfully engagement and coordination with the Indigenous People in the REDD+ process based on the results of the initial stages of the consultation process. It was used to institute procedures to improve channels of communication with the IP communities. No such mechanism existed before the creation of the IP desk. (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021)²

The IP Desk was tasked with the coordination between the 4 indigenous groups across Belize, the Mayas of the South, the Northern Maya Association of Belize, the Yucatec Mayas of the West and the Garifuna. This meant that the IP Coordinator worked closely with the leaders of each group and the Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC) which brought together 3 of the 4 IP groups. Through the IP Desk, the REDD+ project provided support to BENIC in funding of council meetings. This was expressed as a need since the council suffered from financial restrictions. During these council meetings, REDD+ matters were also discussed inclusive of planning and trainings as it related to the different REDD+ products that needed to be communicated to the communities.

This collaboration of the IP Desk, REDD+ CU and the BENIC led to the creation of an Indigenous Technical Team, a concept that had never been tried by any country prior. This team consisted

² [Draft National REDD+ Strategy](#)

of experts from each IP group in the areas of law, anthropology, Indigenous Affairs etc. The purpose of the ITT was to review the REDD+ products, breakdown the information and explain it to their respective IP communities.

For the purposes of consultations during the REDD+ project, the Mayas of the south established consultation protocols³ for their communities and through the engagement of the BENIC, representatives of the other 3 IP groups, the Northern Maya Association of Belize, the Yucatec Mayas of the West and the Garifuna in Belize, also adopted the same engagement protocols as the Mayas of the south. In early 2022, the GOB passed a bill, establishing the GOB FPIC protocols. It must be said that the BENIC have logged their disapproval of the FPIC protocols passed by the GOB as they have communicated it was not in line with their recommendations.

Important to note is that the FPIC protocols passed by the GOB and being rejected by BENIC are not the same consultation protocols used to consult IPs during the REDD+ Readiness phase. This specific issue is above the REDD+ project and is being addressed through other means.

Another requirement of the FCPF was the development of Belize's Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM). The FGRM is a tool utilized to capture feedback and manage grievances related to the REDD+ process. It has clear protocols for the addressing of complaints and allow for transparency within the REDD+ initiative.

A Stakeholder mapping was carried out and served as a useful tool to identify the relevant stakeholders, understand their interests and perceptions in relation to forestry and climate change issues. The feedback provided important considerations for the design and application of the FGRM. Relevant stakeholders were identified and contacted, and their response provided input into the design of the FGRM.

As outlined in the 2020 "*Development of a Feedback Grievance Redress mechanism for the REDD+ Implementation in Belize Context Research and Assessment Report*"⁴, the main FGRM stakeholder groups targeted for its development included:

Government Institutions – This included government agencies whose work was directly related to the initiative, may be impacted or have an impact on the implementation of the REDD+ initiative. Interviews included representatives of different Departments of the then MAFFESD including the Department of Agriculture, Department of Forestry, Department of Environment, and the Forest Department.

Civil Society Organizations – These included representatives of the co-managers or organizations involved in terrestrial protected areas and organizations working in forest conservation such as the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO).

³ [Belize REDD+ Draft Stakeholder Engagement Protocol V3](#)

⁴ [Development of Belize FGRM Assessment](#)

Private Sector – The private sector category included primarily representatives of the agribusiness sector but also include tourism and agriculture particularly from the sugarcane industry.

Rural Communities – This category included representatives from rural communities that occupy forested areas and utilize forested areas based on their reliance on subsistence and small-scale agriculture as their primary means of livelihoods.

Indigenous Communities - This category included indigenous communities such as the Mopan and Q'eqchi Mayas, Yucatec Maya and Garifuna Peoples.

A FGRM Log was developed by the REDD+ CU to register and monitor the management of all grievances and feedback received. The link to the log grievances is www.fgrm.gov.bz and can be accessed from the REDD+ Website which is up and functional.

The Social Expert of the REDD+CU, was responsible for tracking and responding to all feedback, complaints etc. The website became functional in the 1st part of 2021. Thus far, 5 grievances have been received, resolved, and documented in the FGRM log. Awareness raising on the FGRM was undertaken through stakeholder outreach, development of video and documentary and during the SESA and BSM consultations.

In addition to the existence of the FGRM and process for resolving complaints, stakeholders have been informed on other channels for logging a grievance. For example, in the event that internet access is an issue, grievances can be logged via telephone or direct mail to REDD+ CU.

The Belize REDD+ requirements are on track to demonstrate fully transparent, consistent, comprehensive, and timely sharing and disclosure of information of all readiness activities, including the development of REDD+ Strategy, reference levels, and monitoring systems, in a culturally appropriate form. There is still work needed as it relates to information sharing and the accessibility of information. While the project was able to launch its SIS and FGRM websites, much more awareness is needed among stakeholders on their existence and purpose. In the last year, the project was able to communicate extensively to the Indigenous population on these two points, the other stakeholder groups did not have this same experience. The same can be said for general public awareness and consultations with the broader Belizean demography.

Finally, in mid-2021, the REDD+ CU through the IP Desk embarked on a small forest restoration activity that was birthed through the outreach and awareness raising sessions. As the REDD+ communications teams (consisting of the IP Coordinator, the Social & Environmental (S&E) Expert, the REDD+ Communications Officer and on occasion the Project Officer) meet with different IP and community groups, the members kept requesting assistance with reforestation activities as the community had sited vulnerable areas such as springs and rivers that required intervention. After discussion and review of the budget, savings were identified, and communities and the leaders were engaged. The REDD+ Unit in collaboration with the FD

provided a variety of trees to the communities who had made the request. The leaders and the communities took on the responsibility of planting the trees within the vulnerable areas. At the close of the project, the REDD+ project provided over 3,500 trees to roughly 24 communities. The FD provided guidance as to recommended species to purchase along with the logging of reforestation areas to add to Belize's restoration map.

Component 2: Prepare the REDD+ Strategy

In order for Belize to prepare its REDD+ Strategy there were several activities and reports needed to ensure that Belize was able to move on the phase two of REDD+. The country needed to have an understanding of its drivers for deforestation and degradation, this meant that a Land Use, Land Use Change (LULC) Assessment (CATHALAC, 2020) needed to be carried out along with an assessment of Belize's Forest Laws, Policies and Governance. This Land Use Land Change Assessment was completed for the period 2022-2018.

Belize is unique in that a large percentage of its population is considered Indigenous with them concentrating particularly in the southern region of the country. In addition to this Belize currently has a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which was brought forward by the Mayas of southern Belize for rights to communal lands. Respecting and safeguarding Ips' rights are requirements of the WB and of the FCPF. One of the requirements to become a REDD+ nation is that the country must have a REDD+ Strategy to guide the implementation of REDD+, with in this document, not only is a LULC assessment needed but also a Land Tenure Assessment/Report of the country.

The REDD+ CU collaborated with the Belize Lands Department (LD), who has the mandate for land resources in Belize under the MNR, in order to carry out the Land Tenure Assessment activity. The REDD+ project worked along with the MNR to equip the department with additional resources in order for the assessment to be carried out. The Lands Department had already started working on a Land Assessment for the Northern part of the country, they expressed that due to the sensitive nature of the south, the resources would be best spent on the southern areas and extensive work was needed in order for Belize to update the land information in that specific area. The also expressed with the cuts faced by the department as a result of the COVID Pandemic, the department was not able to complete such an analysis without aid.

Taking these points into consideration, with discussion by the REDD+ CU, WB, MNR (LD), the decision was made to utilize the funds to carry out the assessment of the southern part of Belize, specifically the Toledo District⁵. In February 2022, the Land Tenure Report for the Toledo District was submitted to the REDD+ CU by the LD. With this, the REDD+ CU through a consultancy with the Julian Cho Society, funded the development Ethno-maps for 4 villages in the Toledo District.

⁵ [Toledo Land Tenure Report December 2021_Update1.pdf](#)

These Ethno-maps were utilized in the Land Tenure Assessment carried out by the LD. The Ethno-maps were created through community consultations with the villagers communicating how and why they utilized the lands around them. The Ethno-maps identified key areas of importance and spiritual and cultural significance for each community.

Another sub-component that was essential to the overall development of the REDD+ Strategy was the Completion of the Legal and Institutional framework assessment for REDD+ implementation and associated recommendations on a REDD+ coordinating mechanism that will provide a frame for future determination of carbon rights. As a REDD+ country, Belize needed to identify the legal and institutional policies that need to be addressed to ensure a fair execution. An in-depth analysis of synergies and/or conflicts among various sector policies and strategies, including an analysis of REDD+ international framework/requirements, analysis of Institutional framework and stakeholders mapping, analysis of Legal Framework on REDD+ is essential to identify the level of work is needed for Belize to benefit. In addition, it must assess its capabilities and identify the areas that require changes, improvements, or development as it relates to carbon rights as a nation and for the stakeholders involved. The project was able to carry out this assessment and it constitutes a key component of the strategy.

In addition, the current BSM produced under this action is only a draft, the mechanism needs to be finalized in phase 2 through greater consultation with those stakeholders who were not fully engaged in phase one. And thirdly, more groundwork is needed to continue to Land Tenure Mapping of the country of Belize. In consultation with the World Bank (WB), the funds for this activity were used to concentrate the efforts of the Belize Lands Department (LD) on the Toledo District. This decision was reached since the Toledo District is the only district that has been recognized by the CCJ as having communal lands. This decision by the CCJ requires that the resource strapped GOB carryout a mapping exercise, same as what is required under this action. Because of the level of resources needed to do this work in the south, the project made the decision to steer the funds for work in that area.

In conjunction to the above mentioned, component 2 also saw the development of a draft Benefit Sharing Mechanism (BSM) (Development E. C., 2022). While a BSM is not a mandate under the FCPF, it is encouraged and is viewed as an essential deliverable to ensure fair and equitable distributions of carbon credit. The project unfortunately was not able to produce a final document due to several factors; these included the setbacks on consultations due to COVID 19 along with the request from the GOB for time to develop a Carbon Rights Framework which would feed into the BSM.

Belize in the last 2 years of REDD+, commenced discussions on Carbon Rights within the Marine perspective. This means that whatever work Belize is doing as it relates to Carbon Rights goes beyond the REDD+ initiative. At the close of the BSM consultancy, pending activities that were required to finalize the mechanism included final consultation sessions with NGOs/GOB Stakeholders as well as final consultations with the non-IP communities who were also identified as Key Stakeholders of REDD+ were not carried out. While the draft BSM incorporates extensive

feedback from the IP communities of Belize as the project was able to thoroughly engage them, the same is needed with the other stakeholders and will need to be completed in phase 2 in order for a final BSM to be drafted. It is important to mention that even with the extensive engagement carried out with the IP communities, the IP communities have requested that additional consultation is still needed for them to be updated on the final products of the Phase 1 of the REDD+ Project.

As another deliverable, the REDD+ project developed a Belize REDD+ Strategy (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021). The purpose of the strategy is to guide Belize in the implementation of REDD+ within the second phase. The REDD+ Strategy produced was an Operational Working Draft that will be finalized by the GOB upon defining some minor elements under discussion such as the REDD+ implementation framework. The operational working draft was completed in December 2021 and presented to the GOB for further input on key points that required the administration's attention.

Belize's National REDD+ Strategy was prepared through a participatory approach with the involvement of national and local level stakeholders and uses the country's national context, policies, plans and sustainable development as the basis for the strategy.

The version of Belize's National REDD+ Strategy which was used as a basis for the SESA process, consists of four pillars, each of which has several strategic lines allocated to it. It is a general strategy, which does not yet provide specific activities under each strategic line. Thus, the SESA (AAE-CADS, SESA Final Report, 2020) and subsequently the ESMF (Asesoramiento Ambiental Estrategico, 2021) were done based on possible lines of actions but not already determined activities. The four pillars are as follows:

- Pillar 1: Strengthen Institutional Coordination, Legal and Policy Framework and Enforcement
- Pillar 2: Increased and meaningful community engagement and empowerment
- Pillar 3: Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation
- Pillar 4: Forest Information, Monitoring

Because the SESA and the REDD+ Strategy were developed simultaneously through an interactive process, the results from the SESA process were used to further refine the draft National REDD+ Strategy with further opportunity given to stakeholders to review and provide feedback before the final version was presented in a validation workshop. (SESA 2021)

The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)⁶ which is a sub-component of the strategy was also developed to help ensure compliance with relevant safeguards by integrating key environmental and social considerations covered by the relevant safeguard policies and procedures at the earliest stage of decision making. It also created a platform for the participation of key stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities who depend on

⁶ [SESA Report.pdf](#)

forest resources. The SESA was a requirement of the FCPF in order for Belize to become a REDD+ nation. In September 2021, the final SESA Report was finalized, with this came the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which aims to help countries manage and mitigate the environmental and social risks and impacts of future investments associated with implementing a country's REDD+ strategy. The ESMF provided a direct link to the relevant safeguard standards, and the Safeguard Information System (SIS).

The geographic scope of Belize's SESA process was nation-wide, with specific emphasis on those districts that had the largest forest cover and/or was most affected by forest cover changes, including mangroves. The focus on the forest sector also influenced the social scope of the SESA, where stakeholders were identified based on their interest in and power over decisions regarding the use of forest land and resources. Moreover, the topics considered of particular relevance for the SESA process were identified from a combination of the geographic and social scope, as well as aspects of importance under the applicable safeguard standards. (AAE-CADS, SESA Final Report, 2020).

In addition to this came the SIS, which is a Safeguard Information System that outlines the steps that must be taken in the event of a problem. The SIS is one of the four key deliverables if a FCPF funded country wishes to move on the phase 2. It also falls in line with the requirements of WB as it adheres to, the environmental and social safeguards policies of the institution.

Belize has implemented and assessed its efficiency on the five REDD+ activities: reducing emissions from deforestation, reducing emissions from forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. This is in accordance with national circumstances, in agreement with the Decision 1/CP.16 of the UNFCCC, paragraph 71, and as a standard and benchmark for contributing to mitigation actions on the forest sector referred to in paragraph 70 of the same decision (GOB 2020b).

This approach considered the importance of the five activities in terms of emissions and removals of GHG. The relation of these activities to various drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, with the consequent capacity to implement the activities through more efficient and cost-effective PAMs was also taken into account.

Component 3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level/ Forest Reference Level

In line with the Land Use, Land Use Change assessment carried out in component 2, the REDD+ unit in conjunction with the Belize Forest Department used a Geography Information System to conduct its National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS). The Department has also developed its unique Land Use Change and Land Use Change Assessment Protocol. In 2018, the Forest Department with support from FAO built capacities to process satellite imagery and other digital

technology and to combine these with the use of GIS. The Forest Department has been using the “Collect Earth/Open Foris” tool as a central feature of its NFMS since 2019. This tool is adequate for Belize’s national circumstances and complies with REDD+ requirements in relation to FREL and MRV (Department B. F., 2019)

The protocol for Belize’s Collect Earth/Open Foris Land Use and Land Use Change Assessment is divided into three distinct phases or sections, the preparatory, implementation and validation phases (Department B. F., 2019).

The preparatory phase, which took approximately 7 months, involved a process of capacity building in the Forest Department to determine the Forest Reference Level (FRL) and to use the Open Foris software as the monitoring tool of the department. The preparatory phase also included the design of grids and survey systems which would be used to observe the land and its use over time. In this same phase, the definitions for various related terms such as forest, grassland, cropland, wetlands and settlements were also standardized and the timeframe for the FREL was decided (2000 to 2018).

The implementation phase took almost 2 months, involved 14 operators in charge of classification to assess land use change and disturbances for all selected samples points.

The validation phase to assess the accuracy of the tool was conducted over a period of one year in 2018. The department used experts on site to ensure quality assurances and controls for the data collected and to provide technical support to the test team. All data was documented and stored as per archiving and documentation procedures, with the main custodian being the Forest Department.

Through funding from the REDD+ Project, the FD was able to build both its human resource capacity as well as its technological capacity, the trainings and work of this component has led to the FD establishing a Geo-Spatial Monitoring Unit, geared to the continuous mapping and surveillance of Belize’s terrestrial cover.

Belize has continued in developing its National Forest Inventory (NFI). The lack of a robust NFI means that Belize does not have the strongest national values for emission factors to be used in its FREL and MRV. Belize continues in the setting of new permanent sampling plots, following the same methodology including strata that were not included the FREL.

The national FREL is one of the necessary elements agreed under COP 16 for developing countries implementing REDD+ activities. Belize has presented a FREL with national coverage, for a 2000-2015 period. The FREL has been prepared following IPCC standards and in agreement with the Greenhouses Gases Inventory. At the preparation of the FREL 2020, the decision was to use a combination of country-specific information and default values of the IPCC. Country specific information comes mainly from Cho (2013), a study based on a set of sampling plots located in areas usually affect by hurricanes (Belize, Belize First Biennial Update Report to UNFCCC, 2020).

Component 4: Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Safeguards Systems

Prior to the REDD+ Project, Belize had 51 Permanent Sample Plots (PSP) established, through the collaborative work of FD and other projects such as KBA and Selva-Maya. With the inception of the REDD+, the PSP network was expanded to 56 plots by 2020 with 2 of the new established plots funded by the project itself.

The REDD+ Project has allowed for the FD to hold workshops and field exercises geared to building of Belize's NFMS, these included a workshop on the "Monitoring-Measurement, Reporting and Verification for REDD+: Expanding and Mobilizing of the Forest Monitoring Network of Belize (FORMET-B) for the National Forest Monitoring System" along with several workshops on the development for the methodologies for the non-forest plots. Persons in attendance was from various agencies inclusive of the FD, REDD+ CU, KBA, NCCO and UB-ERI.

While there was an expected continued expansion of Belize's current network of PSPs to include more PSPs inclusive of strata that was not included previously such as secondary forests under the REDD+ Project in 2020; this was not possible due to the onset of the COVID 19 Pandemic which gripped the country and sent it into complete lockdown from March 2020 to October 2020 and a partial reopening from October 2020 to July 2021.

With the project being unable to carry out the original workplan for 2020, the decision was made to continue funding of two PSP re-measurements in 2021 which was to be executed by FD with support of the REDD+ CU. However, due to the lifting of COVID restriction until mid-2021, and the GOB extension to the logging season; it left the FD having to prioritize its annual workload and distribution of its human resources. The PSP remeasurements were pushed to the very end of 2021 which ultimately led to the REDD+ Project being unable to fund the activity as the project CU had made the decision to not fund any additional activities pass November 15, 2021. This then led to the postponement of the PSP activity altogether.

In addition to the remeasurements and expansion of PSPs by the project, there was extensive work carried out by the REDD+ CU and FD for the addition of non-forest plots such as ferns and thickets, shrubs, Agriculture, mangroves etc. These addition plots which are classified as Destructive Sample Plots, allowed for Belize to collect data in the areas where gaps were identified for the country.

The incorporation of both PSPs and DSPs was an extensive process and feed into why it was essential to establish a clear MRVS.

Funding from the REDD+ Project, enabled the Forest Department to continue in its development of Belize's National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) and Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS) (INC, 2022). In 2021 the project assisted in the development of a comprehensive and detailed MRV system for the continuous collection, analysis and verification of national data on forest related carbon emissions and sequestration. This included an analysis of land use and

land cover changes from deforestation and forest degradation as well as enhancements in carbon stocks, including a national scale and spatially explicit greenhouse gas inventory (GHGi). Annual forest activity data were mapped using the NASA/USGS Landsat archive, which allowed assessment of national forest activity data from 1984 – 2020. Because Belize had an annual forest activity data it enabled the use of IPCC Approach 3 and Tier 2 emission factors for developing the GHGi database. (INC, 2022)

Readiness Assessment

A summary of results of the current self-assessment in relation to the indicators of the FCPF's REDD+ Readiness Assessment Framework is presented in this section. To facilitate a like-for-like comparison of the performance indicators between the mid-term review and the R- Package self-assessment, the 5- point visual scale used for the mid-term review was reduced to the 4-point visual scale applied to the self-assessment. This is visually presented in Table 3.

Table 3 comparison of the performance indicators between the mid-term review and the R-Package self-assessment.

5-Point Scale used for Mid-Term Review		4-Point Scale used for R-Package Self-Assessment	
Assessment rating	Meaning of the assessment rating	Assessment rating	Meaning of the assessment rating
	The sub-component has been completed		Significant progress
	Significant progress		
	Progressing well, further development required		Progressing well, further development required
	Further development required		Further development required
	Not yet demonstrating progress		Not yet demonstrating progress

The Readiness Assessment was done through a thorough self-examination by Belize stakeholders to take stock of the activities implemented during the REDD+ readiness phase and assess progress on REDD+ readiness. The results of the Readiness Assessment are compiled in this R-Package, which documents the country's progress, captures lessons learned, assesses remaining gaps, and identifies activities for the way forward to transitioning to the implementation of performance-based activities.

Following the *FCPF framework*⁷ and recommendations to have a two-stage assessment process (namely, Stage 1: a national multi-stakeholder self-assessment (resulting in the R-Package) – this present document; and,

Stage 2: an assessment of the R-Package by the Project Steering Committee (PSC) with input from the Technical Expert Group (TEG), the Delivery Partner (WB), and others), Belize followed such approach.

The Belize multi-stakeholder self-assessment was a participatory and inclusive process - encompassing the perspectives and experiences of a range of stakeholders identified in the Belize REDD+ Stakeholder list. The self-assessment was carried out via email in the form of a questionnaire evaluation. The REDD+ Self -Evaluation framework was sent to stakeholders

⁷ The Readiness Assessment was carried out following the "A Guide to the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework".

who were identified as being key to at least one of the components of the project and a 1-week deadline was given for submission of the completed evaluation followed by 1–2-week extensions. Stakeholders were also sent a link to a folder containing all the documents and reports produced under the readiness phase of the project for reference.

The results of the assessment were combined with the feedback received from participants of the consultations that occurred in the last year of the project, specifically from the sessions for the preparation of the REDD+ Strategy, the Benefit Sharing Mechanism (BSM), and the REDD+ outreach.

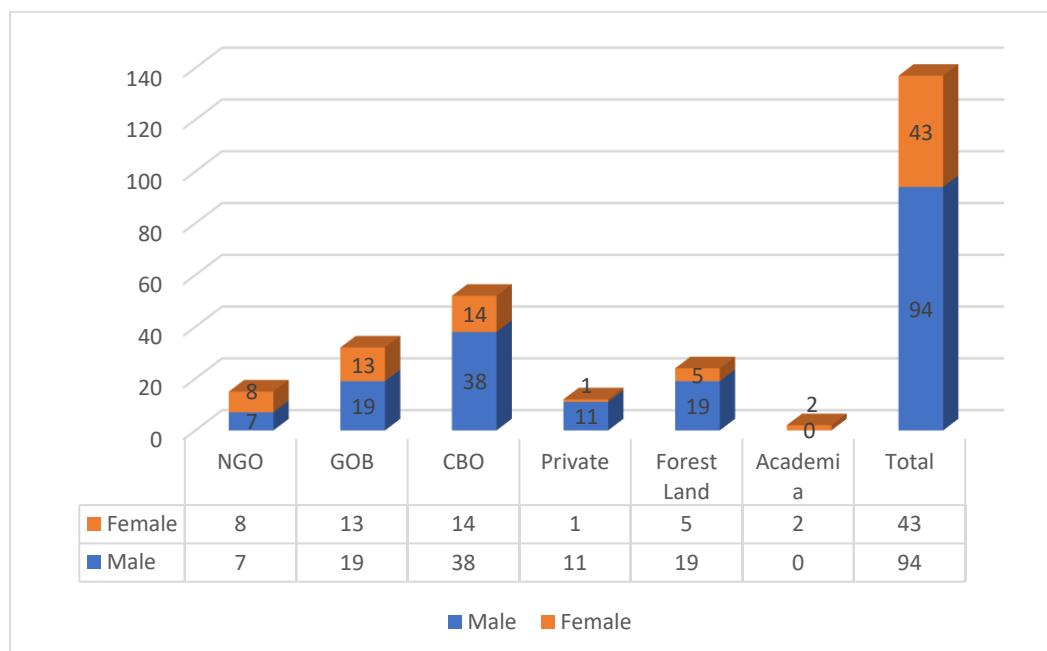
This approach to the readiness assessment was taken due the below reasons:

1. The COVID-19 precautions in place within the country
2. The fact that the draft BSM was not completed until end of February 2022 and the project ended in March 2022.

The evaluation sought to gain feedback form a broad range of stakeholders, including government, non-government, civil society, Indigenous NGOs, NGOs, and private sector groups. It is important to remember that the REDD+ Project had made the decision to only engage key stakeholders to minimize the risks of exposure due to the COVID pandemic while doing its best to meet the project goals. This along with the project’s decision to engage the Julian Cho Society (JCS) to carry out the consultations with the Indigenous People of the south resulted in a small stakeholder group to engage for the self-assessment.

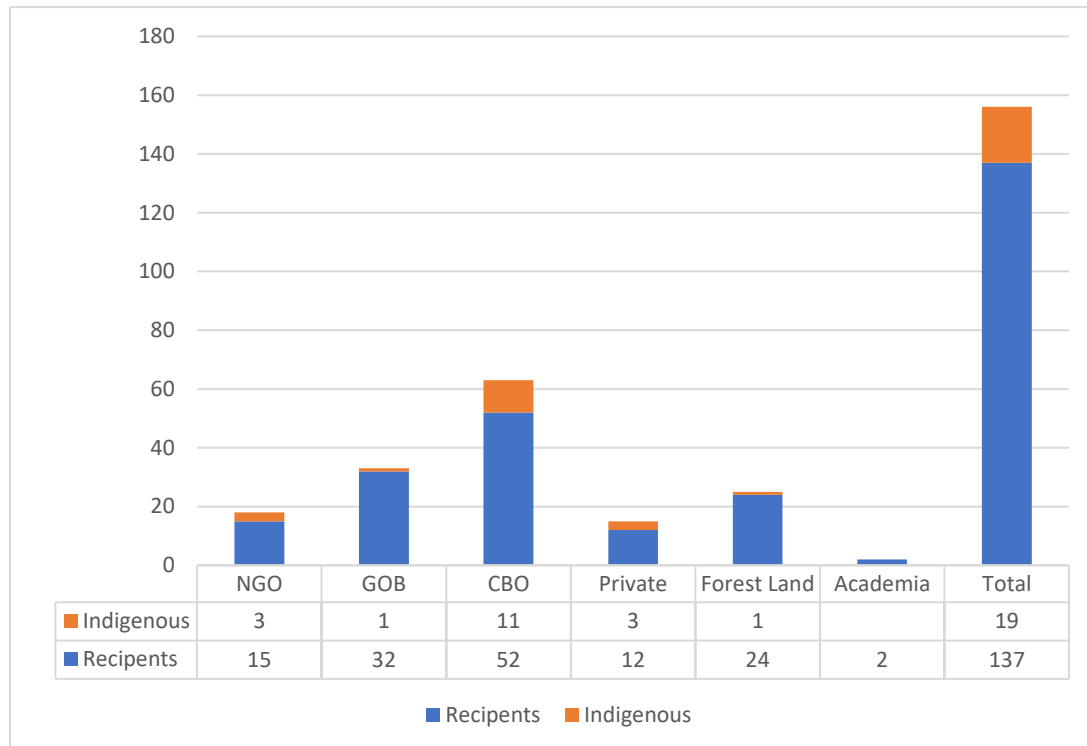
A total of 137 persons was sent the readiness assessment questionnaire, of those 137 recipients, 67.9% were males and 32.1% were females. Reference table 4 below.

Table 4 shows the total number of male and female recipients of the readiness assessment.



Of the total 137 recipients, 13.9% of the recipients represented a group of indigenous stakeholders. These individuals/organizations capturing the indigenous stakeholders fell under the following sectors, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private. See table 5 below.

Table 5 shows recipients of the readiness assessment representing indigenous stakeholders.



Important to note is that not all stakeholders were involved with the four major components of the readiness phase and as such were briefed to only fill out the sections relevant to them. An example of this was for the BENIC, members were only a part of components 1 and 2.

- All inputs to the present assessment process were compiled and disseminated to the stakeholders as well, *these include* Background materials (e.g., a description of the self-assessment, the assessment criteria, and the assessment methodology);
- Relevant documents or outputs of readiness preparation process (the National Draft REDD+ strategy; the FREL, MRVS, Safeguards Information System (SIS)) including the Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Strategic Social and Environmental Assessment (SESA), Analysis of Drivers of Deforestation, and Land Use, Land Use Change Analysis.
- A preliminary evaluation of the results for each indicator using the colour scores described above.

Evaluation of the REDD+ Readiness Phase

Component 1: REDD+ Organization Framework, Consultations, and Grievance Redress

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD+ Management Arrangements

This part of the Assessment Framework focuses on national REDD+ management arrangements and their effectiveness in fulfilling core functions.

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD Management Arrangements

Indicator 1. Accountability and transparency – Significant Progress

How are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements demonstrating they are operating in an open, accountable, and transparent manner?

The REDD+ management and coordination unit have demonstrated that they are operating in an open and transparent manner. The check and balance process put in place by the both the Government of Belize and the World Bank ensure accountability at every juncture of the project implementation of this first phase.

The Government of Belize continues to demonstrate a high level of commitment as it relates to Belize's fight against the climate crisis. In 2014, the National Climate Change Office (NCCO) was established as a secretariat for climate change in Belize. This office is responsible for the mobilization of climate change related activities across the country and as such, acts as an operational arm to Belize's National Climate Change Committee. The NCCO guides the coordination between both private and public sectors to ensure the building of Belize's resilience to Climate Change.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (MSDCCDRM) oversaw the coordination with several key national climate change partners who guided the implementation of REDD+. These included the National Climate Change Office (NCCO), Belize Forest Department (BFD), Department of the Environment (DOE), National Biodiversity Office (NBIO) and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT).

In addition, sister ministries and departments were also engaged to ensure proper coordination across key entities such as the Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Economic Development (MED), Attorney General Office (AG), Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). However, several other institutions, including the Ministry of Economic Development and Finance (MEDF), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and Ministry of Human Development and Indigenous Affairs (MoHDIA).

In addition, support was received from several advisory bodies led by Belize Forest Department such as the Forest and Land Use Committee (FLOU), the Technical Expert Group and the Steering Committee.



Image 1 Planning Session with REDD+ CU, April 2021.

In 2017, the REDD+ Readiness Project commenced in Belize under the then, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration (MAFFESDI), with the direct management by the Belize Forest Department. The first year of the project was met with significant delays due to several coordination issues and as a result, the management of the project was transfer to the NCCO in 2018 which is also housed under the same ministry. With the shift came significant progress and to date

has seen successful delivery in all components of the first phase.

The FD hold the mandate for the sustainable management of Belize’s forest resources and as such the NCCO and FD worked closely to implement the components of the project, including the development and implementation of the National Forest Management System (NFMS), Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS), and implementation of other activities outlined in the project.

In addition to these Ministries and Agencies, the following key State and non-State actors and Committees supported REDD+ implementation:

- Belize National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC)
- Julian Cho Society (JCS),
- Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC).
- Environmental Research Institute – University of Belize (ERI-UB)
- Belize Livestock Producers Association (BLPA)

Each having its own mandate and governance structure collaborating on to secure Belize’s Carbon benefits.

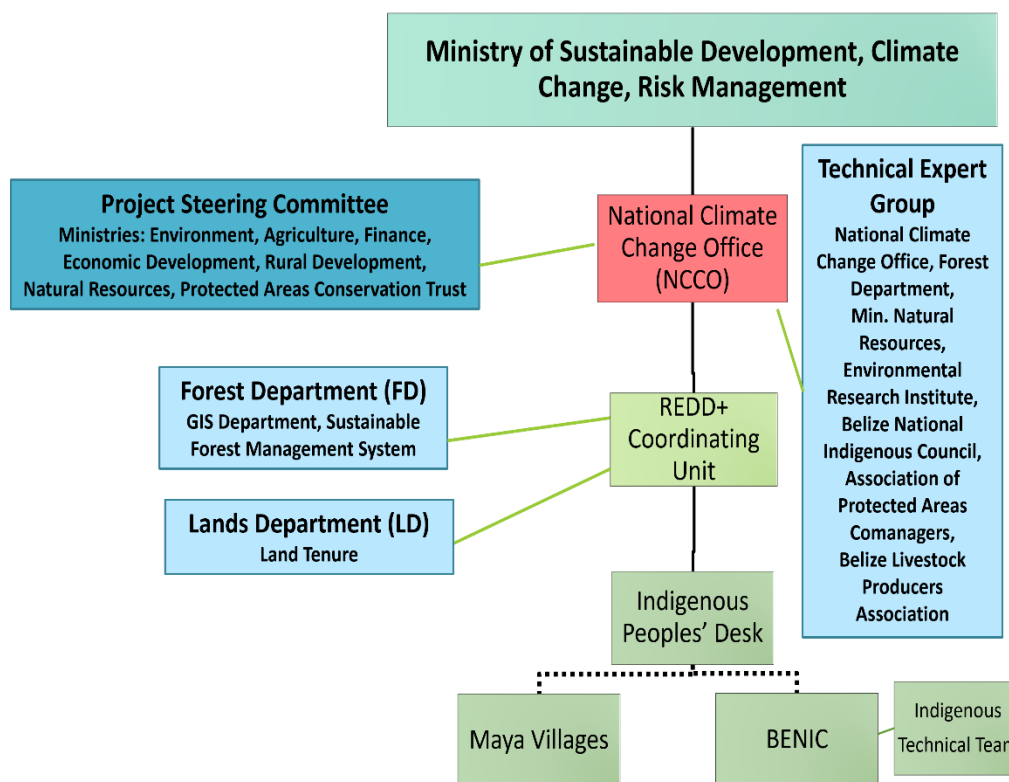


Figure 2 shows the management structure of the REDD+ Readiness Project

The structure put in place ensured that the voices of the Indigenous Peoples, non-IP communities and other stakeholders are documented while ensuring proper consultations guide the decision-making process. The Belize – World Bank Grant Agreement ensures that the rights of the key stakeholders are protected.

The Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC) is the focal institution to represent the Indigenous People’s collective rights on national and international policy issues that affects the four Indigenous communities of Belize. These groups are the Garifuna, the Mopan Maya, the Q’eqchi Maya and the Yucatec Maya. BENIC is made up of representatives/executives of the National Garifuna Council, Northern Maya Association of Belize, and the Maya Leaders Alliance. The Belize REDD+ CU has worked closely with BENIC and other Indigenous organizations in the south of Belize such as the JCS, MLA and TAA. The REDD+ Belize CU has gone a step further, and in 2019, established an Indigenous People’s (IP) Desk housed in the southern part of Belize which is inhabited by the largest population of IPs in the country. Under the IP Desk, the Indigenous Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of all REDD+ activities across the different indigenous constituencies while working closely with the REDD+CU, consultants, the R+CU Social & Environmental expert and the REDD+ Communications Team.

Belize has made great strides in its efforts to securing of carbon payment under the second phase of this process.

Key achievements and progress towards openness, transparency and accountability were evident in the following ways:

- Clear mandates available for all institutions and oversight committees.
- Work of agencies subject to independent third-party audits, including verification of progress for the Belize – World Bank Grant Agreement such as the periodic Mid-Term Reports;
- Minutes of Project Steering Committee and Technical Expert Group are made available to auditors and partners.

Further outreach needs to be done so stakeholders are aware of the REDD+ process, its status and awareness on the FGRM structure. With COVID-19 affecting the project for 2 of its 4 years, outreach activities had to be shifted and was geared to mainly the key stakeholders rather than the large Belizean Population. The concept of REDD+ and what it entails needs to be communicated on a larger scale if REDD+ is to work fully in Belize and to secure buy in from the larger Belize demography.

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD Management Arrangements

Indicator 2. Operating mandate and budget - Significant Progress

How is it shown that national REDD+ institutions operate under clear mutually supportive mandates with adequate, predictable, and sustainable budgets?

REDD+ institutions operate under clear mandates and budgets. The National Climate Change Office (NCCO) is guidance by the National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Master Plan. The Forest Department is guided by the National Forest Policy. The Forest Department has its own cost centre in the national budget, but the NCCO's budget falls under the Ministry's administration. The REDD+ Readiness process operated under the clear mandates within the Government of Belize. The mandates for the main parties are as follows:

- NCCO plays a leading role in the engagement and dialogue with multilateral agencies on behalf of the government, to establish partnerships and facilitate access to technical and financial support for low carbon initiatives and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The NCCO has drafted a National Climate Change Action Plan to guide Belize in its fight against climate change.
- The FD has the mandate in the sustainable management of Belize's Forest resources and work closely with the REDD+ to carry out the monitoring, reporting and data collection needed to ensure Belize has a robust National Forest reference System. 90% of the activities of the REDD+ project is directly linked to the BFD mandate and as such the REDD+ team helps to carry out the timely gathering of information needed to ensure the success of the REDD+ project.
- The MNR has responsibility for facilitating strengthened coordination and collaboration amongst the natural resources management agencies involved in REDD+ implementation, including the execution of the REDD+ readiness activities.

One challenge facing Belize is sustaining the gains made and supporting the institutions in the implementation, however the GOB has committed to the financing of the key sectors necessary to ensure Belize continues. Table below shows Belize's On-going and Pipeline projects that support the REDD+ initiative.

Table 6 List of On-going and Pipeline Forestry and environment sector Programs and Initiatives complementary to REDD+ Program.

On-going Program/Initiative/Project	Implementing Partner	Description	Donor	Value USD
Biodiversity Finance Project II (BIOFIN)	MSDCCDRM	To implement the biodiversity finance plan at the national level. This plan will assist in improving cost effectiveness through mainstreaming of biodiversity finance solutions into national development and sectoral planning.	United Nations Development Programme	\$270,000
The National Biodiversity Institutional Strengthening Project	FD	Facilitate the operationalization and institutional strengthening of the NBIO by enabling a seamless integration into the government structure and execution of mandate in an effective and efficient manner.	Protected Areas Conservation Trust	\$154,000
Integrated Ridge to Reef Management of the Meso-American Reef Eco-region (MAR2R) - Strengthening Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Belize	CZMAI	To contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of fresh water, coastal and marine shared resources in the transboundary MAR eco-region using a ridge to reef approach therefore ensuring economic benefits and sustainable means of life for participating countries and communities. To improve ICZM planning through an evaluation and updating of the Belize ICZM Plan to better incorporate and mainstream Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation as well as to provide support to	Global Environment Facility	\$110,000

		capacity building in ICZM tools.		
	TOTAL Budget for On-going Projects			\$534,000
Pipeline Projects				
Integrated Management of Production Landscapes to deliver Multiple Global Environmental Benefits		Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainability use into production landscapes and seascapes and sectors; maintain or improve flow of agro-ecological intensification; reduce pressure on natural resources by managing competing land uses in broader landscapes and scaling up sustainable land management through landscape approach.	Global Environment Facility /World Bank	\$5,108,933
National Adaptation Planning for Agriculture, Tourism, Forestry, Health etc		Development of plans to identify adaptation needs in the respective sectors and development and implementation of strategies and programmes to address those needs	Global Climate Fund	\$1,497,063
Readiness Proposal on Traditional Fire Management for Belize		This proposal is geared towards addressing gaps such that Belize ultimately has the requisite capacity and an enabling environment for an emissions reduction traditional fire management sector, that will lead to establishment of self-sustaining emissions reductions, traditional fire management projects that reduce emissions, protect biodiversity, prevent forest loss and degradation, and create employment opportunities for remote Indigenous and local communities.	Global Climate Fund	\$400,000

<p>Enhancing Access for Climate Finance Opportunities through Pre-accreditation Support to Belize Social Investment Fund (BSIF) and the Ministry of Economic Development-Belize and technical support for the Belize National Protected Areas System (BNPAS) Entities</p>		<p>This project seeks to address the gaps identified under a previous assessment to BSIF to seek accreditation to assist the rural communities and sectors such as health, education, infrastructure to be more climate resilient. Also, the project seeks to provide additional capacity building to the NDA by the way of additional capacity building and an assessment and the development of an action plan for MED to seek GCF accreditation.</p>	<p>Global Climate Fund</p>	<p>\$600,000</p>
	<p>Total Budget for Pipeline Projects</p>			<p>\$7,605,996</p>

One area that would assist in smoother operations would be for the NCCO to be provided a cost centre. The recommendation is for this to be done within the next 2 years and would aid with better operations in the second phase of REDD+.

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD Management Arrangements

Indicator 3. Multi-Sector coordinating mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration - Progressing well, further development required

How are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements ensuring REDD+ activities are coordinated, integrated into, and influencing the broader national or sector policy frameworks (e.g., agriculture, environment, natural resources management, infrastructure development and land-use planning)?

Belize’s multi-sectorial coordination for national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements to ensure that REDD+ activities were coordinated, integrated into, and influencing the broader national or sector policy frameworks had a very slow start. While there were significant meetings among departments and/or offices within the MSDCCDRM and relevant terrestrial agencies with the same vision, the REDD+ CU found it a challenge in the 1st few years of the project to get other ministries and/or their departments to actively partake in specific components of the project as needed. The REDD+ project, in order to be successful required constant communication and data sharing across sectors. This concept while not new, was met with some resistance as some departments were tight with their

data. In situations where training was offered through the REDD+ network, participants from some sister departments did not take the interest as others.

The REDD+ CU, in order to meet its deliverables, had to be unrelenting, ensuring constant communication and collaborative efforts across sectors over its 4 years to where now, REDD+ technicians can now easily engage sister agencies to access data. The REDD+ Project, through its trainings and collaborative meetings has assisted Belize in building a cohesive data sharing atmosphere in relation to REDD+ activities.

Below is a list of key achievements and progress that have been recorded in the following areas:

- Capacity building efforts include enhanced data collection and analysis, data storage, PSP establishment, analysis tools, development of reports as part of Belize's international obligations under the UNFCCC.
- Establishment of the National Forest Monitoring System of Belize through the collaboration of the REDD+ CU, FD and NCCO team.
- Development of methodologies for establishment of PSPs and DSPs for different land uses.
- Facilitation of multi-sector and cross-sector exchange and collaboration for the updating of GHGi and NDC; MRVS Technical Expert Group – FOLU, for the development of Belize's Technical Annex, BUR and other national documents ensuring multi-sector and cross- sector collaboration and exchange, inclusive of use of data derived from MRVS reporting;
- Collaboration with the MNR for the development of Belize Land Tenure Assessment.
- Collaboration and networking with Indigenous Peoples of Belize to ensure IP communities are informed and properly consulted.
- The PSC provided oversight of the coordination and collaboration required for implementation of the Readiness activities.

The REDD+ Strategy⁸ indicated that a number of sectors/drivers (large scale agriculture, tourism, mining, forestry, urban expansion and transport) are the leading causes in deforestation and forest degradation. Each sector has its respective sectoral policies and laws that regulate the activities in the respective sectors and as such effective coordinate of REDD+ activities are difficult to carry out without a cohesive coordination between all sectors involved along with the revision of laws and policies where needed. If the existing laws and policies cannot be synced and the different sectors continue to act independently of each other without regard for the ripple effect of their sector's activity, the REDD+ initiative will fail in Belize.

The GOB has placed the coordination of sectors and the success of REDD+ as a high priority. Ministries and departments are regularly updated and data sharing, while challenging at the first start of REDD+, has become easier. Technicians have an open channel of communication with other departments and readily request information as needed especially as it relates to the drafting of yearly emission rates.

⁸ [Draft Belize National REDD+ Strategy.pdf](#)

During the readiness phase, the REDD+ Coordination unit carried out a series of meetings with its Project Steering Committee and Technical Expert Group whose main function to provide oversight to the project implementation by providing guidance on national policy and on strategic approaches in line with national development policies and plans for successful project implementation. The Committee will advocate on behalf of the Project and when needed to obtain support for the broader integration of management and administration. The PSC will provide strategic direction and make decisions when corrective actions are needed to ensure the project is implemented in a timely manner and with demonstrable results.

Table 7 summarizes the Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meetings and Technical Expert Group (TEG) Meetings held under the REDD+ Readiness Phase.

Meeting Type and Number	Date	Purpose
REDD+ Project Steering Committee Meeting No.1	May 18, 2018	First meeting of the REDD+ PSC. Presented the project overview the PSC TOR and the workplan.
REDD+ Project Steering Committee Meeting No.2		REDD+ Project Update
REDD+ Project Steering Committee Meeting No.3	March 28, 2019	REDD+ Project update. Communication of delays being experienced and revised workplan.
REDD+ Project Steering Committee Meeting No.4	June 6, 2019	REDD+ Project update. Renewal of REDD+ Staff contracts. Upcoming Mid-term review.
Technical Expert Group Meeting No. 1	September 6, 2019	First TEG meeting. Presentation of the REDD+ Project, workplan and TOR for the TEG.
Technical Expert Group Meeting No. 2	February 21, 2020	Discussion of FGMR TOR, project update and way forward.
Technical Expert Group Meeting No. 3	February 4, 2021	Virtual Meeting with the TEG to facilitate stakeholder contribution in the build-up of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation analysis.
Technical Expert Group Meeting No. 4	February 9, 2021	To understand the implications of the different decisions that need to be made for the Strategy consultancy and to obtain input and confirmations from this group as the decision-making authority.
Technical Expert Group Meeting No. 5	February 12, 2021	Virtual Meeting with the TEG: Follow up to Feb 4, 2021, meeting to facilitate stakeholder contribution in the build-up of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation analysis.
REDD+ Project Steering Committee Meeting No.5	March 13, 2020	REDD+ Project Updates.
Technical Expert Group Meeting No. 6	March 16, 2021	To Discussed the first draft of the Strategy produced.
REDD+ Project Steering Committee Meeting No.6	June 7, 2021	To introduce the new PSC members and update on REDD+ Project status.
REDD+ Project Steering Committee Meeting No.7	October 7, 2021	Was the last meeting with the PCS to update them on REDD+ Project Status that coincide with the Project Closure Event.

Membership of the Project Steering Committee were as follows:

Table 8 List of Project Steering Committee Members.

Organization/Department/Ministry	Position	Sector
Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change & Disaster Risk Management	Chief Executive Officer (Chair of REDD+ PSC)	Government of Belize
National Climate Change Office	Chief Climate Change Officer, REDD+ Project Coordinator	Government of Belize
Ministry of Economic Development	Chief Executive Officer	Government of Belize
Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government	Chief Executive Officer	Government of Belize
Ministry Natural Resources	Chief Executive Officer	Government of Belize
Ministry of Finance	Financial Secretary	Government of Belize
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Enterprise	Chief Executive Officer	Government of Belize
Protected Areas Conservation Trust	Executive Director	Non-Governmental Organization

Members of the Technical Expert Group as follows:

Table 9 List of Technical Expert Group members.

Organization/Department/Ministry	Position	Sector
National Climate Change Office	Deputy Chief Climate Change Officer	Government of Belize
Belize Forest Department	Chief Forest Officer	Government of Belize
Ministry Natural Resources	Director of Mining	Government of Belize
Belize Livestock Producer Association	Representative	Private Sector
University of Belize – Environmental Research Institute	Director	Educational Organization
Belize National Indigenous Council	President	Community Base Organization, Indigenous People
Belize Network of NGOs	Representative	Non-Governmental Organization

There had been regular communication between the REDD+ management institutions and sector agencies. However, it has not translated into a state where national or sectoral policy frameworks are being influenced.

While the Technical Expert Group (TEG) was influential in providing information and feedback for the development of the SESA and REDD+ Strategy. The issue was that the TEG met

infrequently; this was due to several factors ranging from difficulties due to scheduling conflicts and then later by the COVID Pandemic. The PCU had to utilize other approaches to ensure that the technical integrity of its deliverables was achieved in those instances where the TEG could not convene or there was a time crunch on an activity. An example of this is that Technical Experts for respective fields were engaged directly to guide project deliverables and consultancy works such as the engaging of Dr. Percival Cho as the technical expert for the drafting, monitoring and evaluation of the MRV Consultancy.

The ideal was to have the TEG to be fully operational in the REDD+ initiatives, however the difficulties experienced above lead to the project team having to find other ways to ensure Belize benefited fully despite issues.

Belize currently has in place a Belize National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC), however there is a need for more frequent engagement between the committee and stakeholders. Because the committee is made up of high-level officers, it is rather difficult to coordinate schedules. It is found that to obtain the full attention of committee members, isolation from daily environment is highly effective as the segregation allows for more productive sessions.

As it relates to stakeholders, the REDD+ CU made every effort to remain flexible and coordinate meetings around stakeholder schedules; this meant, meetings took place on weekends, during the night and in smaller groups, and when necessary, staff having to consistently travel to remote locations. This approach meant more funding was needed for outreach to accommodate the multiple sessions and additional logistics required (catering, transportation, and accommodations). Working in indigenous communities requires significant funding, even more so with the GOB passing of the FPIC protocols. The language and educational barriers are real factors that must be accommodated; each indigenous constituency is different, and along with that each community holds its own level of challenge, e.g., not all communities can readily access the internet or local television stations; there is no one set of approach for all. These different community, stakeholder and partner dynamics mean that proper funding for outreach, consultations is key to ensuring that all stakeholders are properly engaged. Moving from community to community will require significant financial allocation and collaboration among indigenous stakeholders.

Important to note is that the REDD+ Readiness Phase served as an eye opener to national partners on the need for better collaborations as well as buy in among government offices. The REDD+ Project did not experience the level of partner ministries/department buy-in until the last 15 months of the project when the magnitude of the REDD+ benefits were fully realized. This meant the REDD+ CU had to go through a series of project updating sessions with several key ministries and departments within the last year of the project.

The REDD+ CU does not foresee this to be an issue going into the second phase as the buy-in is now evident; however, it will be important to have continuous engagement of these high-level officials both formally and informally to ensure all partner ministries/department are at the forefront of the implementation phase. It is recommended that in addition to quarterly PSC meetings that there also be quarterly meetings with partner ministries/departments from

the onset of phase two. A programme should also be created to facilitate the mainstreaming of REDD+ priorities into sector policies, for this a recommendation of 2 years is given.

The engaging of sister ministries/department should be a continuous process and once phase two starts, should be engaged officially within the 1st 5 months of the phase once the coordination unit has been established and should be maintained for a duration or nothing less than 3 years.

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD Management Arrangements Indicator

4. Technical supervision capacity – Significant Progress

How effectively and efficiently are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements leading and supervising multi-sector readiness activities, including the regular supervision of technical preparations?

Belize has continued to build its capacities and has demonstrated capable leadership in technical areas of REDD+, largely through its implementation of the NFMS and the drafting of its national reports such as the BUR and TA necessary for the country to access Carbon Credits. Key lead entities were the FD and NCCO. The FD serves as an integral stakeholder/ implementer for the elaboration and monitoring of the NDCs while addressing matters concerns raised from the BNCCC. The FD, who is the managing authority for Belize's Forest led the committees/technical groups consisting of other national stakeholders who serve as advisory and consultative bodies for the REDD+ processes; the NCCO supervises the execution of REDD+ readiness activities and the compilation of reports. The NCCO regularly supervises technical preparations for reporting to the UNFCCC. While there is some overlap in membership on both the Project Steering Committee and the Technical Expert Group, the role of the Project Steering Committee is specific to the oversight of the activities of the REDD+ project.

With the implementation of the Geo-Spatial monitoring Unit, the FD has continued to have yearly mapping sessions (with the exception of 2020 due to COVID Pandemic) with various terrestrial partners in Belize. Belize through the FD also possesses technical experts to lead the trainings and execution of expansion of the collection of national data under Permanent Sample Plots and Destructive Sample Plots.

However, while there are currently key persons in place to lead these REDD+ activities, more persons need to be trained in the above-mentioned fields to ensure continuation of activities by local experts and avoid activity delays due to losses of human resources. It is recommended that these trainings start within the 1st year of the second phase of REDD+.

Additionally, there are technical REDD+ readiness activities being carried out, but multisectoral activities are not being implemented. There is a lack of activities being carried out in collaboration with sectors such as agriculture, tourism, etc. It is suggested that multisectoral activities be implemented and this to be done within a two-year timeline.

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD Management Arrangements

Indicator 5. Funds management capacity – Significant Progress

How are institutions and arrangements demonstrating effective, efficient and transparent fiscal management, including coordination with other development partner-funded activities?

Belize, under the leadership of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management enlisted the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) as the fiduciary organization for the implementation of REDD+ Readiness; PACT as the National Implementing Entity (NIE) and the World Bank as Multilateral Implementing Entity (MIE), intends to implement the REDD+ Project countrywide.

The R+CU oversaw the REDD+ Readiness Preparation project which is facilitated under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and administered by the World Bank. An Operational Manual (OM) was developed to provide guidelines for the staff of the R+CU Project, the MSDCCDRM, PACT, the Project Steering Committee (PSC), the World Bank (WB), consultants and any other pertinent parties in the management and implementation of REDD+. The OM served as a useful source of information on project procedures and a reference guide for their involvement in the project. It is also help in ensuring that REDD+ was implemented in a transparent manner. The Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) has demonstrated adequate fiscal management of the REDD+ Readiness Project.

Key achievements and progress have been made in the following areas:

- Funds channelled through PACT as funds managed by their institution, including application of safeguards.
- Agencies conduct regular technical, financial and procurement reporting, at frequency stipulated by project agreements. External financial audit procedures are executed following completion of the project.

The total amount of financing for REDD+ and other forest-based initiatives available to Belize was estimated to be US\$ 10.55 million of which US\$0.00 million (0%) is financing current projects to be implemented through 2022 (Table 10).

Table 10 shows financing for REDD+ and other forest-based initiatives for the period 2014 to 2022.

Name of Project	Donor/Implementer	Budget (US millions)	Period
REDD+ Readiness Project	FCPF	3.8	2017 to 2022
REDD+ Readiness Project	GOB	0.28	2017 to 2022

Regional Program for Belize	REDD/CCAD-GIZ	0.38	2013 to 2016
Key Biodiversity Areas Project	WB	6.09	2014 to 2019

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD Management Arrangements

Indicator 6. Feedback and Grievance Mechanism – Significant Progress

What evidence is there to demonstrate the mechanism is operating at the national, subnational, and local levels, is transparent, impartial, has a clearly defined mandate, and adequate expertise and resources?

What evidence is there that potentially impacted communities are aware of, have access to, and the mechanism is responsive to feedback and grievances?

A FGRM Log is being used by the REDD+ CU to monitor all grievances received. The link to the log grievances is www.fgrm.gov.bz and can be accessed from the REDD+ Website which is up and functional.

Petitioners were given several options for submitting information requests, feedback, complaints, and grievances, such as online, email, letter, phone, voice recording, WhatsApp, and text message. Persons submitting in-person via intake centers and the mobile unit, had the option of receiving guidance regarding the completeness of the information and support to enter it into the registry system. The intake centers supported the FGRM secretariat with entering data from voice recordings, phone calls, text messages, emails, and letters into the online registry system. Where appropriate, the FGRM Ambassadors (REDD+ IP Coordinator, JCS Representatives, BENIC committee members) translated the received information to English. If needed, back translation was done by an independent translator to ensure accurateness of information. The daily tasks of the FGRM Ambassadors included information sharing, receiving cases, entering cases into the web-based registry system in English, conducting initial check of data completeness, tracking cases, and updating petitioners.

Written complaints: Hard copy registration forms, equivalent to the online form were made available at the local level, via REDD+ related institutions and authorities, FGRM intake centers, Indigenous Peoples organizations, village councils, and non-governmental organizations. The forms included directives on where completed forms could be submitted, whether by mail, in person, or otherwise; these included submission at the REDD+ Coordination Unit, the then Ministry of Environment, Market Square, Belmopan, and at the FGRM intake offices, via the FGRM Ambassadors and the Mobile Unit.

Phone/SMS/WhatsApp: Petitioners who are unable to submit their case via electronic channels, through hard copy or in person, but had access to telephone services, were given the option to call, text or submit a photograph to a dedicated cell phone number at the FGRM

Intake Centers. The FGRM Ambassadors were responsible for obtaining all the necessary information, completing the form, and entering the information into the registry system.

In person: Petitioners who preferred face-to-face contact were able to file cases verbally, in person at the FGRM intake offices, at the mobile unit or during other engagement activities. If a formal case is submitted in person, the FGRM Ambassadors were responsible for registering the data using a grievance form. The Ambassadors were tasked with recording the case in the online registry system.

The REDD+ Indigenous Coordinator served as the medium for communication of grievances should persons needed assistance in logging their issue and could not operate the online platform at the local level. While persons were encouraged to utilize the online platform or to reach out directly to the Project Coordinator or Social & Environmental Expert, it was understood that not all persons had the capacity or means to utilize the medium, so the IP Coordinator filled this role.

Table 11 below shows a breakdown of the consultations that took place during the development of Belize’s FGRM⁹. During the consultation process 57.1% of the persons engaged were males and 42.9% were females.

Table 11 shows consultation sessions for the FGRM development.

Year	Specifications	Target Audience	Total Participants	Males		Females	
				No.	%	No.	%
2019							
01	FGRM Workshop	BENIC	24	14	58.3%	10	41.7%
02	Discussion on Legal Analysis Findings & Sensitization on the FGRM Consultancy		16	10	62.5%	6	37.5%
03	Sensitization on the FGRM Consultancy		10	9	90.0%	1	10.0%
08	Consultation and validation on FGRM	National Garifuna Council	48	21	43.8%	27	56.3%
09	Consultation on FGRM & Sensitization on the REDD+ Project	BENIC	24	14	58.3%	10	41.7%
10	Consultation and validation on FGRM	Northern Mayas of Belize Association	21	13	61.9%	8	38.1%
11	Consultation and validation on FGRM	Government of Belize	22	11	50.0%	11	50.0%
			165	92	55.8%	73	44.2%
2020							
01	Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism	Meeting with ministry of Agriculture, Belize Livestock Producers Association SIRDI	10	7	70.0%	3	30.0%
02	Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism	Mennonite Community Blue Creek	7	6	85.7%	1	14.3%
03	Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism	Mennonite Community Spanish Lookout	3	2	66.7%	1	33.3%

⁹ [Development of a FGRM Assessment and Context Research Report.pdf](#)

04	Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism	BENIC	22	9	40.9%	13	59.1%
			42	24	57.1%	18	42.9%
			207	116	56.0%	91	44.0%

Feedback received from the sessions included community concerns on how the politicians have little respect for community leaders. Also, that the if the lands around the communities belong to the community, the concept of crown land is not serving the communities. The other indigenous communities outside of the Mayas of the south expressed they are looking into communal land rights as well.

Additionally, it was commented that Government actions affect the communities directly as every law in Belize has a line that states “at the Minister’s discretion”.

The Social Expert of the REDD+CU was responsible for overseeing the tracking and responding to all feedback and resolution of grievances and complaints. The FGRM website became functional in the 1st part of 2021. At project completion, only, 5 grievances were placed, resolved and logged. Important to note is that the 4th and 5th grievances were not REDD+ related and so were not logged. Additionally, all grievances were logged before the FGRM website was operational in 2021, and these came in the form of official letters. To the date of the Readiness Phase end, no grievances (in the form of tickets) were filed in the FGRM online portal. Table 6 below details all the REDD+ related grievances received during the 4 years of the project.

During the first few years of the project, before the creation of the FGRM website, the REDD+ CU during consultation sessions had informed stakeholders that in event of a grievance, grievances could be logged via telephone or mail, directly to the REDD+ CU and that the project would be creating an on-line portal for a more transparent process. The REDD+ CU contact information was shared along with the respective persons grievances should be addressed to; these persons being the REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert and/or the REDD+ Project Coordinator.

After the creation of the FGRM website in January 2021, communication on the FGRM website to stakeholders was only done for roughly nine months in 2021 when restrictions on gatherings were still in effect. The COVID pandemic did not allow for the REDD+ CU to do more than the basic outreach on the on-line platform. One of the mediums the REDD+ CU used to generate awareness on the FGRM website to stakeholders was with the development of a video and documentary to be used during the BSM and SESA consultations. This minimal approach agreed upon in order to minimize stakeholder exposure to COVID-19, segregated portions of the communities and the wider Belizean population for receiving information on the FGRM and the website. One gap identified is that there is a lack of permanent institution to address grievance.

The recommendation is to create an institutional arrangement to have a committee established to oversee the grievance redress process, as it is the opinion that the grievance redress mechanism should not be handled by any single person. A multi-sectoral committee

is needed to ensure continuity in cases where those persons move on from the institution as is the case at the conclusion of phase one.

Table 12 details of all grievances logged during the Belize REDD+ Readiness Phase.

Feedback GRM Log REDD+ Readiness Preparation Project																			
Feedback-Grievance				Received by R+CU			Confirming Receipt by R+CU				Substantive Response			Status					
Claim Number	Date Feedback/Complaint Made	Name of Person/Organization Providing Feedback or Making Complaint	Type	Content of Feedback/Complaint	By	Date Received	Elapsed Time (Days) from when Feedback/Complaint Made to when Received by R+CU	By	Date of Acknowledgement of Receipt of Complaint (informing complainant of response time)/Response to Complaint for Simple Issues	Elapsed Time (Days) from when Feedback/Complaint Received by R+CU to when Acknowledgement Sent	Person to Track Response	By	Date Responded to Feedback/Complaint	Elapsed Time (Days) from when Feedback/Complaint Made to when Substantive Response Sent	Status	Date Feedback/Complaint Resolved	Elapsed Time (Days) from when Feedback/Complaint Made to when resolved	How Feedback Responded to/Complaint Resolved	Final Response from Person Complaining/Providing Feedback
1	17-Jun-19	Belize National Indigenous Council	Grievance letter	BENIC was concerned that a "Draft REDD+ Strategy for Belize" was presented to stakeholders on April 29, 2019. BENIC noted that no consultation was done to draft a strategy.	REDD+ Communications Officer and REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	31-Jul-19	44	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	31-Jul-19	0	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	REDD+ Project Coordinator	29-Aug-19	73	Resolved	29-Aug-19	73	BENIC was informed that what was presented on April 29, 2019, were "indicative examples" for a REDD+ Strategy. BENIC was also informed of the following of FPIC for consultation, the development of consultation protocol, and consultation for key REDD+ activity TORs.	None received

2	17-Jun-19	Maya Leaders Alliance	Grievance letter	The MLA raised concern on a) the constrained REDD+ Project timeline, b) key REDD+ Project activities (REDD+ Strategy, Benefit Sharing Mechanism, and Land Tenure Studies), and c) the use of documents not approved by the MLA to develop the REDD+ documents.	REDD+ Communications Officer and REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	31-Jul-19	44	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	31-Jul-19	0	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	REDD+ Project Coordinator	29-Aug-19	73	Resolved	29-Aug-19	73	The MLA was informed that the R+CU is reviewing its workplan to ensure that all key REDD+ activities are conducted. A description of the land tenure activities for REDD+ was given and considerations for the CCJ 2015 Consent Order. As for the development of REDD+ documents, the MLA was assured that these will be developed in a participatory manner.	None received
3	11-Sep-19	Maya Leaders Alliance	Feedback received by ...	The MLA is requesting clarification if 'REDD+ meetings' held in villages of Toledo are being conducted by the REDD+ Coordinating Unit.	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	11-Sep-19	0	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	11-Sep-19	0	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert	11-Sep-19	0	Resolved	11-Sep-19	0	The R+CU informed the MLA that the meetings was a partnership with the Ya'axche Conservation Trust (YCT). YCT village stakeholders were provided information on REDD+. It was communicated to the MLA that the meetings do not amount to consultation with IPs.	None received

Sub-Component 1b. Consultation, Participation, and Outreach

This part of the FCPF Assessment Framework reviews how consultations with key stakeholders are performed to ensure participation of different social groups, transparency, and accountability of decision-making.

Sub-Component 1b. Consultation, Participation, and Outreach

Indicator 7. Participation and engagement of key stakeholders – Significant Progress

How is the full, effective and on-going participation of key stakeholders demonstrated through institutional mechanisms (including extra efforts to engage marginalised groups such as forest-dependent women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities)?

What are the participatory mechanisms being used to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities have the capacity to effectively participate in REDD+ readiness and implementation?

Recognizing the important link between forest and people, the Government of Belize made efforts to promote greater involvement of indigenous people, women, youth, local communities, and other sectors in forest management. The project carried out numerous, stakeholder awareness and engagement during the period 2019 to 2020 as shown in Table 13, key stakeholders such as IP and non-IP communities who bordered terrestrial areas, private landowners as well as NGO/GOB partners. There were also efforts put in place to ensure that both youth and women were engaged as well as that there were opportunities for them to be heard.

Table 13 shows outreach and engagement sessions carried out on REDD+.

Organization	No. Participants
Government of Belize	22
Community Base Organization	2
Community - Indigenous	26
NGO	8
National Garifuna Council	30
BENIC	18
Private	8
Private (Mennonite Community)	6

The REDD+ CU developed a Communication Strategy¹⁰ for the Belize REDD+ Readiness Project, 2018 to 2020, which was the culmination of numerous actors, from both government and non-government agencies, whose guidance and supervision made the document possible.

The success of REDD+ Readiness phase is dependent on how the R+CU interacts with both its internal and external stakeholders. To achieve this, attempts were made to identify REDD+'s stakeholders, their interest and expectations of REDD+ and specific ways they could benefit from the design and implementation of this communication strategy. As a result, the communication goals and objectives were determined based on the stakeholder's analysis.

The following key stakeholders for the REDD+ were identified according to the following categories:

Table 14 showing Key Stakeholders of REDD+ Belize.

	Description	Critical Issues/Interests/Expectations
Policy makers, decision makers	<p>This comprise of the relevant parliamentarians or parliamentary select committees. Whether standing or select committees, these committees may consist of senators or members of the House of Representatives, who meet to examine issues relating to natural resources management.</p> <p>The National REDD+ Project Steering Committee is also an important group, as it is instrumental in the communication process. They report to area representatives or parliamentarians, who will also need to be</p>	<p>Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REDD+ to align its programs with the government's priorities and key targets. • Creating institutional and legal enabling conditions, capacity building and documenting and disseminating evidence. • focus on cross sectoral linkages, robust REDD+ process with national recognition and acceptance. <p>Interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REDD+ and its relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation, positive environmental and social impact and economic benefits.

¹⁰ [REDD+ Belize Communication Strategy. Final V.pdf](#)

	<p>briefed on REDD+ and how their constituents will need to be engaged in the process. This structure allows information sharing and feedback that enriches the discussions and decision-making process on REDD+.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the R-PP fits with ministerial and statutory agenda and jurisdictions. • Ensure participation by legal partners and establishing their role in R-PP implementation activities.
<p>Government Agencies</p>	<p>This category covers government Ministries and Agencies whose work is directly related to the initiative or may be impacted or have an impact on the implementation of the initiative. This includes the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Rural Development and other government agencies that have a role in the management of Belize’s forest both in terms of conservation and development. This group also includes the R+CU, Technical Expert Group, and the NCCC members. The coordination unit is expected to play a leading role on the implementation of the R-PP in the country and to advocate to the</p>	<p>Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building to improve understanding of REDD+ and improving stakeholder engagement, <p>Interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the R-PP fits with their agenda and the role to be played in REDD+ Readiness implementation activities. • Forest management, drivers of deforestation, climate finance, monitoring and evaluation, community participation and social and environmental safeguards. • willingness to participate in decision making process. <p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for improved internal circular communication and collaboration with counter-part agencies.

	government and the private sector on forest development at the national levels, by conducting research, facilitating participation and consultations, managing information and sharing best practices and findings.	
Civil Society Organizations & Interest Groups	These are mostly made up of co-managers of terrestrial protected areas and organizations working in forest conservation. This also includes agencies and organizations that focus on gender issues. Most of these groups are co-management organizations, who are members of the different technical working groups. Since many of these groups were actively engaged in the design of the R-PP, they are important partners in the implementation of REDD+ Readiness phase. They want to participate in different forum and meetings and look for clear engagement guidelines with indication of their specific tasks or roles. During both the R-PP design and KBA project consultations, they encourage meaningful participation of partners.	<p>Interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest management, drivers of deforestation, monitoring and evaluation, community participation and social and environmental safeguards. <p>Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback and Grievance Redressal Mechanism during consultation process and readiness activities. • Capacity building support through training to build their capacities.
Private Sector	The private sector category is made up	Expectations:

	<p>primarily of the agri-business sector but also include tourism, forestry and local enterprises.</p> <p>There are several major agriculture industries in the country that have a large footprint in terms of land use. This includes the sugar, citrus, bananas and livestock sectors. In addition, a major part of this sector is the large-scale Mennonite farmers in western and northern Belize, who are dominant in agricultural production especially cattle and grain production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level of good governance, participation, transparency and accountability. • Positive environmental and social impacts and economic benefits. • Land tenure arrangement and defining carbon rights. • Long-term leases to the private-sector for the management of forests and enhanced relations with local communities. • Feedback and Grievance Redressal Mechanism during consultation process and readiness activities. <p>Interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of agriculture and extractive activities in deforestation and forest degradation. • Role in development of national REDD+ Strategy. • Participation in consultations and other implementation activities. • Opportunities and potential benefits from REDD+. • REDD+ in relation to climate change mitigation. • REDD+ and its related business benefits and opportunities. •
<p>Local Communities (Non-indigenous communities)</p>	<p>This category includes rural communities that occupy forested areas or buffer communities and utilize forested areas based on their reliance on</p>	<p>Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of REDD+ within communities and among community leaders, who are completely unaware

	<p>subsistence and small-scale agriculture as their primary means of livelihoods.</p> <p>There are 194 villages in Belize, each having its own system of local governance through Village Councils. There is a need to manage expectations and demystify wrong and/or inflated expectations.</p> <p>Under this group the target comprises the members of village communities living adjacent to forest areas. This includes households with and without access to arable land that traditionally use forest areas for timber and firewood, as well as for cattle grazing.</p> <p>In addition, a particular focus is placed on female forest users who collect firewood for subsistence use and for local sales in an unregulated manner.</p>	<p>that REDD+ exists or how it works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity on how the carbon revenue would be shared and who will benefit or how the revenue would be distributed. • Awareness regarding the link between forests and Climate Change, carbon emissions, carbon storage, and the concept of emissions trading. • realistic figures of the level of income that would be generated through carbon sales. <p>Interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers of deforestation. • Social and environmental safeguards that will be put in place and their role in the development and implementation of these measures. • Livelihoods and rights to land and carbon assets based on their access and control of resources. • Feedback and Grievance Redressal Mechanism during consultation process and readiness activities.
<p>Forest-Dependent Communities (Indigenous)</p>	<p>This category includes indigenous communities. Most of the villages that self-identify as indigenous can be found in southern Belize mainly the Toledo District.</p>	<p>Expectation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity as to how land will be considered in Readiness Activities and in the development of a National REDD+ Strategy. • Adherence to FPIC during the R-PP consultation and readiness activities.

	<p>There are approximately 39 Maya villages in Toledo led by the customary Alcalde System. The Alcalde Assembly forms the Toledo Alcalde Association that is run by an Executive Board.</p> <p>Indigenous communities are some of the most forest-dependent communities with the use of natural resources intertwined in the social and cultural lifestyles. Indigenous communities also contribute to the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and environmental safeguards that will be put in place and the role of IPs in the development and implementation of these measures. • The livelihoods of IPs are also important issue to cover. These of course must be in conjunction with applicable international obligations in regard to IP rights. • Feedback and Grievance Redressal Mechanism during consultation process and readiness activities. <p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land tenure, resource-use rights and property rights are important, including their rights to land and carbon assets based on their access and control of resources.
Academia	<p>This category refers to tertiary level institutions that incorporate natural resource management and sustainable development in their programs. They participate in and provide support to initiatives such as the REDD+. Their role in a REDD+ program will need to be further defined so as to build on their strength as centres of learning and training.</p>	<p>Interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities and role in monitoring; • Terrestrial research, national strategy and national REDD+ capacity building. • Social and environmental safeguards that will be put in place and their role in the development and implementation of these measures. • Opportunities in National Forest Monitoring System.
Donors	<p>Donor support helps countries, like Belize, to</p>	<p>Expectations:</p>

	<p>build capacities and develop policy and legal frameworks to reduce deforestation and improve forest and land-use governance. It also allows REDD+ countries to develop pilot projects at national and sub-national scales that aim to demonstrate how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build institutional capacities • Manage a results-based payment system • Distribute benefits to rural forest communities, farmers and smallholders • Involve the private sector • Monitor and assess performance • In the case of result-based payments, donor support helps pilot incentive payments for REDD+ activities in REDD+ countries. • Because there are many international and regional donors supporting the REDD+ process, there are equally diverse views of REDD+'s engagement processes and potential impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REDD+ to strengthen forest dependent communities. • Prioritization of meaningful public participation. • To see REDD+ as an innovative and learning process and a well-respected partner to both the government and the private sector. • demand timely submission of progress and financial performances reports, transparent and accountable operation, and integrated and networked information and monitoring and evaluation system that is capable of generating reliable performance information that can be used to make informed decisions. • Results based program management; responsiveness and assignment of focal persons that liaise with donors are additional expectations of donors.
<p>Media Organizations and Media Practitioners</p>	<p>There are currently one government media agency, 10 radio media organizations, 7 television stations, 4 print media houses, sixteen online media, and an</p>	<p>Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to REDD+-related information. <p>Interests:</p>

	undisclosed number of unlicensed social-media news agencies and reporting practitioners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental, forest-related, and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. • Identification of both the positive social and environmental benefits and identify the shortfalls of REDD+. • monitoring for timely execution of activities under REDD+, timely and transparent dissemination of relevant information and whether there is proactive stakeholder engagement and inter-agency collaboration. • communicating how REDD+ is being implemented and if it is compatible with the needs of the country.
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Target groups under each sector was also identified and included in the REDD+ Communication Strategy 2018-2022.

To gain a better understanding of the REDD+ stakeholders, the R-PP stakeholder mapping was reviewed, and interviews were conducted to identify and integrate stakeholders’ concerns, expectations, interests and needs in the strategic planning process. Consequently, the following key stakeholders for the REDD+ were identified according to the following categories:

The REDD+ Readiness project instituted a multi-stakeholder approach for its outreach and consultations. Stakeholders were identified along with the adequate means of connecting with them. The REDD+ Project created a communication strategy which outlined the activities and actions that would guide each stage of the REDD+ Readiness Phase to ensure there is an overall understanding, acceptance, and success of the project among diverse stakeholder groups. It follows the R-PP’s commitments and Early Dialogue process, which specified the need and opportunity for communication, consultation, and participation, from the onset of the process. The communication strategy was utilized by the R+CU, FD, NCCO and its partner; it offered strategic approaches and emphasized principles and guidelines throughout the document in order to increase stakeholder understanding of the REDD+ Readiness process and promote meaningful engagement. One of the key aspects of the strategy was the clarification of the

communication goals; it explains the, why, when, and how stakeholder awareness, capacity and participation would be achieved.



Image 2 Outreach session with Non-IPs in Toledo District.

The strategy was built on the principles of inclusivity, accessibility, transparency, fairness, and respect for human rights. In facilitating the engagement process, it emphasized adherence to the principles of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) when informing and engaging with IPs and local communities about REDD+. There is also careful attention to expanding access to information and increasing engagement of other forest dependent people and communities, marginalised, gender and vulnerable groups, whose involvement and participation are necessary in REDD+.

In October 2020 the country saw a minor lifting of protocols, but with that came the GOB imposing drastic protocols on gatherings and social distancing which continued to affect activities. In addition, the WB mandated that any consultations with local communities should strictly adhere to national restrictions and protocols for social gatherings and should be minimized to every extent possible, especially with particularly vulnerable groups experiencing disproportionate impacts from COVID-19, including Indigenous Peoples and extremely poorer communities.

While the project did its best to adhere to the protocols of both GOB and WB, the IP stakeholder communities were not comfortable with virtual consultations. They expressed that several factors hindered their ability to participate in a meaningful manner under a virtual platform; these included, lack of access to internet, lack of access to Smart technology, remoteness of their communities, educational level of the stakeholders being engage and their ability to comprehend the information as well as log onto the virtual platforms among others. Taking these concerns into consideration and the fact that the IP communities' input was crucial to the success of the project, the REDD+ CU made the decision to continue with in-person consultations with the IPs specifically. The REDD+ CU ensured meetings were held in an open environment, that strict social distance protocols were adhered to along with proper sanitization stations and sanitization of the venue itself as well as the wearing of masks at all times and keeping of gathering sizes within the authorized numbers. In addition to this, the REDD+ CU in consultation with local stakeholders identified key personnel from each community/group to engage. These persons served as the liaison between the project and the community/groups.

THE REDD+ CU along with local partners, identifies what was classified of key individuals from each group/community to engage continuously. These persons were selected based on their status within their community, their ability to participate meaningfully within the consultation

sessions and their willingness to carry back the information to their community for further dissemination. This approach allowed for proper consultation, minimizing of contact numbers during consultation sessions along with strengthening the capacities of persons within the Indigenous communities. Furthermore, the selected individuals were divided into smaller groups, under 10 and later on under 35 persons, to ensure that meeting sizes were kept within protocol. This meant that multiple meetings were carried out within the same communities/groups to properly engage the members. The country of Belize was held under social restrictions to the very end of the project in March 2022, which affected the implementation of the activities.

The document is a live document, allowing for continuous updating to the stakeholder list and revised approaches/methods as the environment changes.

The project continuously used a social expert, a communication expert, and an indigenous liaison to ensure the participation of indigenous groups in REDD+ activities and to continuously provide education and capacity building to vulnerable groups. However, the lack of permanent REDD+ staff to ensure the engagement of key stakeholders is a gap identified. It is recommended to hire permanent REDD+ Staff with an operation budget as this will allow for continuity and not replication along with continuous engagement of stakeholders especially within funding gap periods or wait periods between phases. It is recommended to have this established within the 1 to 3 years.

Sub-Component 1b. Consultation, Participation, and Outreach

Indicator 8. Consultation processes – Significant Progress

What evidence demonstrates that consultation processes at the national and local levels are clear, inclusive, transparent, and facilitate timely access to information in a culturally appropriate form?

What evidence is there that the country has used a self-selection process to identify rights holders and stakeholders during consultations?

What evidence is there that Indigenous Peoples institutions and decision-making processes are utilised to enhance consultations and engagement?

What evidence is there that consultation processes are gender sensitive and inclusive?



Image 3 Outreach session with NMAB in Cristo Rey Village, Orange Walk District.

The Government of Belize through the REDD+ project conducted REDD+ information, sensitisation, and awareness sessions from 2018 to 2022 with several key stakeholder groups across Belize. A total of 4 Indigenous groups, the Garifuna, Mopan, Q’eqchi’ and Yucatec Mayas. Together, these 4 indigenous constituencies held representation within 51 IP communities/groups across Belize and represented roughly over 25,000 persons. With the country of Belize implementing the lockdown due to COVID-19, the REDD+ CU with guidance from WB, embarked on the

engagement of only the key communities who buffer forested areas. This approach was also used for non-IP communities/groups which fell into one of the following categories, forest-dependent groups, women groups, loggers, miners, NGOs, Government agencies, and private landowners, agricultural producers.

The REDD+ Social & Environmental Expert was responsible for the coordination of all consultation sessions with the key stakeholders identified. Important to note is that the REDD+ CU had to provide significant financial support to the BENIC in order for them to mobilize and carryout sessions to meet the REDD+ FPIC requirements for IP communities.

Through these efforts the ITT was formed; this body played an important role in facilitating communication and consultation with IP communities, including answering questions related to the key documents produced under the project.

The REDD+ team’s consultations sessions was divided into 2 classes, outreach and education and consultation for the different Readiness outputs (e.g., SESA, ESMF, REDD+ Strategy, BSM).

The outreach and education session’s objectives were as follows:

- To gauge the knowledge base of the stakeholders on climate change and REDD+.
- Understand the perspectives of stakeholder about deforestation and degradation of forests,
- Identify the best means of communication for each stakeholder group based on their geographical location and amenities available to them.
- Provide information, create awareness and give opportunity for discussions,
- Explain upcoming consultation sessions and the importance of consultations and documents

- Explain the FGRM and create an open communication channel to the REDD+ CU.

As mentioned previously, the COVID-19 Pandemic significantly affected the outreach, consultations, and participation by the stakeholders. With the reduction in COVID protocols by the GOB in the last quarter of 2021, the project embarked on a series of awareness raising sessions throughout the country of Belize in preparation for the consultation sessions slated for the drafting of the REDD+ Strategy which included the SESA and SIS, and the Benefit Sharing Mechanism. While the virtual platform was used as much as possible for consultations, specifically in the case with NGO/GOB stakeholders, private landowners and other key stakeholders, the IPs insisted that consultations with its people be done in person due to the language barrier, the inaccessibility to internet and smart devices as well as the education level of the indigenous people. With this request, the REDD+ CU made the decision to continue in person sessions with the IP groups only but with that several protocols were adhered to; these included; all gatherings were kept under 10 persons and thereafter under 35 as per the GOB revised regulations on social gatherings, gathering were conducted in an open area, sanitization of areas were carried out before each event, sanitation stations were erected at every gathering, masks were worn at all times and social distance regulations were adhered to. This meant that in some cases, more than 2 meetings were held in the same area to meet with the stakeholders.



Image 4 Outreach session in Hopkins Village, Stann Creek District.

In addition to this, the REDD+ CU after consultation with WB, made the decision to only engage key stakeholders, prioritizing those who were directly impacted by the terrestrial resources and its management. This also led to consultations with BENIC and IP leaders where leaders for each community were identified to represent their communities and they would serve as the liaison between the communities and the REDD+ project.

Between August 2018 and September 2019, a total of 22 in-person engagement sessions were conducted during which 634 participants were engaged; 219 females and 415 males.

Engagement sessions were used to:

- Sensitize the participants on REDD+ and its related processes;
- Provide information on Carbon Financing and the various financing mechanisms and options;
- Provide information about the FGRM;
- Provide information for the REDD+ Strategy, SESA, SIS and ESMF;

- Provide information for the Draft Benefit Sharing Mechanism;
- Directly engage with Indigenous Peoples;
- Consult on the environmental and social risks and mechanisms for reducing or mitigating identified risks; and
- Outreach to youth in the Toledo and Cayo districts.

The Table 8 below show a breakdown of the education and awareness sessions held across Belize for the period 2018 to 2022. The table 7 shows that there was a total of 42 education and awareness sessions held with a total of 862 key stakeholders; of those, 60.7% of the participants was logged as male, 30.4% as females and for the remaining 8.9%, their gender was not recorded.

Table 15 lists the education and awareness sessions carried out by the project for the period 2018 to 2022.

Year	Specifications	Location	Total Participants	Males		Females	
				No.	%	No.	%
2018							
01	Sensitization on the REDD+ Project		20	16	80.0%	4	20.0%
02	Sensitization on the REDD+ Project		23	17	73.9%	6	26.1%
03	Sensitization on the REDD+ Project		24	18	75.0%	6	25.0%
04	Outreach & Education, TAA-MLA by the R+CU		10	7	70.0%	3	30.0%
05	Sensitization on the REDD+ Project		20	10	50.0%	10	50.0%
			97	68	70.1%	29	29.9%
2019							
06	Sensitization on the FGRM Consultancy		10	9	90.0%	1	10.0%
07	Sensitization on the REDD+ Project		67	54	80.6%	13	19.4%
08	Sensitization Maya Youth on the REDD+ Project	REDD+ Belize	90	53	58.9%	37	41.1%
			167	116	69.5%	51	30.5%
2020							
	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Across Belize	60		0.0%		0.0%
		Toledo District					

09	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Indian Creek Village					
10	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Santa Cruz Village					
11	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	San Antonio Village					
		Stann Creek District					
12	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Maya Center Village					
13	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Valley Community					
14	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Dangriga Town					
		Belize District					
15	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Crooked Tree Village					
16	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	River Valley Villages					
		Orange Walk District					
17	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Orange Walk Town					
18	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	August Pine Ridge					
19	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Rancho Dolores Village	8		0.0%		0.0%
		Cayo District					
20	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Belmopan City					
21	Docu-series – Filming and interviews	Bermudian Landing, Scotland Halfmoon	9		0.0%		0.0%
		National Garifuna Council					
22	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Punta Gorda Town	6	3	50.0%	3	50.0%
23	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Dangriga Town	9	6	66.7%	3	33.3%
24	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Barranco Village	14	8	57.1%	6	42.9%

25	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	George Town Village	22	12	54.5%	10	45.5%
26	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Hopkins Village	9	4	44.4%	5	55.6%
		Northern Maya Association of Belize					
27	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Orange Walk Town	11	7	63.6%	4	36.4%
28	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Cristo Rey Village	11	11	100.0%		0.0%
29	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Sarteneja Village	15	10	66.7%	5	33.3%
		Maya Leaders Alliance/ Toledo Alcalde Association					
30	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Otoxha Women's Group	10		0.0%	10	100.0%
31	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Forest Working Group	13	10	76.9%	3	23.1%
32	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	TAA Steering Committee	34	34	100.0%		0.0%
33	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	San Jose Women's Group	9		0.0%	9	100.0%
34	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Deep South Plot Zone	19	19	100.0%		0.0%
35	1st round of REDD+ Sensitization Meetings	Columbia Village	22	15	68.2%	7	31.8%
			281	139	49.5%	65	23.1%
2021							
		CAYO	317	200	63.1%	117	36.9%
36	REDD+ Awareness Sessions with IPs	San Antonio Village,					
		Corozal					
37	REDD+ Awareness Sessions with IPs	Sarteneja, Chunox, Copper Bank					
		Orange Walk					
38	REDD+ Awareness Sessions with IPs	Crista Rey, Patchacan					
39	REDD+ Awareness Sessions with IPs	Douglas, Orange Walk Town, San Estevan					

		Toledo					
40	REDD+ Awareness Sessions with IPs	San Jose, San Vicente, Jalacte, San Antonio, Santa Elena, Santa Cruz					
41	REDD+ Awareness Sessions with IPs	Otoxah, Corazon, Dolores					
42	REDD+ Awareness Sessions with IPs	Columbia, Silver Creek, Golden Stream, Big Falls					
			317	200	63.1%	117	36.9%
			862	523	60.7%	262	30.4%

Engagement and participation by stakeholders evolved and/or transitioned over time with an adaptive management to stakeholder engagement allowed for the creation of the Indigenous Peoples Desk within the REDD+ CU. The IP Desk promoted full participation and assisted in the generation of the perspectives and feedback of the IP into the REDD+ readiness phase.

The key stakeholders of this desk included:

- ✓ BENIC- Belize National Indigenous Council
- ✓ NGC- National Garifuna Council
- ✓ NMAB- Northern Maya Association of Belize
- ✓ MLA/TAA- Maya Leaders Alliance/Toledo Alcalde's Association
- ✓ Mayas of the West

The Belize National Indigenous Council served as the focal institution to represent the Indigenous people's collective rights on national and international policy issues that affects the four Indigenous communities of Belize. These groups are the Garifuna, the Mopan Maya, the Q'eqchi' Maya and the Yucatec Maya.

This institution was made up of representatives/executives of the National Garifuna Council, Northern Maya Association of Belize and the Maya Leaders Alliance.

In 2021, under the IP Desk and in collaboration with the S&E Expert and REDD+ CU the following in-person outreach and awareness activities in Table 9 below were carried out with the respective agencies mentioned above.



Image 5 REDD+ IP Stakeholders from Toledo participating in flyover of Columbia River Forest Reserve.

Table 16 shows a break-down of Male and Female Participants in education & outreach sessions carried out by the Indigenous People's Desk.

Indigenous Group	Age Range	Males	Females	Total Participants per group
National Garifuna Council	20 -75	33	27	60
Northern Maya Association of Belize	22- 68	44	9	53
Maya Leaders Alliance/ Toledo Alcalde Association	18- 65	78	29	107
Youth Environmental Club in Toledo	10-28	45	52	97
Total		200	117	317

The Yucatec of Western Belize was not represented under BENIC, but they represent part of the indigenous groups in Belize. The Yucatec Mayas of the west are concentrated in the village of San Antonio Cayo, this village is surrounded by 3 terrestrial bodies. Since there is no representation of the Yucatec Mayas of the west on the BENIC, the IP Desk reached out to village council members separately as well as other established community groups such as the farmers' cooperative in San Antonio Cayo to include them in the awareness session and consultation of the REDD+ project. These efforts helped to foster a link for the Northern Maya Association to identify key persons in the area to collaborate and to become a part of the NMAB and BENIC. By engaging them directly, the REDD+ project was able to also produce an agreed upon consultation protocol for REDD+ Readiness activities.

In the awareness sessions with the IP communities, many the participants were not able to explain what climate change was, but after explanation by the outreach team, they explained that they were very much aware of Climate change at their community level; speaking on the changes they have experienced over the years in areas such as water, weather and seasons, agreeing that climate change was real from their perspectives and was affecting their community and way of life.

Participants also communicated that deforestation was a problem and they were cognisant of how their activities played a role in forest loss. When it came to their knowledge of REDD+, only 3% of the total participants knew what REDD+ was and 5% of the participants have heard about REDD+ but did not really understand how REDD+ worked and what it meant for Belize.

It is very important to note that in every step of the way, the Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC) was always consulted. A total of 3 BENIC Working session was done over a 10-month period in 2021 by the Indigenous Coordinator. The IP Desk always conducted activities based on BENIC's recommendation.

In order to ensure participation of the IP of the south, the REDD+ CU entered into contract with the Julian Cho Society JCS, "Support Indigenous Peoples Representative organizations", to strengthen the capacity of the Maya people of southern Belize on the topic of climate change so that they can better participate in the implementation of the project. The JCS is a local NGO who have taken on the task of ensuring the IP of the south are properly consulted and comprehending the different activities, project, laws and policies brought forth by entities both outside and within the district on the happenings of their surrounding lands and environment. They have an established network of leaders and means of communicating within the communities.

Under the project, the JCS:

- a. Facilitated capacity building for the 39 Maya villages (including women and youth) on the broader theme of climate change and climate change mitigation strategies focused on REDD+.
- b. Coordinated and facilitated the effective participation of representatives of the 39 Maya communities in the five (5) main components of the REDD+ Readiness preparation phase (REDD+ Organization Framework, Consultations, and Grievance Redress, Preparation of the REDD+ Strategy, Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level, Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Safeguards Systems, Project Management).
- c. Strengthened the awareness among the Maya leaders with specific focus on women on climate change, impacts of climate change (especially on indigenous peoples) and the drivers of climate change.
- d. Engaged in a dialogue with Maya leaders and women on REDD+ and ensured the inclusion of the Maya Indigenous Peoples in all REDD+ Processes and in particular in the development of the SESA.

The awareness building sessions were delivered by a combination of technical persons from the Julian Cho Society with support from personnel of the REDD+ Indigenous Desk and the REDD+ Project Officer, Communication Officer, Environmental and Social Expert. Translation was also done in the respective Maya languages where needed.

Additionally, the JCS was the liaison between the southern Mayas and the consultants for the different project deliverables. JCS worked closely with the BENIC and ITT to ensure that the information was clear, and that the participants feedback was properly captured.

REDD+ Maya Target Group participants chosen needed to be appropriate for the purposes of ensuring that the broad representation of the 39 Maya communities is reflected in the participation. The Initial contact session with the TAA generated consensus around the need to clearly identify those who would participate in the capacity building; it was decided that only those who became a part of the consultation process on the REDD+ activities (SESA Report, Belize National REDD+ Strategy, etc) would be engaged.

The Participants identified to be engaged are as follows:

- a. Communities in and around a widely recognized forest frontier (for capacity building) – this included the three villages of San Vicente, San Jose and Na Luum Ca. These communities are located near the Colombia River Forest Reserve which is one of the largest remain contiguous block of forest frontier in the western part of Belize.
- b. Communities found in the deep south forest block (for capacity building) – this included the villages of Aguacate, San Benito Poite, Corazon and Otoxha, these communities sit on a block of forested lands. Additional important to note is that these villages also carried out the ethno-mapping of the lands they use and occupy.
- c. The Maya Steering Committee – Through a declaration made on May 1st, 2021, by the TAA Assembly, the Maya Steering Committee was, among other duties, tasked to “represent the Maya villages on matters that may affect them.” The Steering Committee is made up of representatives chosen by each of the six (6) zones of the 39 Maya villages.
- d. The Toledo Alcaldes Association Assembly – this includes the representatives of Alcaldes of the 39 Maya villages. Additionally, the chairpersons or their representatives of the same 39 villages will participate. The primary purpose of participation is to receive update and validate positions, outcomes and final products related to REDD+ and how the Maya peoples’ issues are addressed therein. (Society, 2021).

Table 17 shows list of consultation meetings coordinated and/or executed by JCS in IP communities of Toledo on behalf of REDD+ Belize.

Meeting Date	Particulars	Number of participants	Males	Females
September 25, 2021	Zone 2 - BSM Preliminary review	14	14	

October 2, 2021	Zone 2 - BSM 2nd review	14	14	
October 1, 2021	Zone 1 - BSM Preliminary review - TAA Assembly	15	15	
October 9, 2021	BSM Consultation with ECGD in Blue Creek			
October 9, 2021	BSM Consultation with ECGD in Blue Creek			
October 15, 2021	REDD+ Strategy / SESA w/ SC - Zone 1 in Corazon	23	22	1
October 16, 2021	REDD+ Strategy / SESA w/ SC - Zone 2 in Indian Creek	18	17	1
November 1, 2021	Presentation REDD+ Final Strategy w/ leaders Corazon	12	11	1
November 1, 2021	Presentation REDD+ Final Strategy w/ leaders Blue Creek	18	18	
November 2, 2021	Presentation REDD+ Final Strategy w/ leaders Santa Cruz	25	24	1
November 2, 2021	Presentation REDD+ Final Strategy w/ leaders Santa Ana	20	18	2
November 3, 2021	Presentation REDD+ Final Strategy w/ leaders Indian Creek	13	13	
November 3, 2021	Presentation REDD+ Final Strategy w/ leaders Laguna	15	15	
November 11, 2021	Flyover - Cayo	11	9	2
November 13, 2021	TAA Assembly - BSM review	92	80	12
November 14, 2021	BSM Update with Women	53	10	43

In 2021, the REDD+ communications team did not hold many sessions with the general Belizean population since it was decided, as previously mentioned, by the REDD+ CU, that consultations and outreach would be focused on only key stakeholders. However, the REDD+ team was able to engage a couple groups who had made direct requests through partner organizations such as youth groups and schools. As was the case with the IP communities, only 2% to 4% of participants had heard about REDD+, and like with the IP groups, after presentation and explanations from the outreach team on the concept of REDD+, 98% of participants wanted to know more about REDD+ and were willing to have more engagement, especially in the consultations. It was also clear that the participants want their leaders and communities to be involved in all aspects of the project especially when it comes to the local and indigenous communities.

Prior to COVID, the REDD+ CU engaged in a number of outreach events ranging from school and local fairs, Clean Up Campaigns etc. which allowed for a reach to roughly 3,531 persons from varying age ranges and backgrounds. Table 8 below shows the summary of those activities.

Table 18 lists the outreach events REDD+ CU participated in for the period 2019 to 2020.

Date	Activity	Participants	Estimated Total
February 1st 2019	Clean Up Campaign (World Wetlands Day) Took place in Crooked Tree Village, Belize District	REDD+ Coordinating Unit	300
		NCCO Staff	
		DOE	
		Forest Department	
		Belize Audubon Society	
		Crooked Tree Primary School	
March 18th 2019	International Day of Forest and tree planting ceremony took place at the University of Belize, Belmopan City.	REDD+ Coordinating Unit	250
		MAFESDI	
		NCCO Staff	
		Forest Department	
		University of Belize	
		IFSA	
		Belmopan Comprehensive High school	
		Belmopan Methodist High School	
March 21st 2019	International Day of Forest Fair at Julian Cho Technical Highschool, Toledo.	REDD+ Coordinating Unit	800
		Forest Department	
		DOE	
		YAXCHE	
		ACES	

		OCEANA Belize	
		BDF	
		Punta Gorda Town Council	
		Julian Cho Technical Highschool	
		Laguna Primary School	
		Belize Christian Academy	
		San Felipe Primary School	
		Forest Home Methodist Primary School	
		Punta Gorda Methodist Primary School	
		Little Flower Primary School	
March 30th 2019	Annual General Meeting of Belize Livestock Farmers Producers Association, Belmopan City	REDD+ Coordinating Unit	300
		Spanish Lookout Mennonites	
		Farmers from Toledo, Cayo, Orange Walk, Corozal, Stann Creek and Belize Districts	
		Atlantic Bank	
		Ministry of Agriculture	
		Development Finance Cooperation	
		Scotia Bank	
		Reimer's Feed Mill	
12th and 13th November, 2019	Regeneration Agriculture Conference, Belmopan City	REDD+ Coordinating Unit	350
		Small farmers	
		Intensive agriculture farmers	
		Ministry of Agriculture	
		Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations	
December 4th, 2019	Saint Ignatius High School engagement on REDD+	High school students and teachers	162
December 5th, 2019	Eden Seventh Day Adventist High School engagement on REDD+	High school students and teachers	560
January 10th, 2020	Mopan Technical High School engagement on REDD+	High school students and teachers	258
February 13th/14th 2020	REDD+ Youth Exchange Cayo	REDD+ Coordinating Unit	56
		Mount Carmel Highschool	
		Mopan Technical Highschool teachers and student	

		Sacred Heart teachers and students	
		Saint Ignatius Highschool teachers and students	
		IFSA- UB Students	
		Las Cuevas/ FCD Staff	
March 11th 2020	World Water Day Roaming with DOE, NCCO and Hydrology	Baptist High school students and teachers	300
March 11th 2020	World Water Day Roaming with NCCO and Rural Development	Cayo Christian Academy students and teacher	135
March 13th 2020	World Water Day Roaming with NCCO and Hydrology	Belize High School of Agriculture students and teachers	60
TOTAL			3531

Table 19 outreach and education sessions held by the IP Desk alone in 2021.

Year	Purpose	Group/Organization	Total Participants	Males		Females	
				No.	%	No.	%
2021							
01	Working session with BENIC	NGC	6		0.0%		0.0%
02		NMAB	6		0.0%		0.0%
03		MLA/TAA	8		0.0%		0.0%
04		ITT	3		0.0%		0.0%
05		REDD+ CU	2	2	100%		0.0%
06	MLA/TAA Sensitization and Capacity Building with Columbia River Forest Reserve buffer communities	San Jose, Na Lum Ca,	22	22	100.0%		0.0%
07		San Benito Poite, Corozon, Otoxaha, Aguacate	19	19	100.0%		0.0%
08		San Jose Women's Group	9	0	0.0%	9	100.0%
09		Otoxha Women's Group	10	0	0.0%	10	100.0%

10		Forest Working Group	13	13	100.0%		0.0%
11		TAA Steering Committee	34	31	91.2%	3	8.8%
12	Sensitization and Capacity Building for NGC	NGC - Punta Gorda	6	3	50.0%	3	50.0%
13		NGC - Hopkins	9	6	66.7%	3	33.3%
14		NGC - Barranco	14	8	57.1%	6	42.9%
15		NGC - George Town	22	12	54.5%	10	45.5%
16		NGC - Dangriga	9	4	44.4%	5	55.6%
17	Sensitization and Capacity Building for NMAB	Orange Walk Town	11		0.0%		0.0%
18		Cristo Rey	11	11	100%		0.0%
19		Sarteneja	15		0.0%		0.0%
20	Sensitization and Capacity Building for Western Mayas	San Antonio Village, Cayo.	16	16	100%		0.0%
21							
22	Sensitization of Youths on REDD+ in Toledo			45	46.4%	52	53.6%
		Trio Village	8				
23		San Marcos Village	12				
24		Bladen Village	12				
25		Golden Stream Village	24				
26		San Miguel Village	6				
27		San Pedro Columbia Village	9				
28		Big Falls Village	13				
29		Silver Creek Village	13				
			342	192	43.7%	101	23.0%

Reforestation Activity



Image 6 Restoration activity with the NGC-Dangriga Branch.

on. They informed the REDD+ team that in the year 2019, the village faced water shortage for the first time, which the leaders deciphered was a result of the riparian zone being cleared.



Image 7 Restoration activity with the youth group in Toledo District.

As a result of the awareness sessions carried out by the REDD+ CU with the indigenous groups, the REDD+ CU was approached and asked if support could be given to the different groups as it related to reforestation activities that the group/communities were interested in doing.

In particular, the leaders from San Vicente village located in the Toledo District expressed their need to plant trees on the bank of the creek and on the head source of water that the village depended

This request was the catalyst for the reforestation activities carried out by the REDD+ CU. As the REDD+ staff continued to carry out their sensitization sessions, additional requests were received from the communities to assist with reforestation activities. These requests led to the REDD+ CU to carry out a budget review, savings were located from other activities and the decision was made to commence a nationwide reforestation activity to assist communities who were united, wanted to participate, and who had

a need to reforest vulnerable areas that they themselves had identified. The REDD+ CU worked with village leaders, established community environmental clubs with support from other partner organizations, schools as well as the different indigenous groups. In addition to this, the REDD+ CU partnered with the Forest Department to assist in the reforestation efforts. This collaboration was considered important as the FD guided the team in the purchasing of the key plant species used in restoration as well as the species native to the different areas. Additionally, the FD was able to log the different areas where the reforestation was being carried out along with the quantities being placed in each area in order for Belize to start a data base of Belize's reforestation efforts which is a deliverable under the NDCs.



Image 8 Restoration activity with the NMAB in Orange Walk District.

Table 20 shows a breakdown of trees distributed and communities targeted for under the reforestation activity.

Distributed of Seedlings for Reforestation Activity			
Community/Organization	No. of Timber Seedlings	No. of Fruit Seedlings	Total Trees Received
Toledo Alcalde Association (TAA)/Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA)			
Toledo District			
San Vicente Village	200	75	275
San Jose Village	125	75	200
Na Lum Ca	75	25	100
Silver Creek	225	0	225
Schools/Youth Groups			
Indianville Eco Club	30	0	30
Columbia River Keepers	30	0	30
Rio Grande / Agua Caliente Water Shed	350	250	600
Sub-total Toledo	1,035	425	1460
National Garifuna Council (NGC)			
Stann Creek District			
Dangriga Town	110	40	150
Sub-total Stann Creek	110	40	150
Northern Maya Association of Belize (NMAB)			
Orange Walk District (Orange Walk Town, Cristo Rey, Douglas and Patchacan Villages)	200	100	300

Corozal District (Sarteneja, Chunox and Copper Bank Villages)	200	100	300
Sub-total Northern	400	200	600
Yucatec Mayas of the West			
Cayo District			
San Antonio Village	150	50	200
Schools/Youth Groups			
Duck Run 2 Primary School	65	0	65
Billy White Primary School	85	0	85
Santa Familia Primary School	75	0	75
Green Culture Eco Club	125	0	125
Cayo North	575	195	770
Sub-total West	1,075	245	1,320
Overall Total to seedlings distributed	2,620	910	3,530

Sub-Component 1b. Consultation, Participation, and Outreach

Indicator 9. Information sharing and accessibility of information – Significant Progress

How have national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements demonstrated transparent, consistent, comprehensive and timely sharing and disclosure of information (related to all readiness activities, including the development of REDD+ strategy, reference levels, and monitoring systems) in a culturally appropriate form?

What evidence is there that information is accessible to stakeholders (e.g., in a format and language understandable to them) and is being received?

What channels of communications are being used to ensure that stakeholders are well informed, especially those that have limited or no access to relevant information?



Image 9 local products purchased to use as promotional items for the REDD+ Project.

For the first part of the project the project had secured generic promotional items such as pens, books, pencils, bags, t-shirts, caps, water bottles etc. While these were welcomed by stakeholders; the REDD+ CU in consultation with WB made a request to purchase craft and agricultural products directly from stakeholder communities that would be incorporated with the REDD+ logo and would be used as promotional items to stakeholders during the consultation sessions. The approval was received and in 2021, the project engaged local stakeholders (several women’s group in Toledo, Dangriga and Orange Walk, individual crafts people from the 4 IP groups, as well as persons who produced local agricultural products such as honey, turmeric, seasonings, cashew seeds etc.) to purchase their items. The REDD+ logo was incorporated in all products purchased and in cases where producers needed assistance with packaging material, the REDD+ assisted. This initiative was well received by the communities and the feedback by stakeholders receiving the items was most positive with many other national projects expressing their desire to replicate.



Image 10 local products purchased to use as promotional items for the REDD+ Project.

The Belize REDD+ has made every effort to generate information on the project in the major different dialects of the country. The primary language for Belize is English and secondary is Spanish. However, due to the fact that the project targeted key stakeholders and prioritized awareness raising and participation with the IP of Belize; great emphasis was made to produce materials in the different indigenous languages. These include Mopan Maya, Q’eqchi Maya and Spanish. The reason the project did not produce any materials in Garifuna and Yucatec Maya is that during the awareness sessions, the different



Image 11 local products purchased to use as promotional items for the REDD+ Project.



Image 12 local products purchased to use as promotional items for the REDD+ Project.

groups were asked about which language they are most comfortable with and would be comfortable to majority of their population.



Image 13 local products purchased to use as promotional items for the REDD+ Project.

For the Garinagu people, they expressed that while they are fluent in the Garifuna language, 100% of their population is also fluent in English and function in their daily lives outside their homes with English. They expressed that any materials produced in English would be well received by their people. When the same question was posed to the Yucatec Mayas of the north and west, they both expressed that while they do speak Yucatec Maya, more so among the Mayas of the west, they are also fluent in Spanish with 90% of their population being able to function easily with the Spanish language, they expressed that the other 10% could be engaged with the English materials. The southern Mayas, both the Mopan and Q'eqchi, expressed that it would be best if materials could be produced in their languages as a great percentage of the mid to elderly population was more comfortable communication in their native tongues. They also expressed that the young generation were dual and were also comfortable with English as well.

With this feedback, the project ensured that materials were produced in the languages requested, in cases where one language was being spoken in the videos, sub-titles were produced in a second language to have maximum reach. In the cases of consultation sessions, the project and partners ensured that a translator was present, and in some cases, specifically in the south, two translators were provided for both the Mopan and Q'eqchi persons present.

Overall, information on REDD+ is accessible to stakeholders and is being received. In addition to the measures taken for on the ground consultations, the REDD+ Project in 2021 embarked on a

series of radio and television advertisements to not only reach the key stakeholders but to inform the greater Belizean populace as not much was done with them especially with COVID-19. The project created a series of 5 short videos that seek to educate viewers on the major activities and engagements of the project, these were produced in English. Further to this, using those same 5 short videos, voice clips were produced and translated using the same message, these were broadcast over selected local radio stations that were identified to be among the only radio broadcasting that could reach remote stakeholders in the deep south and north of Belize. This ensured those who have limited or no access to internet and television and who are not technologically savvy were being reached. These voice clips were also translated in their native tongue to ensure proper communication of the message. In the cases where access to TV and internet is available, video clips were aired and where necessary translated as well in the language of the target audience.

In addition to the 5 short videos produced by the REDD+ CU, the IP Desk in collaboration with JCS and TAA, produced one other short video focused specifically on the Mayas of the south communicating their traditions, their use of the forest and what it means for them to safeguard their traditions while preserving the forest. This video was done in the Q'eqchi language and contained sub-titles of the Mopan Maya.

Other media works produced include a Docu-Series containing 3 15-minute videos that spoke on the cornerstone activities Belize have carried out under the REDD+ Readiness Phase. These videos, along with the 5 short videos were aired on Belize's National Television stations, Channel 5, Channel 7 and LoveFM, during peak hours, specifically during the nightly news reaching around 10,000 viewers per station, they were placed on the NCCO Facebook site as well as on YouTube. In the case of the 5 short videos, these were also broadcast on 3 local television stations (PGTV in the south, The National Channel in the west and Centaur Communications in the north) within the different districts for additional viewership. The onslaught of the major media campaign saw an increase in requests from the public for more information on REDD+, requests for interviews and presentations as well as requests to be included in future consultation sessions as well as requests for documents produced.

Additional public campaigns included a collaboration with the Forest Department in 2021 for World Forest Day. This was a 1-week public awareness on a local morning show, "Open Your Eyes" on Channel 5 Live, where the REDD+ CU and FD staff participated to promote REDD+ and Forest Conservation and Sustainable Management.

There was also a 4-day outreach and education carried out in March 2022 for Belize's Annual La Ruta Maya Challenge, the REDD+ Project gave a small sponsorship to two teams participating in the event. Project logo was displayed and along with this, the project paid for an advertisement package for the 4 days where the project videos were streamed twice per day at peak times when viewership was greatest as the event was being streamed live by one of Belize's largest media stations reaching at least 15,000 people per day. The broadcasting station aired both via television and on their Facebook page.

Prior to the media activities of 2021, the project also produced 2 sets of brochures on REDD+, containing different level of information, along with several posters that was shared with stakeholders during outreach sessions along with the purchasing of promotional items that were distributed.

Table 21 shows communication log for the different mediums utilized in the REDD+ Readiness Phase.

Creator	Particulars	Median	Link	Audience	Approx. reach	Comments
REDD+ CU	Short videos					
	REDD+ - Watershed Video	Facebook		Youths, Adults, General Belize Population		
		Youth Group Presentations		Youths	97	Played during presentations
		YouTube		Social Media Followers		
		Channel 5		Viewers of nightly news	10,000	Aired 2 times for the week for 16 weeks
		Channel 7		Viewers of nightly news	10,000	Aired 2 times for the week for 16 weeks
		LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	7,000	
	REDD+, Mangrove Video	Facebook	(1) Facebook	Social Media Followers	321 Views	
		YouTube	REDD+ Short Videos: Mangroves - YouTube	Social Media Followers	3 views	
		LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	7,000	
		PGTV		Viewers of nightly news	1,000	
		Plus TV		Viewers of nightly news	5,000	
	Redd+, Sustainable Logging Video	Facebook	(1) Facebook	Social Media Followers	495 views	
		YouTube	REDD+ Short Videos: Timber - YouTube	Social Media Followers	2 views	
		LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	7,000	
		PGTV		Viewers of nightly news	1,000	
		Plus TV		Viewers of nightly news	5,000	
	REDD+ and Indigenous People and the youth population of Belize	Facebook	(1) Facebook	Social Media Followers	169 views	

		YouTube	REDD+ Short Videos: Youth - YouTube	Social Media Followers		
		LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	7,000	
		PGTV		Viewers of nightly news	1,000	
		Plus TV		Viewers of nightly news	5,000	
	REDD+, the Indigenous People of Belize and the effects of Climate Change	Facebook	(1) Facebook	Social Media Followers	292 views	
		YouTube	REDD+ Short Videos: Indigenous People - YouTube	Social Media Followers	2 views	
		LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	7,000	
		PGTV		Viewers of nightly news	1,000	
		Plus TV		Viewers of nightly news	5,000	
	REDD+, MLA and Columbia River Flyover	Facebook	(1) Facebook	Social Media Followers	10K views	
	Mapathon 2021	Facebook	(3) Facebook	Social Media Followers	303 views	
	REDD+, Reforestation Activities Video	Facebook	(2) Facebook	Social Media Followers	338 views	
	REDD+, Reforestation in Northern Belize	Facebook		Social Media Followers	300 views	Shared by both NMAB and NCCO
	What is REDD+?	YouTube	What is REDD+ - YouTube	Social Media Followers	51 views	
	Docu-series					
	1. Introduction to REDD+	Channel 7	REDD+ Docu-Series: Episode 1 - YouTube	Viewers of nightly news	10,000	Once every week for 2 weeks
	Introduction to REDD+	LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	7,000	Once every week for 2 weeks
	2. REDD+, Consultations with the Indigenous People, Indigenous Technical Team	Channel 7		Viewers of nightly news	10,000	Once every week for 2 weeks

	REDD+, Consultations with the Indigenous People, Indigenous Technical Team	LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	7,000	Once every week for 2 weeks
	3. Carbon Credit & PSP	Channel 7	REDD+ Docu-Series: Episode 3 - YouTube	Viewers of nightly news	10,000	Once every week for 2 weeks
	Carbon Credit & PSP	LoveFM		Viewers of nightly news	5,000	Once every week for 2 weeks
	4. Virtual Project Closure Event	Facebook	(1) Facebook		6.3 K views	Shared on GOB Press Office FB Page, NCCO FB Page
		YouTube	REDD+ Holds Project Closing Event - YouTube		80 views	
REDD+ IP Desk	Maya People and Climate Change	Facebook	(2) Facebook		2.3K Views	
		YouTube			46 views	
FCPF		Facebook				
	REDD+ Belize "Our Forest is Our Future"	YouTube	REDD+ Belize "Our Forest Is Our Future" - YouTube		676 views	



Image 14 Poster created and used as part of the REDD+ Project education and outreach.

One feedback received from the indigenous stakeholders is that while information was consistently being shared, there were times when the information was excessive and tedious to review especially when review deadlines were short which led to the focal points not always being able to meet the deadlines. This means that the REDD+ project will need to engage stakeholders on what is considered a more reasonable deadline for review and submission of input especially when the packages are larger than others.

Sub-Component 1b. Consultation, Participation, and Outreach

Indicator 10. Implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes - Progressing well, further development required

How are the outcomes of consultations integrated (fed into, disseminated, publicly disclosed, and taken into account) in management arrangements, strategy development and technical activities related to reference level and monitoring and information systems development?

The REDD+ CU ensured that the outcomes of public consultations were properly documented and was taken into account in the design and development of forest management and REDD+ policy and management arrangements. All documents produced was shared with the respective agencies who participated in the consultation for their review and feedback on the draft, after which the final version was once again shared to ensure transparency and accountability. In

addition, links to the documents were shared on the NCCO's Facebook page for stakeholders from across Belize to review and submit comments. A SIS website has also been launched which highlights the safeguards as well as links stakeholders to the documents produced under the project.

BENIC has been a fixture in the consultation process, ensuring that the IPs were properly consulted despite the restrictions on the country due to COVID-19. However, while several of the documents produced under the project, it is important to note that for consultations under the REDD+ project (for all major outputs other than the BSM) consultation protocols adhering to FPIC requirements were developed in close consultation with the constituent members of BENIC and the documents were able to be finalized. The BSM was halted in the late stages and the consultations with GOB/NGOs and Non-IP was not carried out due to the GOB needing more time to finalize their Carbon Rights legislation which goes beyond the activities of REDD+ and has a greater impact on the country. This was compounded by the GOB passing of legislature establishing the FPIC protocols for Belize. Important to note is that while the GOB has made a great step in the establishing of FPIC Protocols, there is some push back from local IP NGO organizations who have voiced that the protocols were not in line with the recommendations made by the IP. This matter is beyond the REDD+ Project and steps are being taken to address concerns raised. These drawbacks have resulted in only a draft BSM being produced with the intention for it to be finalized in the 2nd phase of REDD+.



Image 15 Members of the Belize National Indigenous Council.

It is important to note that Indigenous women and youths were invited to participate in the sessions and were a part of the process for all deliverables under the project. However, there is room for improvement to ensure they are empowered and equally recognised for their contributions and achievements. It must be stated that no two IP group/community is the same, and it is noticeable were the level of involvement by women is greater across demographics, for example, in the Garifuna and Yucatec Mayas of the North, versus the Mayas of the South and Yucatec Mayas of the West.

The outcomes of consultations were not properly integrated into management arrangements, strategy development and technical activities. The recommendation is to create a plan to facilitate mainstreaming of consultation outcomes into management arrangements.

It is recommended that sessions be held in year one of the second phase as a refresher to stakeholders on the different documents produced. These sessions would serve as both an outreach and awareness as well as disclosure to the formation for stakeholders who might not have been able to access the information prior.

One of the requests received from the indigenous groups, specifically the Maya of the south is to improve on disclosure of consultations. Generally, projects would forward the final products of a consultancy to the stakeholders for their review; however, the request received from the Mayas of the south is for there to be sessions just as was done during the consultations. They requested that the ITT be brought in to explain exactly what is in the final document, breakdown the information as was done previously in order for the stakeholders to properly understand the document's contents. This will allow for a clear understanding of the final products. This request was made for documents such as the strategy and the BSM. This approach is not considered when drafting a project or activity, if the REDD+ CU was to adapt this approach as part of its disclosure process, it would mean financial resources would be needed (accommodations, travel, meals, catering) to carry out these additional sessions as the team would need to do multiple sessions within each community across all the indigenous constituencies as well as paying the ITT member's daily stipend and accommodations for each session.

The suggestion would be for this to be done through a consultancy to ensure that even if the project ends, there is a grace period to finalize the disclosure of the information to stakeholders especially in the cases where some deliverables are not finalized until the very end of the project as was the case with the BSM during this readiness phase. Each product or deliverable would require its respective sessions for disclosure to the stakeholders.

Component 2: Prepare the REDD+ Strategy

Sub-Component 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, and Governance

This part of the Readiness Assessment focuses on the causal relationship between the economic, legal, policy setting of the country and associated patterns of land-use change, deforestation, and forest degradation. Building a comprehensive understanding at the preparation phase sets a solid foundation for developing an effective REDD+ strategy.

Sub-Component 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, and Governance

Indicator 11. Assessment and analysis – Significant Progress

Does the summary of the work conducted during R-PP formulation and preparation present an analysis of recent historical land-use trends (including traditional) and assessment of relevant land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods (including traditional/customary), forest law, policy and governance issues?

The Land Use Land Cover Map of Belize¹¹ was developed by employing remote sensing techniques using the sentinel-2 satellite sensor and based on the survey that was previously generated by the Forest Department. Through this product, the government will be obtaining an indicator on the area of concentration of forest cover and on the different categories of land use that involve the economic exploitation of the land area of Belize.

During the fieldwork, CATHALAC technicians, together with Forest Department technicians, travelled throughout Belize to evaluate the different categories reflected on the map. The tour was supported using drone flight technology and GPS (Global Positioning System). This integration of fieldwork and use of technology of GPS/drone helped to have results with high quality for display in the Land Use Land Cover Map the situation of the agricultural activities, urban concentration, forest and categories associated to the natural resources of Belize.

According to the 2006 IPCC guidelines, Belize implemented the Approach 3, as it is characterized by spatially explicit observations of land-use categories and land-use conversions, tracking patterns at specific point location.

The methodology applied in the development of a land-use land cover map of 2018 using Sentinel – 2 Images is different from the methodology developed during the process of land use land cover change using the collect earth application. In this process, we are interpreting sentinel 2 images

¹¹ [CATHALAC Product 5 Report.pdf](#)

of 2018 year to identify the different categories of land use land cover that belong to the map, supported with intensive fieldwork and reference information. While using collect earth application the Forest Department used a catalogue of imagery of different periods with the objective to identify the land use and the land cover change to know the evolution between land use and land cover.

The process applied to make the accuracy assessment of land use land cover classification was: Global accuracy to evaluate the general map accuracy. Also was applied the omission error/producer accuracy to evaluate each category map and the commission error/user accuracy to evaluate each category in the site.

To achieve this, Belize decided to use the image visualization tool called Collect Earth / Open Foris developed since 2013 as a tool for the collection of Land Use and Land Use Change data using mid- and high-resolution imagery. Collect Earth (as well as all the tools developed within Open Foris) can be downloaded for free from the OpenForis.org page (<http://www.openforis.org/>). This software is developed in Java, uses Google Earth as its main data collection interface and integrates several web services that provide very high-resolution satellite images, as well as temporal analysis using free images from NASA and ESA since 1984 which facilitates the process of visual interpretation.

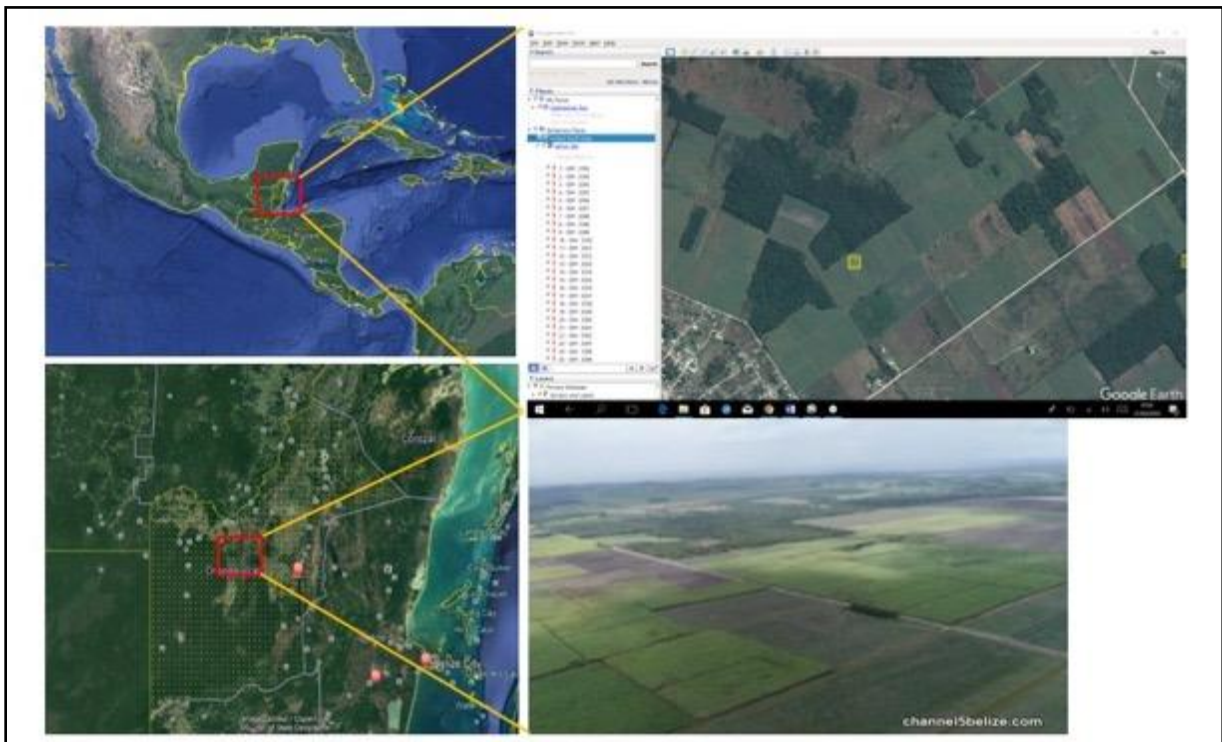


Figure 3: Example of collect earth visual interface on google earth.

This tool combines the ease of use of such a simple and well-known software such as Google Earth, which is used for the data collection interface, with the power to handle Open Foris Collect surveys; as well as, the file and analysis capacity of Google Earth Engine, and the very high-resolution images of Bing Maps. Collect Earth uses a sample design predetermined by the survey administrator, as well as a form design (generated through Open Foris Collect) that will be shown when clicking on a plot that is displayed in Google Earth (Figure 3).

Collect Earth is integrated with Bing Maps and Google Earth Engine, which means that when the form is displayed (clicking on the plot) a process is initiated that opens several windows showing that same plot in Bing Maps, which will sometimes have better very high-resolution images than Google Earth, as well as in Google Earth Engine Code Editor and Google Earth Engine Explorer. Through Google Earth Engine, access to all the historical archive of NASA (Landsat 5, 7 and 8 and MODIS) from 1984 to the present was made possible, as well as the ESA (Sentinel-2), which offers very high-quality image resolution (10 meters per pixel as opposed to 30 meters per pixel from Landsat) from 2014 every 16 days. Google Earth Engine not only enables imagery capabilities, but also analytical tools producing, for example, vegetation graphs or image composites to eliminate cloud cover.

After analysis of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in Belize from 2000 -2017, it was noted that the predominant conversion was from Forest to Cropland which allows us to infer that the main factor driving deforestation in Belize is the existing land tenure legislation, which requires that leased lands that are forested must be “developed” by the owners, or their leases would be revoked. This provides an enormous incentive for landowners to clear the land to meet the requirements of “development”. However, it has been observed that many of these lands lie idle after they have been cleared since the landowners lack the capital to engage in alternative land uses. Hence, simple amendments to the existing land tenure law could have a significant impact on biodiversity conservation, the deforestation and forest degradation rate and the subsequent fragmentation of Key Biodiversity Areas and forests 20 as well as in the implementation of REDD+ Strategy.

The national definition of forest in Belize is “plot of land with an area of 0.5 hectares or more, with trees 5 meters or higher, and a canopy cover of 30% or higher. This definition also includes forest plantation. In addition, it includes an ecosystem that due to biotic conditions (terrain, soil type, rainfall, etcetera), the trees cannot grow higher than 5 meters.” (Forest Department 2020: 33).

Forest types are mainly defined by tree community composition and disturbance reflected in crown cover. Depending on the methodology used: i) Collect Earth (CE) used as a base to prepare the FREL or ii) the most recent assessment prepared by digital classification of Sentinel 2 images (S2) (CATHALAC 2020), the forest land cover is composed of:

- Mature Broadleaf Forest 1.287.000 ha (S2) and 1.167.000 ha (CE));

- Secondary Broadleaf Forest 27.000 ha (S2) and 53.000 ha (CE);
- Mangroves 70.000 (S2)- 75.000 ha (CE);
- Pine Forest 16.000 (S2) -21.000 ha (CE);
- Forest Plantation less than 1.500ha

About 40% of the national forest cover is under some scheme of protected area and the other 60% is privately owned or situated on public lands that are not directly managed for forestry purposes. Of the publicly owned and managed forests, 65% are set aside for timber production (forest reserves in the PA system), and the remaining areas are managed for non-extractive purposes under sustainable schemes (Forest Department, n.d.).

Table 22 shows managed and unmanaged lands by categories in Belize.

Category	Managed Lands	Unmanaged Lands
Forest land (Undisturbed)	10,153.53	1,064,009.52
Forest land (Disturbed)	171,805.77	133,503.84
Cropland	207,896.04	0.00
Grassland	445,146.84	4,222.26
Wetland	151,699.77	0.00
Settlements	36,391.86	0.00
Other land	603.18	0.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	1,024,601.76	1,186,153.47
<i>National total</i>	2,210,755.23	
<i>% of Managed Lands</i>	46.3%	

Belize followed 2006 IPCC guidelines structure for the AFOLU sector, including the six main land uses proposed: Forestlands, Cropland, Grassland, Wetlands, Settlement and other lands (Level 1). Additional subdivisions were defined following national circumstances, including climate, soil and disturbance history in line with IPCC guidance (Levels 2 and 3).

Table 23. Land classification in Belize following the 6 land uses defined in the 2006 IPCC guidelines.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
	Broad-leaf Mature Forest	Riparian Forest Swamp Forest Other Forest
	Broad-leaf Secondary Forest	Riparian Forest Swamp Forest Other Forest
	Pine Forest	
	Mangroves	Tall mangroves Dwarf mangroves Littoral forest
	Plantations	Teak Other Plantations (TEBABUYA SP.)
CROPLANDS	Annual crops	Rice, Beans, Corn, Sugar Cane
	Perennial crops	Banana, Coffee, Citrus
	Follow lands	
GRASSLANDS	Pastures/Shrublands /Savannas/Ferns/Thickets	Riparian shrubland vegetation, Shrub land (thicket), Ferns, Savannah with scattered pine trees, Savannah with scattered shrubs, Bare-savannah, Agriculture-pasture
	Regenerating Shrubs & Bushes	
	Regenerating Shrubs & Bushes (Mountain Pine Ridge)	
WETLANDS		Wetland, Coastal lagoon, Inland water bodies, Aquaculture
SETTLEMENTS		Residential areas, roof tops, market, sport facilities areas and parking lots.
OTHER LANDS		Roads, highways, quarries, eroded areas, beach sand, dried up soil in savannah areas, bare rock and exposed river beds

Sub-Component 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, and Governance

Indicator 12. Prioritisation of direct and indirect drivers / barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement – Significant Progress

How was the analysis used to prioritise key direct and indirect drivers to be addressed by the programmes and policies included in the REDD+ strategy?

Did the analysis consider the major barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities (if appropriate) to be addressed by the programmes and policies included in the REDD+ strategy?

A clear understanding of the drivers and barriers¹² is important for the development of policies and measures designed to combat them. The UNFCCC COP encourages developing countries to identify drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in order to address them in their national strategies or action plans (Decision 4/CP.15).

Drivers can be classified as direct and underlying or indirect drivers. Direct drivers are human activities or actions that impact forest cover directly, therefore leading to forest carbon loss. Underlying drivers operate more diffusely, often by altering one or more of the direct drivers. They are formed by a complex set of social, political, economic, demographic, technological, cultural, and biophysical variables. Barriers refer to obstacles that can hinder the “plus” activities of REDD+: forest conservation, enhancement of forest carbon stocks and sustainable management of forests. Barriers are strongly linked to drivers and tend to be most related to underlying drivers, comprising institutional, legal, and socioeconomic variables.

Figure 6 below is the causal map of deforestation and forest degradation in Belize. It shows the main direct and underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in Belize, which also contain the main barriers to the plus activities in REDD+. This causal map and the drivers and barriers described in this section are the result of a rapid analysis conducted between January and February 2021 that concluded in the Analysis of Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Barriers to + Activities in REDD+ in Belize. Deforestation data suggests that the annual rate of deforestation is fluctuating around 6,000 and 12,000 ha/year. Data obtained by the Open Foris Collect Earth tool indicates that for the 2001-2018 period average annual deforestation was 8,707 has/year with a maximum annual average in the subperiod 2010-2015 of approximately 11,500 ha/year. Noticeable high annual deforestation happened in 2011; 2013 and 2015 with a maximum of approximately 20,000 ha/year in 2011. This information is consistent with alternative estimates using digital classification of Landsat Images, which indicate an average annual deforestation of 11,671 ha/year for the 1980-2012 period.

¹² [Analysis of causes of D&D in Belize.pdf](#)

Direct drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

● The Drivers of Deforestation, Forest Degradation and Barriers to + in REDD+ study in Belize identified the following direct causes of deforestation and forest degradation in the country:

- Conversion to grassland and cattle ranching
- Conversion to cropland, modern, intensive farming
- Expansion of urban and rural housing and infrastructure
- Illegal logging
- Unsustainable legal logging
- Subsistence, slash and burn agriculture
- Unregulated development of urban and coastal areas
- Unsustainable extraction of non-timber forest products
- Illegal hunting/poaching
- Tourism pollution in coastal areas
- Illegal gold mining
- Land tenure legislation, regulation

Conversion of forest to grassland (livestock pastures) and cropland (food crops) have been, in the last two decades in Belize, the two major direct causes of deforestation and forest degradation.

Underlying drivers

The main underlying drivers identified for Belize are land tenure legislation; control and coordination deficiencies; international demand for high value timber species; international markets; commoditization; road development; population growth; and permeable boundaries and migrants. Land tenure legislation, which requires that leased lands that are forested must be 'developed' by the owners or their leases are revoked, is identified in several documents as one of the main factors driving deforestation in the country. It provides an incentive for landowners to clear the land in an effort to meet the requirement of 'development'.

Control deficiencies affect the control of illegal activities and the administration and supervision of approved operations, resulting in unsustainable and damaging extractions (Forest Department 2020; Chicas 2017). Control deficiencies come both from lack of personnel, capacity and financial resources and ineffective institutions and legal frameworks that inhibit enforcement of environmental regulations (Young 2008). International demand for high value timber species has

been linked to illegal selective extraction. Unsustainable levels of selective logging pose a threat to protected areas as well. International markets promote the large-scale production of highly standardized goods, or ‘commodities’, which facilitates their commercialization in diverse markets and with multiple economic instruments. The economy of Belize has been based mainly on exports of traditional commodities with access to preferential markets in the sugar, citrus, and banana sector (GOB 2015b). To this end, production models which require large inputs of natural resources, including land, are applied. In these processes’ other productive alternatives and land uses may find it difficult to compete economically. Commoditization processes have an important influence as underlying drivers of deforestation. Road development facilitates resource extraction and may lead to higher levels of deforestation. This is recognized in the RPP (GOB 2015a) and in studies conducted in several areas of the country like the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve in south central Belize and in Cayo District, in the west (Folkard-Tapp 2020). Population growth, and the subsequent need for expansion of rural and urban housing as well as the need for expansion of farmland, places pressure on forest lands.

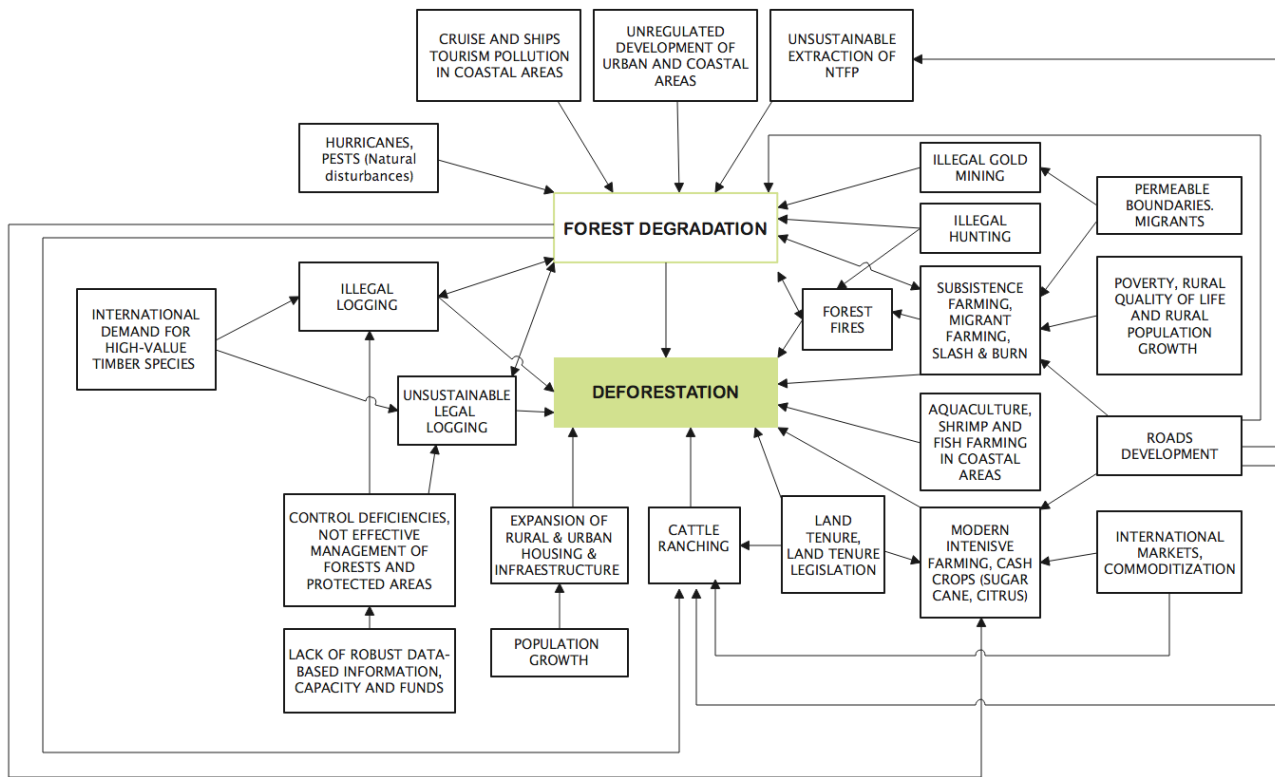


Figure 4 Causal map of deforestation and forest degradation in Belize

Barriers to forest carbon enhancement

Addressing barriers to forest carbon enhancement activities, namely, the conservation of forest carbon stocks, enhancement of forest carbon stocks and sustainable management of forests is important, as Belize has included all five REDD+ activities in the Strategy. Barriers are most frequently associated with those basic, underlying forces that support more proximate, immediate circumstances. They tend to be mostly related to underlying drivers, comprising institutional, legal, and socioeconomic variables.

From the analysis of drivers, it can be inferred that in the conservation of forest carbon stocks several factors may act as barriers, including control deficiencies and weak law enforcement, land tenure legislation and taxation, land use pressures induced by international markets and commoditization, and some harmful side-effects of the international demand for high value timber species.

These same obstacles would hinder the enhancement of carbon stocks, where the uncontrolled use of fire to clear grassland or degraded forest land for agriculture will also have to be considered. Forest fires are a direct, proximate cause closely related to others in the same category, such as slash and burn agriculture, poaching, and to forest degradation related to hurricanes and pests. As a result of prolonged exposure to storms and hurricanes, the Belizean forests have frequently been damaged or degraded, creating a high fuel hazard (FAO 2006).

The mentioned barriers might also affect the sustainable management of forests as a carbon enhancement activity.

Sub-Component 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, and Governance

Indicator 13. Links between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities – Significant Progress

What evidence demonstrates that systematic links between key drivers, and/or barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities (as appropriate), and REDD+ activities were identified?

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ adopted at COP 19 in 2013, provides methodological guidance for countries intending to advance toward results-based payments. Furthermore, in order to access to results-based payments countries should provide, inter-alia, a technical report detailing that anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals resulting from the implementation of REDD+ activities are fully measured, reported and verified in accordance with UNFCCC guidance. Belize has been carrying out these measurements since 2017 as part of the it's grant agreement and have made historical steps in the production of its FREL, BUR, TA, Updated NDC, and enhancement of its NFMS.

The review of previous works in Belize, together with the participatory consultation exercises, resulted in the identification of a number of direct drivers or proximate causes of deforestation

and forest degradation. They were analysed and linked in causal chains to their underlying drivers, as well as to other factors as discussed in the above paragraphs. The development of a framework for a national MRVS, demonstrates that systematic links exist between key drivers and/or barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities and REDD+ activities. The MRVS tracks forest change, both deforestation and degradation, by change driver. Deforestation is tracked through the interpretation of a national coverage of satellite imagery. Degradation estimates will be drawn from the results of the accuracy assessment.

Illegal and/or unsustainable logging of high-value timber has also been linked to the rapid expansion of agriculture (in turn driven by population increase) on forest lands of the Sapote-Mahogany habitat in Northern Belize (Folkard-Tapp 2020). Forest fires are another proximate cause closely related to others in the same category, such as slash and burn agriculture, poaching, and to forest degradation related to hurricanes and pests. These causal relationships highlight the special role of forest degradation, which may act as a result as well as a driver, linked to all these factors and largely due, but not limited to, the natural phenomena hurricanes and pests, in the dynamics of forest and land change in Belize.

Natural phenomena, particularly hurricanes and pests, the latter with their impacts on pine forests, are special cases, as they are not human activities and therefore, they would not fall under the classical definition of driver in REDD+ literature. They are nevertheless included in the causal analysis due to their diverse and important interactions with recognized causes of forest degradation and deforestation.

Regarding conversion to agriculture, both crop cultivation and cattle ranching, Mennonite communities and Mennonite farming are major actors in Belize. They include groups with both religious and entrepreneurial differences, with important communities introducing technical innovations at different levels and implementing modern practices of commercial agriculture and agribusiness under the influence of global processes of modernization (Roessingh 2007, 2012; Roessingh and Boersma 2011). Their large fields are not all within the communities, and corn, beans and rice are major crops. These groups and communities would fall under the direct drivers category of modern, intensive farming, and as such are also influenced by global commoditization and international markets, an underlying driver discussed in another section. Other Mennonite communities are more conservative, translating their conservatism to agricultural techniques, but with some of them receiving more outside influences than others. They practice a less mechanized agriculture, but not free from “modern” components such as the use of chemicals, this with the exception of a group of conservative organic farmers in Central Belize.

Deficiencies in the control of both illegal and legal activities have been described as an important driver of deforestation and forest degradation in Belize. Illegal logging was also raised as an important problem in the validation workshops, making reference to specific areas such as the Chiquibul forest reserve.

It is recognized that the Government faces significant weaknesses in aspects related to monitoring and enforcement, and illegal logging continues to be a major threat to maintenance of forest cover in Belize (GOB 2015a). This affects not only the control of illegal activities, but also the administration and supervision of approved operations, resulting in unsustainable and damaging extractions (GOB 2020c, Chicas 2017). The lack of personnel, capacity and financial resources has been mentioned, but also ineffective institutional and legal frameworks that inhibit enforcement of environmental regulations (Young 2008) and lack of robust data-based information. In long-term analysis, protected areas in the country were found to experience similar levels of deforestation to those without designations (Folkard-Tapp 2020).

Control deficiencies impact directly on significant direct causes of deforestation and degradation such as illegal logging and unsustainable logging. But they also have a pervasive effect on the whole dynamics of land change, as the State functions of regulation and control in the use of the natural resources have a very close relationship with the quality of their governance.

In addition to all this, Belize also has a serious issue as it relates to increasing illegal transboundary incursions by immigrants into Belize forests and protected areas for farming, hunting, and harvesting non-timber forest products might result in increased deforestation (GOB 2020c).

Pockets of deforestation are visible along the Guatemala-Belize border in the Maya Forest, Central Belize, especially within the Caracol Archaeological Reserve. The majority of deforestation in this area has been found to have occurred since 2000. Deforestation has been observed to occur as far as two kilometers east of the border due to a lack of conservation posts around the Caracol Reserve. This area is used for illegal agriculture including farming of maize, pumpkin and beans, as well as an entry point for illegal loggers prospecting further into the Chiquebul National Park and Forest Reserve. In addition to loss of flora, poaching of fauna is a concern at Caracol.

Among the Guatemalan poor persists a belief that Belize is their rightful territory (Young 2008, quoted by Folkard-Tapp op. cit.) This leads to poaching, harvesting of forest products and other activities which, although illegal in Belize, the people of Guatemala consider to be their right. It is a complicated situation, with armed conflict taking place in 2014 at the Mayan site between Guatemalan subsistence farmers and members of the Belize Defence Force.

Belize will implement and assess its efficiency on the five REDD+ activities: reducing emissions from deforestation, reducing emissions from forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. This is in accordance with national circumstances, in agreement with the Decision 1/CP.16 of the UNFCCC, paragraph 71, and as a standard and benchmark for contributing to mitigation actions on the forest sector referred to in paragraph 70 of the same decision.

This approach considered the importance of the five activities in terms of emissions and removal of GHG. The relation of these activities to various drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, with the consequent capacity to implement the activities through more efficient and cost-

effective PAMs was also taken into account to determine the five activities. (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021)

Sub-Component 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, and Governance

Indicator 14. Action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure, governance – Progressing well, further development required

Do action plans to make progress in the short-, medium- and long-term towards addressing relevant, land-use, land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods, and governance issues in priority regions related to specific REDD+ programmes, outline further steps and identify required resources?

In order to examine the legal and institutional framework needed for a successful implementation of REDD+, the REDD+ CU and the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (MSDCCDRM) did detail policy review called ‘Legal and Institutional Framework for REDD+ implementation in Belize’.

The relevant documents produced under the REDD+ Readiness Phase look at and make recommendations where applicable on addressing relevant, land-use, land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods, and governance issues in priority regions related to the specific REDD+ programmes. Since the REDD+ Strategy was not finalized until December 2021, to date, it has not been able to influence plans for land-use, land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, etc.

Communal Land Rights as well as private landowner rights are at the forefront of the Land Tenure Assessment carried out under this project. The generation of a national Land Tenure Map for the Toledo District, which is the only district that required the greatest effort to generate such a map was understood to be one of the key pieces to ensure accountability and transparency of carbon credit in phase 2. The implication so the ICJ Ruling in favour of the Maya Land Rights means the Toledo District is a sensitive area and the on the groundwork efforts would be the greatest. The upgrading of the data base system helped to curb issues currently plaguing the Lands Department. While the project was able to assist with additional for equipment, consultations, field work, secondment of staff and data systems, a second tranche of these requests will be needed with additions of a vehicle and human resources by the Lands Department to complete the national Land Tenure Assessment for the entire country as well as the finalized BSM. Those two documents complimented by the LULUC analysis will guide Belize’s terrestrial management into phase 2 and 3 of REDD+.

In addition, the Forest Department must be continuously supported to carryout it's work of assessments and updating of these important documents. With the rising costs of fuel and other essentials compounded by minimum budgets, financial aid will be essential if the work is to continue in phase 2.

These activities need to commence within the first year of phase 2 to ensure a comprehensive Land tenure Assessment for the entire country. While the Land Tenure assessment for Toledo, produced under phase 1 is not complete, it is foreseen that the level of work needed in phase two will be just as great if not greater as due to the sensitive nature and need for thorough consultations with all maya communities.

The REDD+ strategy (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021) needs to be formally adopted and socialized in the GOB, the suggested timeline for this is 6 months to 1 year after the re-evaluation of the current draft strategy.

Because of the ICJ Ruling, the REDD+ Project cannot give a timeline for the resolving of the Communal Land Rights and land Tenure Policies as those activities are guided by the court rulings and actions mandated to the GOB.

Sub-Component 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, and Governance

Indicator 15. Implications for forest law and policy - Significant Progress

Does the assessment identify implications for forest or other relevant law and policy in the long-term?

Through the assessments carried out under this project, it is recognized that there is more work needed from the Government of Belize in relation to putting in place and/or updating other relevant law and policy in the long-term. These range from the laws and policies on Carbon Rights, clearing of lands to justify usage, legal framework to govern communal lands and the carbon credits and management system associated with those areas among other.

While the GOB has started the work in phase one and has made head way with some legislations by ensuring that relevant ministries such as the Attorney General Office is included in these discussions, continued updating, revisions and new laws and policies needs be maintained.

Sub-Component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

The REDD+ strategy forms the basis for the development of a set of policies and programmes to reduce emissions from deforestation and/or forest degradation and enhancing carbon uptake from other REDD+ activities.

Sub-Component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

Indicator 16. Selection and prioritisation of REDD+ strategy options – Significant Progress

Were REDD+ strategy options (prioritised based on comprehensive assessment of direct and indirect drivers of deforestation, barriers to forest enhancement activities and/or informed by other factors, as appropriate) selected via a transparent and participatory process?

Were the expected emissions reduction potentials of interventions estimated, where possible, and how did they inform the design of the REDD+ strategy?

Belize's National REDD+ Strategy was prepared through a participatory approach with the involvement of national and local level stakeholders and uses the country's national context, policies, plans and sustainable development as the basis for the strategy.

As outlined in the REDD+ Strategy, the REDD+ Coordination Unit (R+CU) provided guidance on how to best engage stakeholders. The advent of COVID-19 in March 2020 and the attendant public health restrictions created major challenges for the stakeholder consultations processes.

A mix of various formats and platforms had to be utilized to engage national stakeholders. A major part of the consultative process was the conducting of a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) launch workshop in June 2019. It was the first in a series of consultations that were designed to develop safeguards involving the forest and agriculture sectors, and communities that depend on forest resources. The workshop provided information on the REDD+ Programme, its plan of activities and the purpose of undertaking a SESA as part of the REDD+ Readiness process. Topics discussed included: Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation (AAE_CADS, 2021), REDD+ safeguards (AAE-CADS, Belize SIS Content Guide, 2021), SESA scoping (AAE-CADS, Scoping Report - Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the REDD+Readiness Project in Belize, 2021) and the prioritization of Environmental and Social activities (Asesoramiento Ambiental Estrategico, 2021) for REDD+ in Belize.

A Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis was done in September 2019. It was primarily a desktop analysis of available information, that focused on identifying the key stakeholders of the REDD+ process and how to best engage them. The analysis looked at three key factors, namely, the institutional capacity of the group or organization to engage REDD+, the stake that each group or organization had in forest resources, and the influence that the group or organization had over the forest resources. The analysis found that the stakeholders who were identified during the

Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) were still the same ones that were to be involved in the REDD+ process. It also found that there were varying levels of capacity, influence and stake, with communities having the larger stake while government and large operators having the greater influence. Few groups or organizations were found to have the capacity to engage REDD+.

In February 2021 two virtual stakeholder consultations were held to review the identified drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. The first workshop included primarily government ministries, departments, agencies and key experts. The second workshop was held one week later and included community leaders, Indigenous Peoples, industry stakeholders, protected areas managers and conservation NGOs. The workshops focused on presenting the known drivers of deforestation in Belize and requested input from participants. There were a total 59 participants and presenters in the two workshops, 33 in the first and 26 in the second. There was almost equal participation of female and male participants.

The version of the REDD Strategy that was used as a basis for the SESA process consists of four pillars, each of which has several strategic lines allocated to it. It is a general strategy, which does not yet provide specific activities under each strategic line.

The strategy speaks to the existing policies such as the natural resource management and sustainable development policy framework of Belize which promote the implementation of REDD+ Activities as well as other activities presently being implemented that also align.

In addition, the strategy mentions that that institutional framework for REDD+ in Belize has been evolving with new actors being integrated into the new mechanism. The strategy states that in the view of the R+CU, the institutional structure for the REDD+ project in Belize used in phase one was sound and serves its purpose adequately. The strategy recommends that for the implementation phase, it is of key importance to have an optimal involvement of the FD in project activities since the Department has a fundamental role as manager of forests. (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021).

The strategy also provided suggested generic institutional structures for guidance; those are found below in Figure 5.

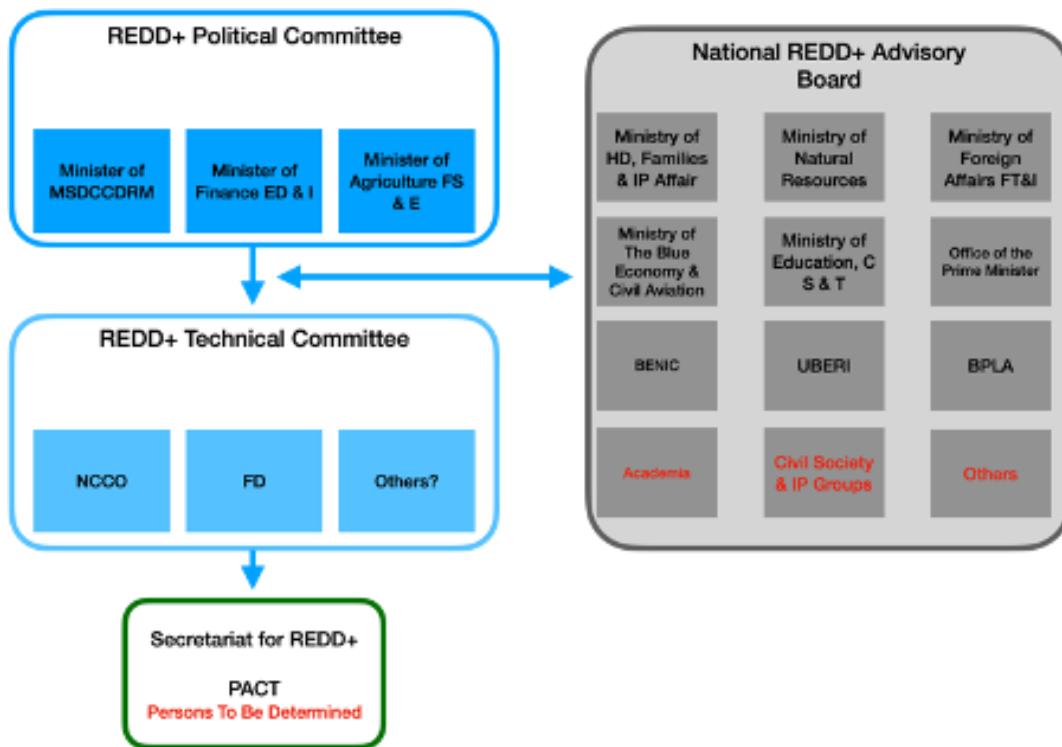


Figure 5 Suggested Generic Institutional Structure for REDD+ implementation.

The REDD+ Strategy (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021) states that its implementation of the strategic lines should be made following certain guiding principles that are aligned with the vision and should be understood as cross-cutting throughout the strategy. The Guiding Principles are based on numerous stakeholder consultations and also reflect the country's compromise with the UNFCCC decisions regarding social and environmental safeguards.

The pillars and strategic lines¹³ included in the REDD+ Strategy are as follows:

Pillar 1: Strengthen Institutional Coordination, Legal and Policy Framework and Enforcement

Strategic line 1.1 Officially implement, regulate and enforce a National Land Use Policy to help guide land use change authorizations, Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), conservation and restoration

Strategic line 1.2 Develop clear criteria and procedures for the review of development plans connected to land allocation approvals and EIAs in which forest lands are involved

Strategic line 1.3 Improve coordination between government actors for better management (e.g. authorizations), monitoring, control and enforcement of existing and new regulations.

Strategic line 1.4 Address inconsistent or perverse incentives in national legislation and design incentives to reduced GHG emissions and enhance carbon sequestration from forests

¹³ [Draft Belize National REDD+ Strategy.pdf](#)

Pillar 2: Increased and meaningful community engagement and empowerment

Strategic line 2.1 Enhance Recognition and Respect for the Rights of all Stakeholders

Strategic line 2.2 Institute Inclusive and Culturally Appropriate Community Engagement and Participation Mechanisms

Strategic line 2.3 Support, enhance and reward the sustainable land and forest stewardship of local community and Indigenous Peoples

Strategic line 2.4 Support, technically and financially, and Enhance Sustainable Development Initiatives and Livelihoods for Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples

Strategic line 2.5 Address Customary Land Tenure Issues, by creating appropriate norms and implementing existing rulings and internationally recognized rights

Pillar 3: Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation

Strategic line 3.1 Institutional harmonization of forest policies and actions

Strategic line 3.2 Define another system for timber valuation that captures the fair value of timber

Strategic line 3.3 Promotion of utilization of secondary hardwoods and lesser-known timber species

Strategic line 3.4 Improving monitoring and control of approved operations and plans

Strategic line 3.5 Implementing integrated pest and fire management

Strategic line 3.6 Enhancing Forest conservation through a set incentives and regulations

Pillar 4: Forest Information, Monitoring

Strategic line 4.1 Develop, process and share forest related information

Strategic line 4.2 Monitoring Forest area and condition through remote sensing and community involvement

Strategic line 4.3 National Forest Inventory and permanent plots

Sub-Component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

Indicator 17. Feasibility assessment – Significant Progress

Were REDD+ strategy options assessed and prioritised for their social, environmental, and political feasibility, risks and opportunities, and analysis of costs and benefits?

Within the strategy, a clear understanding of the drivers and barriers was important for the development of policies and measures designed to combat them. The UNFCCC COP encouraged developing countries to identify drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in order to address them in their national strategies or action plans. These policies and measures are a central part of any REDD+ Strategy. (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021). The Policies and Measures for the REDD+ strategy was designed following the vision and goals for REDD+. These PAMs within the Belize REDD+ strategy reflect the concerns, expectations, and needs of different stakeholders as well as the identified direct and underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. In addition, these PAMs were developed considering existing country policies, laws and instruments, and their implementation. The PAMs are a means to reach the targets set in the recent NDC (GOB 2021). Particularly the targets of reducing “GHG emissions and increase GHG removals related to land use change totalling 2,053 KtCO_{2e} cumulative over the period from 2021 to 2030”; and to “enhance the capacity of the country’s mangrove and seagrass ecosystems to act as a carbon sink by 2030, through increased protection of mangroves and by removing a cumulative total of 381 KtCO_{2e} between 2021 and 2030 through mangrove restoration.”

The PAMs in this National REDD+ Strategy was organized under 4 Pillars, each of which having several subordinated Strategic Lines. The description and justification of each one of the Pillars included references to existing policies and relevant drivers. Pillars and Strategic Lines having interconnected functions, and each was expected to impact positively on direct and underlying drivers in different ways. The entire strategy is to be considered as a whole in its implementation due to the direct and indirect links of the proposed PAMs with the identified drivers.

The Guiding Principles adopted were based on numerous stakeholder consultations (see Annex 2: Summary of consultation process) and also reflect the country’s compromise with the UNFCCC decisions regarding social and environmental safeguards.

The Guiding Principles used to select the strategic lines within the PAMs are:

- Ensure cultural inclusiveness
- Ensure gender equality
- Guarantee respect for the rights of all stakeholders
- Ensure full and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders
- Safeguard forest-dependent livelihoods
- Ensure equitable distribution of benefits

- Guarantee transparency and accountability
- Build capacity within government institutions and non-government stakeholders
- Recognize and value ecosystem services
- Embrace/Improve sustainable forest management
- Abide by national and international obligations, and local culture and values.
- Strengthen intra and inter institutional coordination, including Indigenous governance

Sub-Component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

Indicator 18. Implications of strategy options on existing sectoral policies – Progressing Well, further development required

Have major inconsistencies between the priority REDD+ strategy options and policies or programmes in other sectors related to the forest sector (e.g., transport, agriculture) been identified?

Is an agreed timeline and process in place to resolve inconsistencies and integrate REDD+ strategy options with relevant development policies?

Are they supportive of broader development objectives and have broad community support?

Belize as a country has been working in line with the requirements of REDD+. There are no major inconsistencies between the priority REDD+ strategy options; existing policies such as the natural resource management and sustainable development policy framework of Belize promote the implementation of REDD+ activities, in addition other activities presently being implemented in Belize also align.

Below are the key laws and regulations that govern forests in Belize that guided the development of the strategy:

- National Forest Policy, 2015
- The Forest (Amendment) Act, 2017
- Forests (protection of mangroves) Regulations, 2018
- Forest (Protection of Trees) Regulations, 2010
- Private Forest (Conservation) Act, 2000
- Forest Fire Protection Act, 2000
- Sustainable Forest Management Licenses (SFML)

In addition, the below are all strategic documents and policies that also provided guidance on the forest and land used sector, amongst others that guided the outputs of REDD+ and speak to this indicator.

Strategic policy frameworks

- National Development Framework for Belize (2010-2030), “Horizon 2030”, 2016

Revised Low Carbon Development Roadmap for Belize, April 2016

- Growth and sustainable development strategy (GSDS), 2016-2019,
- National Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan (NCCPSAP), MAFFESDI, 2014

Framework environmental protection law

- National Environmental Policy and Strategy (2014-2024), 2014
- National Environmental Action Plan (2015– 2020), 2014
- The Environmental Protection (Amendment) Act, 2009

Agriculture

- The National Food and Agriculture Policy (2002- 2020), 2003
- The National Agriculture and Food Policy of Belize (NAFP) (2015-2030), 2015
- Agriculture Development Management and Operational Strategy (ADMOS), 2005
- National Adaptation Strategy to address Climate Change in the Agriculture Sector in Belize, 2014
- Agricultural Fires Act, 2000

Land tenure

- National Land Use Policy and Integrated Planning Framework for Land Resource Development (Draft), Ministry of Natural Resources, November 2011
- National Lands Act, 2003
- The Land Utilization (Amendment) Act, 2017
- Land Tax Act, 2003
- Land Acquisition Act, 2000

Spatial Planning

- National Protected Areas Policy and System Plan, 2015
- National Protected Areas System Act, 2015
- Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) (Amendment) Act, 2017
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan, 2016
- Coastal Zone Management Act, 2003

Biodiversity

- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) (2016- 2020), 2018
- Biodiversity Initiative – Biodiversity Policy and Institutional Review, October 2018 (DRAFT)

Taxation

- Environmental Tax (Amended) Act, 2017
- The Fiscal Incentive Program, 2016
- The Fiscal Incentives Act, 2011
- Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, 2011
- The Mines and Minerals Act

In order for Belize to have tangible strategy options, the country needs to work on updating its land use policy. Many policies have been identified as out of date and not in line with REDD+ activities. The country cannot have a successful REDD+ implementation if the laws and policies contradict the REDD+ goals. In order for this to occur, Belize will need funding assistance for the completion and evaluation of the existing strategy. In addition to this is that there will also need to be a re-evaluation of the SESA on both the positive and negative impacts. Funding will also be needed for assistance with this. This should be done within the 1st year of second phase.

Sub-Component 2c. REDD+ Implementation Framework

The implementation framework defines institutional, economic, legal and governance arrangements necessary to implement REDD+ strategy options.

Sub-Component 2c. REDD+ Implementation Framework

Indicator 19. Adoption and implementation of legislation/ regulations – Progressing well, further development required

Have legislation and/or regulations related to REDD+ programmes and activities been adopted?

What evidence is there that these relevant REDD+ laws and policies are being implemented?

Have legislation and/or regulations related to REDD+ programmes and activities been adopted?

What evidence is there that these relevant REDD+ laws and policies are being implemented?

REDD+ is conceived and discussed in the context of wider national policies pertaining to natural resource management and sustainable development. As such, there are activities presently being implemented within the existing natural resource management and sustainable development policy framework of Belize.

Within the existing natural resource management and sustainable development policy framework of Belize, particularly in relation to forests, there are various policies which can enable the implementation of REDD+ activities. The following table provides a summary of the Natural

Resource and Sustainable Development Policies into which Belize’s National REDD+ Strategy gets embedded and how they relate to any of the five different REDD+ activities. (AAE-CADS, SESA Final Report, 2020)

Table 24 Natural Resource and Sustainable Development Policies and REDD+ Activities.

Policies	Policy Goals, Statements, Strategies, Actions and Measures	Related REDD+ Activity
National Development Framework of Belize: Horizon 2030	The natural environment is valued and protected as the basis for all economic activity and therefore development planning is based on the principles of environmental sustainability.	Sustainable management of forests
	Support reforestation and sustainable local logging by communities to create jobs and reduce poverty.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks Reducing emissions from forest degradation
	Provide incentives for reforestation.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
	Adopt and implement the National Protected Areas System Plan and strengthen the legal and administrative framework for protected areas.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks
National Forest Policy 2015	The national forest estate shall be protected and managed sustainably and in perpetuity.	Sustainable management of forests
	The development and management of natural forests on community-owned and managed land by Indigenous People and rural communities will be promoted.	Sustainable management of forests
	Collaborative partnerships and strategic alliances with the private sector shall be developed and strengthened for the sustainable management of forests.	Sustainable management of forests

	Increased competitiveness in the forest sector through the manufacture of value-added timber products will be encouraged and fostered.	Reducing emissions from forest degradation
	The government shall encourage the sustainable use of those non timber forest products (NTFPS) with the potential for commercial exploitation while respecting their traditional and cultural use.	Reducing emissions from forest degradation
	The development and management of natural forests on private land will be promoted.	Sustainable management of forests
	The competitiveness and dynamic development of all aspects of forest management and the forest sector will be promoted through forest education and science and enhancement of professional expertise in forest related disciplines	Sustainable management of forests
	Forest biodiversity will be conserved and managed in support of social and economic well-being and international obligations.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks Sustainable management of forests
	The government shall endeavor to reduce deforestation and forest degradation.	Reducing emissions from deforestation Reducing emissions from forest degradation
	The protection, improvement and rehabilitation of watersheds will be integrated into the sustainable management of forests.	Sustainable management of forests
	The government shall have special regard for conservation of those vegetated areas not traditionally considered productive forests, but which play a significant role in providing valuable ecological services and maintaining biodiversity	Sustainable management of forests Reducing emissions from deforestation (mangrove forests)

	The government shall, recognizing the importance of fires as an ecological process, encourage its proper use and management in the protection and enhancement of terrestrial ecosystems, giving special consideration to human welfare and safety	Reducing emissions from forest degradation
	The government shall create appropriate regulatory frameworks for forest financing mechanisms and the sustainable generation and equitable distribution of benefits derived from those mechanisms by <i>articulating a clear legal framework for the incorporation of carbon rights as new registered land interest to provide a firmer basis for investment in forest conservation by way of REDD+ and other similar mechanism.</i>	Conservation of forest carbon stocks
	Adaptation and mitigation to climate change will be mainstreamed into the management objectives of the government's national forest program.	Sustainable management of forests
	A platform for information sharing will be provided to serve as a basis for reliable data on national forest conservation status, management and the forest products market.	Sustainable management of forests
Forest Department Strategic Action Plan 2019- 2023	Foster resilient, healthy functioning forest ecosystems.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks
	Enhance economic, social and environmental benefits of forests through sustainable utilization of forest resources by stakeholders.	Sustainable management of forests Reducing emissions from deforestation
	Maintain no net loss in forest cover in priority areas.	Reducing emissions from deforestation
	Harmonize and strengthen forest policies and legislation.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks

	Develop stable, diverse, sustainable sources of finances.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks
<i>Belize Rural Area-Based Development Strategy (BRADS) 2012-2030</i>	Promote innovative and sustainable uses of agricultural and forestry resources.	Sustainable management of forests
	Improve agricultural and forestry extension services.	Sustainable management of forests
	Promote reforestation and measures for forest conservation.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks Conservation of forest carbon stocks
	Promote restoring forestry potential and introduce preventive deforestation measures, and actions harmful to the forest.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
	Provide incentives for reforestation and environmental services	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
<i>National Protected Areas System Plan 2015</i>	Explore low carbon development and climate change financing to approach private sector involvement.	Conservation of carbon stocks
	Forest Reserves are established to protect forests for management of timber extraction and/or the conservation of soils, watersheds and wildlife resources.	Reducing emissions from forest degradation
	Protection of the littoral forest, the most threatened of Belize's ecosystems.	Sustainable management of forests.
	50% reduction in the issuance of land leases within Forest Reserves by 2018.	Reducing emissions from deforestation

	50% of forestry (LTFLs) and tourism concessions within actively managed PAs are certified operations (FSC & Green Globe) by 2019.	Sustainable management of forests
<i>National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan to Address Climate Change in Belize 2014</i>	Mainstream adaptation and mitigation to Climate Change will be achieved by providing guidance for actions to be taken with regards to the direct and indirect threats posed by global Climate Change on forests and forest dependent people in order to reduce their vulnerability, increase their resilience and adaptation to Climate Change.	Sustainable management of forests
	Systematically assess the potential impacts of Climate Change on Belize's forests and the extent of the vulnerability of forests to these impacts and actions for adaptation.	Sustainable management of forests
	Develop a comprehensive monitoring system to evaluate changes in the forest cover, carbon stocks and forest biodiversity and to use this information for further planning in light of Climate Change mitigation and adaptation	Sustainable management of forests
	Maintain and restore healthy forest ecosystems by sustainable forest management, increasing afforestation and reforestation in order to increase the resilience of human communities.	Sustainable management of forests Enhancement of forest carbon stocks Reducing emissions from deforestation
<i>Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under UNFCCC</i>	Protection of forest reserves and sustainable forest management could potentially reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a cumulative 410.5GgCO ₂ per year by 2030. With a cumulative reduction of 2,477 GgCO ₂ for the 2020-2030 period (conditional).	Conservation of forest carbon stock Sustainable management of forests
	Reduction of fuel wood consumption - by 27% - 66%.	Reducing emissions from forest degradation

	Protecting and restoring mangrove forests.	Enhancement of forest carbon stock
<i>National Environmental Policy and Strategy 2014 to 2024</i>	Achieve the greening of Belize’s economy by maintaining healthy forest cover and terrestrial ecosystems at 61%.	Reducing emissions from deforestation
	Increase by 50% the forest revenue generated by instituting a framework for the payment for environmental services.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks.
	Increase revenue for timber and non-timber forest products from value added activities by 100%.	Reducing emissions from forest degradation.
	Reduce the clearance of fringing mangroves, seagrass beds and littoral forests by at least 30%.	Reducing emissions from deforestation
	Create appropriate regulatory frameworks for the creation of payments for environmental services schemes	Reducing emissions from deforestation and Enhancement of forest carbon stock
	The promotion of reforestation programs to balance out the forestlands undergoing conversion to agriculture land should be addressed.	Enhancement of forest carbon stock
<i>National Land Use Policy for Land Resource Development 2011</i>	Forests are capable of providing a sustainable supply of timber and non-timber resources, and forests that lie outside of forest reserves and protected areas, i.e., on National Land, must be placed under management regimes that recognize their value and potential contribution to the rural economy.	Sustainable management of forests
	Mangroves, which extend along the majority of the length of the Belizean coast, are recognized as mitigating the impacts of hurricanes and tropical storms on Belize’s coastline, as well as serving as nurseries for many economically important marine species. As such a national mangrove management strategy with updated legislation will need to be developed to oversee their use and/or protection	Sustainable management of forests

	and guide the operation of the mangrove licensing system by the Forest Department.	
	The integrity of protected areas that fall under the National Protected Areas System, marine reserves under the Fisheries Act and forest reserves that fall under the Forests Act must be guaranteed by ensuring a high level of administration, with comprehensive management plans being developed for each of them. Moreover, their scope of inclusion of important marine, terrestrial, historical and cultural sites is to be assessed to guarantee they cover a cross section of these different types.	Sustainable management of forests
	Together with the strategy above, a programme will be undertaken to ascertain the status of current protected areas, including forest reserves. In several areas lands have been alienated from these areas without formal process, and unregulated incursions have taken place. This programme will bring all concerned parties together and will result in a system that ensures that any de-reservation areas will be based on identified national need, particularly as expressed in the National Level Zoning Strategy.	Sustainable management of forests
	Biological corridors are being proposed as a set of ecosystems intended to ensure the connectivity of protected areas across the country. Necessarily, they include tracts of National Land and private land which have no formal form of protection of the natural habitat. This proposal will be finalized to determine its feasibility in relation to other potential land uses, and the Lands and Surveys Department and private landowners will be approached to participate in the scheme.	Sustainable management of forests
	The fact that natural forests may be damaged by natural disasters such as the passing of a hurricane, wildfires etc, will not automatically be a reason to issue a license under the forest act allowing the landowner to clear cut the land and convert it to other land uses.	Reducing emissions from deforestation

	All gathering grounds and recharge areas shall either be retained as forest reserves or national parks, as the case may be, in accordance with the provisions of the Forests Act and the National Parks System Act; or be declared to be controlled areas under section 56 of the Integrated National Water Resources Act 2010, by the Minister having responsibility for forests, after consultation with any relevant entity likely to be affected.	Sustainable management of forests
	Take appropriate action under existing legislation (National Lands Act, Forests Act, National Parks System Act, Land Utilization Act) to prevent or regulate the threat to the gathering ground whether it is private property, National Land, forest reserve or a protected area, as the case may be.	Sustainable management of forests
	Incorporate climate change analysis into national agricultural strategies in coordination with other sectoral policies for reducing deforestation, protecting biodiversity and managing water resources.	Reducing emissions from deforestation
	Hillsides and other areas that are susceptible to landslides and the generation of accelerated rain run-off will be reforested in liaison with the Forest Department.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
	Enhance and expand forest management systems to enable effective schemes for controlling deforestation and forest fires, and undertaking reforestation, afforestation in appropriate areas.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
National Agriculture and Food Policy of Belize 2015-2030	Support development of carbon sequestration and other agro-ecological services through good agricultural practices	Sustainable management of forests
	Support identification of opportunities and options for the Belizean strategy for [carbon] sequestration.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks
	Promote reduced deforestation through intensification and increased productivity in areas under cultivation;	Reducing emissions from deforestation

	Support identification of appropriate mechanisms for development of an agro-ecological services business program via a portfolio of incentives for implementing environmental protection technologies and optimal use of natural resources for sustainable production.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks
	Support Carbon-neutral certification by providing a robust framework and credit certification that aims to reduce its net carbon dioxide emissions to zero.	Conservation of forest carbon stocks.
	Support policy and strategic development initiatives that facilitate stakeholder's participation and advocacy such as: NPESAP, Horizon 2030, GPRS/GSDS, BRADS, Energy, Forestry, and Fisheries' Policies.	Sustainable management of forests
<i>Belize National Agroforestry Policy 2020</i>	Develop AF as a way of reducing the pressure on existing forests, reducing deforestation and degradation, thereby complementing the REDD+ target of increasing forest/tree cover for ecological stability and environmental services, especially in the vulnerable regions.	Reducing emissions from deforestation Reducing emissions from forest degradation
	Increase forest cover, conservation of flora and fauna species, and protect the biodiversity and water resources at the national level, affecting 50,000 acres in 10 years.	Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
<i>National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Belize 2030</i>	Misuse and unsustainable exploitation of natural and cultural resources poses a threat to the sustainable development of tourism growth, such as the lack of public awareness programmes, leading to inappropriate usage of natural resources, such as the reef, national parks and rainforests.	Reducing emissions from forest degradation
<i>Growth and sustainable development strategy 2016-2019</i>	Continue efforts to strengthen sustainable forest management and land use planning. Increase the percentage of forest cover under SFM from 26% to 29%.	Sustainable management of forests Reducing emissions from deforestation.

	<p>Reduce forest cover decline from 6.4% to 2% by 2018.</p> <p>Restore 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2020</p>	<p>Enhancement of forest carbon stocks</p>
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While many of Belize’s current policies and legislations (listed in Table 24 above) are in sync with “REDD+ laws and policies” and are being implemented within the country, the gaps identified in the analysis of these legislations are still being ironed out. The GOB through the leadership of the MSDCCDRM, have held a series of meetings with sister ministries and legal representatives to review the analysis and draft or revise new/existing legislation where needed. While the REDD+ project ensured that communication was a constant with the relevant ministries, the actual discussions and prioritization of the legislation review, drafting and revisions by the Attorney General Office and respective ministries did not actually start until late 2020 to 2021.

Belize is currently working on legislation under the Climate Change Framework Act, Market Base Approaches, Results Based Payment legislation etc. It is estimated that these will be completed within the next year and will be implemented directly after. In addition, there will be a need to draft other legislative amendments, this too the GOB will need financial assistance with.

Both the REDD+ Strategy and BSM produced under this action are only draft documents. The GOB is currently still leading talking in Carbon Rights and other documentation that will allow for further consultations for the development of the BSM. As mentioned, Carbon Rights goes beyond the REDD+ project as the GOB has also been doing extensive work in Blue Carbon. The GOB is currently drafting the documents that will guide the define of Carbon Rights, Benefit Sharing Mechanisms, REDD+ financing modalities and procedures for official approvals. The timeline for these to be completed is one year. Once these are in place, funding will be needed to re-evaluate and complete the REDD+ Strategy and the BSM.

As in any country, the review, revision and/or drafting of new legislation is a lengthy process and as a result none could have been implemented before the end of the project in March 2022. It is expected that phase 2 of this project will see more head way as it relates to this action.

Sub-Component 2c. REDD+ Implementation Framework

Indicator 20. Guidelines for implementation – Progressing well, further development required

What evidence is there that the implementation framework defines carbon rights, benefit sharing mechanisms, REDD+ financing modalities, procedures for official approvals (e.g., for pilots or REDD+ projects), and grievance mechanisms?

Belize has decided on using 7 of the Cancun REDD+ safeguards and has taken steps in how they will be implemented while ensuring compliance with the safeguards throughout the implementation of REDD+ activities. Belize has conducted a Social and Environmental Strategic Assessment (SESA) and designed a Safeguard Information System (SIS) under the umbrella of the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) as well as an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework, and Process Framework, in conformance with the Common Approach under the FCPF. The SIS is being hosted by an independent firm for the first year of its launch, after which it will be taken over by the GOB's Central Information Technology Office (CITO).

Belize's National REDD+ Strategy includes a number of national policy level interventions and does not at the moment contain detail about specific interventions to be implemented on the ground. However, the strategy includes policy lines that hint at future implementation of certain activities at local level. Since it is as yet unknown what kinds of activities will be implemented where and how, it is difficult to assess precisely what the impacts of such activities will be.

Therefore, what is described are the procedures that will be applied to site-specific interventions called "REDD+ subprojects" implemented under the National REDD+ Strategy.

A screening of the project concepts identified potential environmental and social risks, impacts and the design of related mitigation measures for the implementation of REDD+ in Belize. Areas the assessment covers are:

- Compliance with this ESMF, and other relevant third party environmental and social safeguard policies
- Potential areas the project can cause adverse environmental impacts
- Potentials where the project can cause adverse social impacts
- The adequacy and feasibility of the proposal mitigation measure and monitoring plans
- Capacity of Belize to implement any required E&S related measures during the preparation and implementation phases.

The establishment of REDD+ activities within the NCCO follows the accurate advice that, "in creating institutional arrangements to carry out the REDD+ long-term vision(s) and strategic plan(s), countries should build upon existing arrangements, such as those developed for greenhouse gas inventories (GHGI) that underpin National Communications. Building on and strengthening existing institutional arrangements in establishing a NMFS for REDD+ will reduce duplication of effort and costs, facilitate use of official data sources, avoid institutional conflicts and help maximize co-benefits and consistency in reporting" (GFOI 2016).

The current version of Belize's National REDD+ Strategy. It is a general strategy, which does not yet provide specific activities under each strategic line. Thus, the SESA and its analysis of risks was done based on possible lines of actions but not already determined activities.

Belize's National REDD+ Strategy includes a number of national policy level interventions and does not at the moment contain detail about specific interventions to be implemented on the ground. However, the strategy includes policy lines that hint at future implementation of certain activities at local level. Since it is as yet unknown what kinds of activities will be implemented where and how, it is difficult to assess precisely what the impacts of such activities will be.

In phase 2 of the REDD+, it is being recommended by the MSDCCDRM for there to be a review and if necessary, a revision of the draft strategy produced in phase one to see what is still valid and what requires tweaking. This would mean that this would need to commence within the 1st year of the second phase of the implementation phase of REDD+.

Sub-Component 2c. REDD+ Implementation Framework

Indicator 21. Benefit sharing mechanism – Further development required

What evidence is there to demonstrate benefit sharing mechanisms are transparent?

Stakeholder consultation was key to ensure that the various stakeholder experiences, contributions, and priorities were adequately reflected in the design of the REDD+ BSM, and to developing stewardship and trust across all entities.

The Draft REDD+ BSM (Development E. C., 2022) is based on the in-person consultation sessions conducted with Belize's Indigenous Peoples (Mopan and Q'eqchi' Maya of Southern Belize, Garifuna of the Stann Creek and Toledo districts, and the Yucatec Maya of the Corozal, Orange Walk and Cayo districts), and responses received from other stakeholder groups (conservation community, women's groups, community members, small farmers associations, local governments, long-term forest licensees and exporters, government, subject matter experts, and other) via an online survey administered.

Belize's REDD+ BSM aims to ensure that REDD+ benefits are shared in Belize in an effective, efficient, transparent and equitable manner, and in a way that fully reflects national and international requirements. The BSM was streamlined with primary and secondary data sources such as Belize's National REDD+ Strategy.

Belize's BSM adheres to the following design principles:

- Belize's REDD+ BSM will be in line with Good Governance principles.
- REDD+ Benefit incentives will build on the three principles of effectiveness, efficiency and equity.
- It adheres to the Cancun agreement safeguard principles.

- The design and implementation of the BSM should be supported by sound legal basis, supported by BELIZE National REDD+ Strategy and PAMs and share REDD+ benefits as rewards for past and future performance.

While Belize was able to produce a draft BSM, it is important to note that the document drafted needs more work. At the end of the project and consultancy, the REDD+ CU experienced setbacks as it related to the other consultations needed to create a more inclusive draft BSM. Key stakeholder groups were not or in some cases not adequately engaged under this activity. While the project tried an alternative approach to secure meaningful feedback in the form of administering an online survey to the groups mentioned above, it must be said that as communicated to the CU by both the consultant and some stakeholders, there were persons who did not complete the survey due to reasons such as missing the deadline, failure to fully understand the significance of the survey, as well as assuming an in-depth consultation would follow. These consultations are essential for Belize to have a strategy implementation of its BSM.

Belize will need to ensure a BSM mechanism is in place for it to continue its REDD+ journey. This means that a re-evaluation of the current draft BSM will need to take place in phase 2 as well. Consultation will be key across all sectors. Even though the current draft BSM has extensive feedback from the indigenous stakeholders, they will need to be re-engaged for the re-evaluation and compilation and so financial assistance will be needed for the consultancy and for the outreach and disclosure sessions. This work will need to start within the 1st year of the second phase.

Sub-Component 2c. REDD+ Implementation Framework

Indicator 22. National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities – Further development required

Is a national geo-referenced REDD+ information system or registry operational, comprehensive of all relevant information (e.g., information on the location, ownership, carbon accounting and financial flows for sub-national and national REDD+ programs and projects), and does it ensure public access to REDD+ information?

There is no national geo-referenced REDD+ information system or registry and system monitoring REDD+ information activities. Engagements under the UNFCCC and any payments for results-based payments in the future will require a National Registry. Currently Belize is working on its Carbon Rights Legislation which goes beyond REDD+ and which will impact Belize's carbon activities in both terrestrial and marine conservation.

Through the REDD+ Readiness Project, collaboration with the MNR's Lands Information Unit, were carried out to develop a Land Tenure Assessment that will serve as the baseline for land tenure within the country. The focus of the study was the Toledo District as the most southern

part of the country boosts the most issues as it relates to land tenure due to the Maya Land Rights issue which is before the ICJ¹⁴.

The resources and efforts needed to properly map this area was the highest. The LD had previously started the mapping of the other parts of Belize which were easiest as the type of land ownership was National, Private and lease; communal land rights is only specific to the Toledo District.

There is a need to align this action with the Results Based Payment (RBP) legislation being drafted. This should be implemented within the next year. However, assistance will be needed to outfit the agency with a proper computer/data system, human resources, additional equipment needed and trainings to build capacity.

Sub-Component 2d. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) in the Formulation of the REDD+ Strategy

This part of the Assessment Framework focuses on the main findings and results of SESA, including the stand-alone ESMF.

Sub-Component 2d. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) in the Formulation of the REDD+ Strategy

Indicator 23. Analysis of social and environmental safeguard issues – Significant Progress

What evidence is there that applicable social and environmental safeguard issues relevant to the country context have been fully identified/analysed via relevant studies or diagnostics and in consultation processes?

The geographic scope of Belize's SESA process was nation-wide, with specific emphasis on those districts that have the largest forest cover and/or are most affected by forest cover changes, including mangroves. The focus on the forest sector also influences the social scope of the SESA, where stakeholders are identified based on their interest in and power over decisions regarding the use of forest land and resources.

Belize's SESA process had the following objectives:

- A. To provide a complete and concise picture of the SESA methodology applied, including a transparent recount of all participatory activities undertaken to ensure that the voices of Belize's REDD+ stakeholders are heard and considered in Belize's preparation for REDD+;

¹⁴ [Toledo Land Tenure Report December 2021_Update1.pdf](#)

- B. To provide a baseline understanding for the REDD+ and safeguards relevant geographic and socio-economic characteristics of Belize;
- C. To provide an overview of socio-economic, political/institutional and legal obstacles to REDD+ implementation, as well as an outlook towards ways to address them, to the extent possible;
- D. To present the identified environmental and social risks and benefits of REDD+ implementation, together with an outlook towards ways to address/further promote them, either through further adjustments to the draft National REDD+ Strategy or through the ESMF.

In Belize's SESA process, the World Bank Operational Policies as well as additional guidance documents were considered throughout. The main tool through which this is visible is the so-called "OP: risks identification matrix", which reflects the requirements of the operational policies. It was used to identify risks and ensure that all necessary requirements to deal with certain risks are incorporated in the ESMF.¹⁵ The ESMF included an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) identifying and addressing potentially adverse impacts on IPs to ensure culturally appropriate consultation and benefits for IPs and a Process Framework to address impacts related to the restriction of access to natural resources. (Asesoramiento Ambiental Estrategico, 2021)

A SESA process not only consisted of analytical and participatory elements, it also had an iterative nature. The figure 7 displays the analytical steps, participatory steps, inputs, tools and products of Belize's SESA process for REDD+.

The potential synergies between the SESA, ESMF and SIS has been captured: Since the SESA and ESMF were conducted in alignment with World Bank Policies, while the SIS followed the structure of the Cancun Safeguards, an equivalence analysis of the two safeguards standards was conducted at the beginning of the SESA and the linkages between the two systems were made throughout the analyses and outputs to allow for the SIS to be informed directly by the SESA and ESMF.

¹⁵ The World Bank applies a set of eleven Environmental and Social Policies, also referred to as the "Safeguard Policies" and "Operational Policies" (OP), with the aim to ensure that the environment as well as people are protected from possible adverse impacts of project implementation. Nine out of the eleven OPs were considered potentially relevant in the context of REDD+ readiness and implementation in Belize. The only two OPs that were not considered applicable are OP 4.03 Performance Standards for Private Sector Activities and OP 4.37 Safety of Dams.

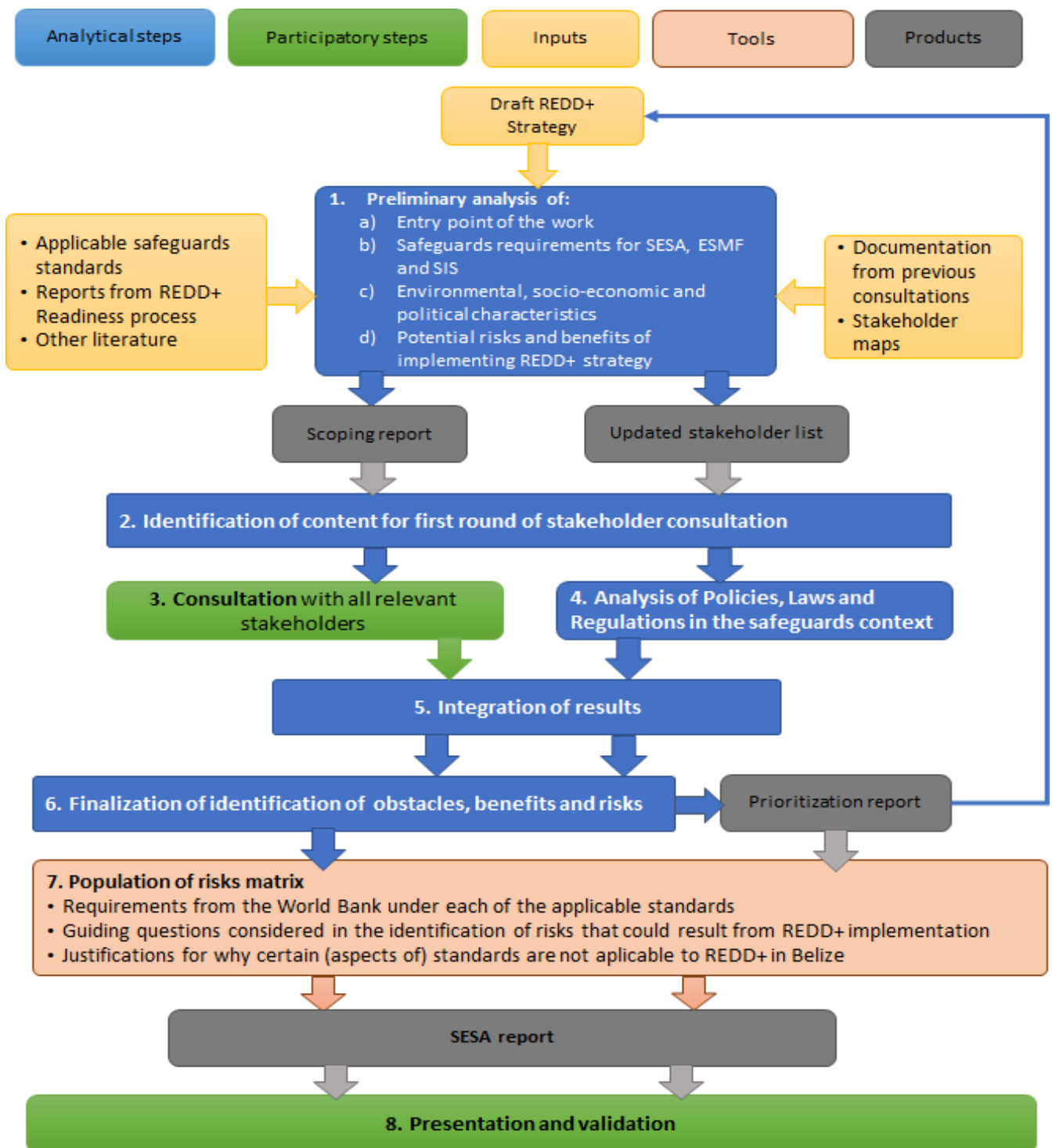


Figure 6 Analytical steps, participatory steps, inputs, tools and products of Belize’s SESA process for REDD+. Source: own elaboration.

The Strategic Social and Environmental Assessment (SESA) process in Belize produced four deliverables:

1. A Scoping Report
2. A Prioritization Report
3. A SESA Report
4. The ESMF

The first step the SESA process was to investigate and have a clear understanding of a country's environmental and socio-economic characteristics for REDD+ implementation, where Belize stands in relation to REDD+ preparation and identify all relevant REDD+ stakeholders. For this, a thorough revision of available secondary sources was done which resulted in the Scoping Report and a list of stakeholders.

Key REDD+ related documents reviewed to understand Belize's SESA process were:

- REDD+ Communications Strategy (R+ CU)
- Mapping and Stakeholder Assessment (MSA)
- REDD Readiness Preparation Project Belize MTE Report
- REDD+ Draft Stakeholder Engagement Protocol (R+ CU 2019c)
- National SESA Workshop Report (Tzec 2019)
- Draft REDD+ Strategy (R+ CU 2019e)

Consultation was an important element of a SESA and for this the project had to identify its key stakeholder. A Stakeholder analysis was conducted, and list was drafted. Once the final list of relevant stakeholders for the REDD+ process was updated and defined, a series of workshops were held for the development of the SESA for the REDD+ Programme in Belize.

To conduct such consultations, the "Stakeholder Engagement Protocol" (R+CU 2019b) prepared and shared by the R+CU, served as the guideline to secure the adequate participation of the stakeholders. Procedures and requirements established in this protocol were followed in all engagement activities. It provided guiding principles and specific approaches to be followed. This document is flexible, and accommodates the overarching framework for free, prior and informed Consent (FPIC) when engaging with forest-dependent communities, including IPs.

All consultations with stakeholder groups other than those with IPs were conducted through a virtual meeting platform (Zoom). The platforms have also facilitated the engagement of stakeholders who would not otherwise participate in decision-making spaces because of distance and related transaction costs.

All the consultations with IPs were conducted in-person. The consultant team (AAE-CADS) was guided by the "Stakeholder Engagement Protocol" (R+CU 2019b), in addition to documentation sent by BENIC to the R+CU to plan for the IP workshops.

Participants of the workshop included a vast array of forest users. These included: Indigenous Peoples, Community Based Conservation Organizations, Conservation NGOs, Department of Rural Development, Long-Term Forest Licensees, Community-Based Forest Groups, Private landowners, Forestry Department, Sugar Industry, Agriculture Sector, and Protected Areas Co-

managers, two Toledo Community-Based Forest Groups – Santa Teresa and Conejo Creek. Invited but absent from the workshop were: Little Belize Community, the University of Belize and Pine Lumber Company Ltd. See figure below for details on participants.

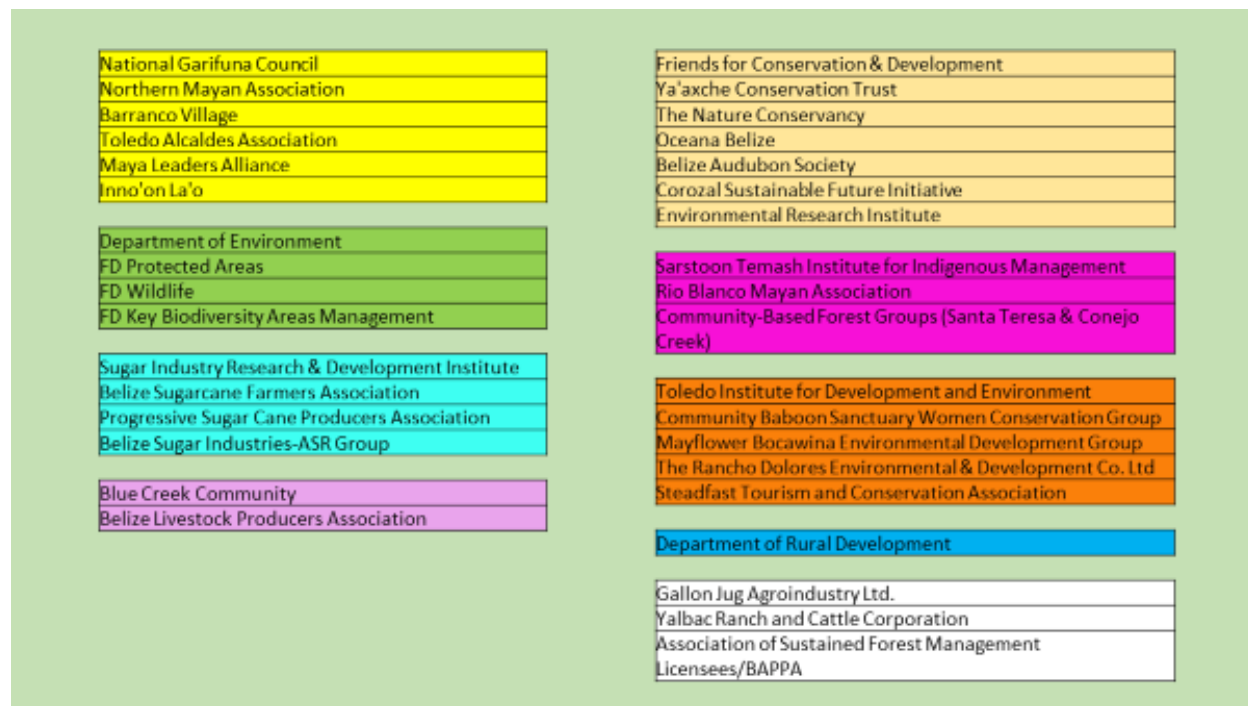


Figure 7 participants of SESA Consultations.

In June 2019, the REDD+ Coordinating Unit launching a series of National Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) Workshops which started with the forest sector and forest-dependent communities, for the construction of SESA for the REDD+ Programme in Belize. At this workshop, a wide array of forest stakeholders was present. They were updated on the REDD+ Programme, planned activities and the purpose of undertaking a SESA process.

The specific objectives were to:

- Initiate a preliminary dialogue with key stakeholders/parties to discuss ideas on the social and environmental issues that must be considered for the SESA process.
- Initiate a transparent, rights-based dialogue with forest stakeholders, so that they may begin to provide their insights on the design and implementation of the SESA process for REDD+ in Belize.
- Engage key stakeholders in the identification of priority environmental and social issues to consider for REDD+ in Belize.

The workshops consisted of a series of presentations updating stakeholders on the status of REDD+ in Belize, a presentation updating stakeholders on the 2018 Collect Earth study on the drivers of deforestation & forest degradation in Belize; followed by a presentation on the proposal of the Government of Belize to be considered and consulted for a future REDD+ Strategy for Belize.

In addition, the World Bank Social Development Specialist, presented on REDD+ and the World Bank’s Safeguards Policies applicable to REDD+ to ensure that environmental and social risks are identified, avoided, and mitigated in consultation with project affected people, including forest owner, forest users, forest-dependent communities and Indigenous Peoples. The link was explained on how the safeguards were related to both the SESA and GRM mechanisms for REDD+.

Participants of the workshop were grouped according to their relationship/use of the forest/ forest sector they belong to. They were provided with 5 guiding questions for the brainstorming session; so first inputs were provided for considerations on critical social and environmental issues on the SESA for Belize.

The guiding questions were as follows:

1. What are the potential positive impacts of REDD+ on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?
2. What are the potential negative impacts of REDD+ on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?
3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?
4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?
5. Give 3 recommendations that the SESA process should include in Belize.

Below are the results of the discussions held by each working group,: SESA Workshop Report¹⁶.

Group 1: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES – Maya Yucatec, Mopan, Q’eqchi’ and Garifuna Peoples.

Questions	Participant’s responses
1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reinforce rights as indigenous peoples ● Continued protection of lands ● Financial benefits (potential) ● Healthier lives

¹⁶ [SESA Workshop Report- FINAL.pdf](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural retention- keep practices and traditions alive ● Increase the level of autonomy as indigenous peoples ● Forward our protected interests to preserve nature and save mother earth. ● Collective voices will be heard (as IPs)
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclusion of and lack of respect for IPs ● Lack of inclusion of traditional knowledge ● Displacement by REDD+ activities ● Increase in land disputes ● Restriction of use of, enjoyment and access to land by REDD+ activities ● Exclusion of vulnerable IPs from financial benefits ● Further impoverishment ● Exploitation of IPs by REDD+ activities ● Failure to understand and address the unique realities of the Mopan, Yucatec and Kekchi Maya and Garifuna peoples. Competing interests over carbon rights and forest resources.
<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Endangerment and extinction of species in the national parks ● Stability of watershed and water supply at risk ● Water pollution and contamination ● Impact on marine ecosystems – deforestation and land degradation do not only affect forest; but also affects marine ecosystems. However, the REDD+ Program does not cover marine ecosystems, this is a disadvantage for coastal Garifuna communities. ● Encroachment and illegal logging on lands of indigenous peoples ● Illegal mining on indigenous lands ● IPs’ reality is not only social ● Air pollution from slash and burn ● Inadequate garbage disposal leads to land and air pollution ● The commodification of forest resources by REDD+ without the free, prior and informed consent of IPs.
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unauthorized squatting on IPs lands ● Illegal land sale (both private and government) ● Lack of respect for the rights and traditions of IPs, especially those related to forest use.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other actors/third parties undermining traditional governance structures of IPs (no respect for Alcaldes) • Lack of transparency, accountability and good governance • High political interference • Disregard of the right to free, prior and informed consent of IPs.
<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the SESA process respects the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples throughout the whole REDD+ process. This should also apply to the GRM, etc. • The current situation/rights of IPs and IPs land tenure must be respected at all times. • IPs must be included in the benefit-sharing mechanism discussion and negotiations. • The IPs rights recognized and safeguarded in the UNDRIP, CANCUN AGREEMENT (COP16), WB SAFEGUARDS FOR IPs, etc. must always be respected during the SESA Process.

GROUP 2. FORESTRY DEPARTMENT

Questions	Participant’s responses
<p>1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase forest conservation in Belize • Improve management practices • Improve working relationship with management entities, communities, other forest stakeholders, etc. • Improvement of living conditions. • Include indigenous peoples in forest related activities • Improve nurseries and replanting activities across Belize • Increase forest connectivity and wildlife corridor
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits the expansion of agriculture • Limits the supply of food and other agricultural products • Potential restriction of people to access forest resources (e.g. need for reduction of Petty permit, affecting permit holders)

<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land degradation mitigation policy ● loss of biodiversity ● water pollution
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth and educators are not included ● Incentives to reduce deforestation and degradation
<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● REDD+ needs to form part of legislation ● Should include biodiversity in the assessment process

GROUP 3. CONSERVATION NGOs – Oceana, YCT, BAS, ERI, CSFI.

<p>Questions</p>	<p>Participant’s responses</p>
<p>1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase resources for management ● Increase job creation/local employment ● Opportunity to build capacity locally (institutional and community) ● Recognition of the importance of protected areas and private forests ● The incentive to resolve the land use/tenure/rights issues. ● Inclusion of multiple sectors for improved coordination of efforts and integrated work for the environment ● The incentive to retain forest cover – private/NGO
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The unclear situation on carbon rights ● The unclear situation on benefit sharing ● Centralized decision making – authorities have the sole power/government to make sole decision on critical issues such as carbon rights and benefit sharing. ● Creation of false expectations for stakeholders ● Adding complexity to the land rights issues in Belize, especially as it relates to IPs ● Over-reliance on payment only for carbon credits with limited consideration to other environmental services of forests ● Fluctuation and uncertainty of carbon markets

<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High risks to Natural disasters ● Environmental degradation of protected areas from illegal incursion and other activities ● Non-timber value of forests ● Unsustainable agricultural practices in and around protected areas
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transboundary incursions ● Inequality in the distribution of lands ● Lack of implementation of a robust land tenure and land use policy ● Limited opportunities for alternative livelihoods and income generation ● Traditional use of non-timber forest products
<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need for the harmonization of regulations and policies that govern forest management and land use ● Strengthening/restructuring of institutional arrangements e.g. Regulatory agencies ● Establish clear systems of equitable and transparent benefit sharing

GROUP 4: COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS- Community Baboon Sanctuary, Mayflower, Steadfast, TIDE, Rancho Dolores.

<p>Questions</p>	<p>Participant’s responses</p>
<p>1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diversification of forest produce ● Build resilient communities ● Forest preservation ● Reduction of carbon emissions
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limit traditional methods and practices of forest uses.
<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revision of forest legislation ● Revision of land use policy ● Revision of national wildlife act, fire management policy and strategy
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of inclusion of youths in the whole REDD+ and SESA planning process

<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SESA process should include lending agencies/local banks since they influence deforestation ● SESA process should revise current land use and forest legislation ● Youth must be included in the process ● Our forest is our future, but who will enjoy if we don't involve our youths?
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GROUP 5: RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Questions	Participant's responses
<p>1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase educational awareness to rural communities on issues of REDD+ - including village councils, water boards, Alcaldes, women's groups, youth groups, the elderly and farmers ● opportunity for proper community planning, ● opportunity to develop proper garbage disposal plans ● opportunity to address issues of management of drinking water sources and improve water quality ● opportunity to enforce village bylaws, especially those related to forest use
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Potential political interference in issues of community forest use ● Altering of cultural practices regarding forest use ● Limiting the use of forest resources for economic benefits
<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overlooking issues of water quality/control/sustainability ● Overlooking critical issues of public health ● Promote/advocate for sound infrastructure development/ green parks and playgrounds/ greener public and residential areas ● Protect existing green areas in communities (existing trees) ● Encourage and expand green landscaping in communities
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integration of women and youth in community decision-making processes. ● Empowerment of women and youth to be active in the REDD+ Programme and SESA Process.

<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revise and modernize land and forest legislations of Belize ● Establish a process of continued community consultation for the SESA process and REDD+ in Belize ● Monitor and evaluate community developments as pertains to REDD+ in Belize
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GROUP 6: SUGAR INDUSTRY AND LIVESTOCK SECTOR – SIRD, BSI-ASR, BSFA, Progressive, BLPA, Blue Creek Community (northern region)

Questions	Participant’s responses
<p>1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity for land use planning ● Opportunity to improve productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness of the agricultural sector ● Opportunity for policy implementation of strategic and sustainable farming systems ● Reforestation of marginal lands ● Redefining and incorporating efficient and sustainable farming methodologies along with technology ● Opportunity for enforcing legislation such as fire permits, thus reducing the expansion of fires across parcels ● Opportunity to reduce political corruption
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction of the availability of land for sugar plantation ● Development of a sense of marginalization among farmers and change in cultural practices ● Uncertainty about the land tenure system in Belize ● The high cost of implementation of REDD+ activities
<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extreme weather events ● Pest and disease outburst ● Impacts on production and productivity
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corruption and political influence that can arise during REDD+ Implementation phase ● Increase in cost of production and opportunity cost ● Social and gender equality ● Inclusion of women and youth ● Conflict of interest

<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define protocol on reforestation and its extent ● Redefine land use policy ● Implementation and defining land clearance policies, including monitoring, verification, and data availability
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GROUP 7: COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT GROUPS – SATIIM, Rio Blanco Mayan

Association, Toledo District Community-Based Forest Groups - Santa Teresa Village and Conejo Creek Village.

Questions	Participant’s responses
<p>1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity for improved sustainable harvesting of forest resources. ● Opportunity to receive assistance to manage forested area (inventory, boundary) ● Opportunity for assistance for alternative livelihoods (from <i>wamil</i> to forest) ● Opportunity to reforest degraded areas
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Distribution of benefits can become a contentious issue in the community ● ownership of land and compensation for forest and forest products must be unclear – land titles for communities need to be attained
<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic activities (rice, etc.) change thus affecting forest cover ● soil and forest type and economic activities go hand in hand and affect forest (preference to raise cattle in certain areas/soil types/forests)
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is the need for wider community involvement and there need to be clear criteria used to identify them. ● migration from communities to urban areas ●
<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to understand the economic activities in the villages and their relationship with the forest ● Tailor strategic options for communities, based on their relationship to their lands and forests

GROUP 8: PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

Questions	Participant's responses
<p>1. What can the positive impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognition of the importance of private forest owners as a sustainable management group at a national level ● Payment for environmental services provided by sustainable forest management of private forest; i.e. tax incentives/subsidies/ reduce import duties on equipment and supplies, etc. ● Increase real estate value of forest under REDD+ - green accounting for carbon offset, etc. ● Wildlife conservation and habitat protection ● Increase biological corridor
<p>2. What can the negative impacts of REDD+ be on your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sustainable forest management is more costly than non-management (methodology, infrastructure/ accountability/ certification/ - FSC- SFMP- LTFL, Bonds, etc.) ● High opportunity cost – converting forest land to agriculture or other use is a more revenue--producing venture in a short time, rather than conserving forest cover without compensation.
<p>3. What are environmental issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a lack of land-use planning strategy both at national and district levels based on land use potential/ social analysis/climate/ topography and biodiversity ● Neighbouring properties are not considered – watershed management, land use, river buffers/ erosion, waste management out of control ● Government mandates policies and enforcement – “it is weak at this time.”
<p>4. What are social issues that affect your livelihood/interest/rights/mandate that are missing from the proposed SESA process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resource use conflicts may arise ● Education awareness sensitization needed ● Sustainable usage – appreciate natural resources
<p>5. What are the three main recommendations that the SESA process must take into consideration for REDD+ in Belize?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create local working groups for the design and implementation of SESA ● Decentralize the process as much as possible ● Do not mix stakeholders

CRITICAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY ALL SECTORS:

Some of the most common issues that the SESA process had to include, as identified by every group were:

- SESA process must follow a rights-based approach and must be transparent, participatory, democratic, and decentralized. It must be developed through a continued consultation process with all relevant stakeholders.
- Land tenure rights must be cleared and respected throughout the SESA process.
- There should be a transparent and fair benefit-sharing mechanism.
- Regulations and policies pertaining to land use, forest use, fire, land clearing, etc. must be revised, improved, harmonized, implemented, and enforced.
- Considerations must be made for non-carbon benefits of forests (e.g. biodiversity, watershed, non-timber forest use, cultural benefits) in the design of the REDD+ Strategy for Belize.
- There is a greater need to integrate women and youth in community decision-making processes and all processes regarding REDD+ and SESA in Belize.
- Create local working groups for the design and implementation of SESA.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW UP PROCESS: three main recommendations were identified for the follow-up SESA process. These are:

1. It is recommended that a continued, transparent, decentralized, democratic, and highly participatory consultation process be established for the development of the SESA report – stakeholders should not be limited to only sporadic consultations.
2. It is recommended that stakeholders be consulted in their regions, under their own context, and through local working groups and not be mixed up. Each stakeholder relates differently to the forest and forest resources; therefore, they must be consulted in their own context and with sufficient time.
3. It is recommended that more time be allocated to the consultation process, so as to receive meaningful and useful feedback from all stakeholders.

Sub-Component 2d. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) in the Formulation of the REDD+ Strategy

Indicator 24. REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts – Significant Progress

How were SESA results and the identification of social and environmental impacts (both positive and negative) used for prioritising and designing REDD+ strategy options?

The results of the SESA process are encouraging in that it can be shown that many of the identified obstacles are to some extent already addressed by the draft version of Belize’s National REDD+ Strategy.

Some of these risks will only become clearer or get confirmed once REDD+ implementation gets broken down into local-level REDD+ implementing (sub-) projects. Other risks, however, can be addressed at national level and from the very start of REDD+ implementation, and ways to do so then need to be mainstreamed throughout every level of REDD+ implementation, such as the risks of exacerbating the gender gap and youth’s exclusion.

The instrument by which risks get avoided, or where this is impossible, minimized and managed throughout REDD+ implementation, is the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), as well as the Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) and the Process Framework (PF). The ESMF includes mitigation measures to address the risks identified in the SESA Process but also procedures describing what needs to be done to screen and manage social and environmental risks as and when REDD+ implementation starts through REDD+ (sub-) projects on the ground. Additional instruments to manage risks and impacts during REDD+ implementation that are crucial elements of the ESMF are the Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism and a description of required monitoring to ensure adequate implementation of all necessary measures and procedures and allow for adaptive management in REDD+ implementation.

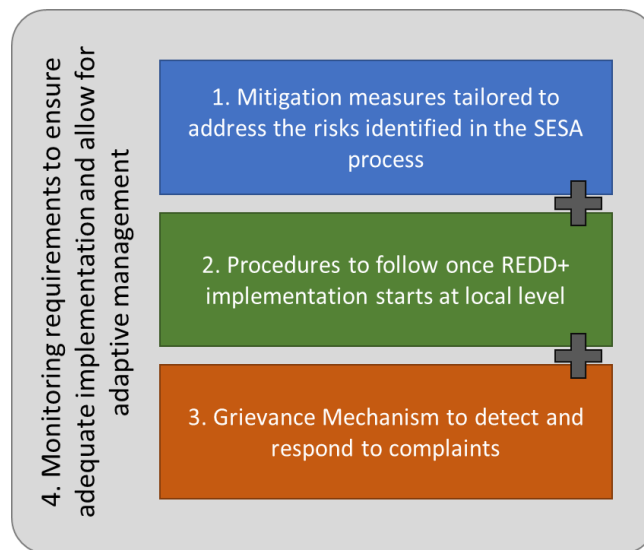


Figure 8 Main elements of the ESMF to avoid, or where this is impossible, minimize and manage REDD+ risks.

Source: Own Elaboration

The SESA and its analysis were done based on possible lines of actions but not already determined activities. The risks were extracted from a detailed matrix where all requirements from WB OP were considered. Here, all risks are presented under each OP, with a description of the risks and its potential impacts, if they are in any way addressed in the Strategy or in the PLR of Belize and how it will be further strengthened in future iterations of the Strategy and/or in the ESMF through risk mitigation measures. This analysis was based on all the above information, consultations results (Prioritization Report) and further expert knowledge in different fields such as forestry, IPs, gender or legal issues (PLR analysis). Thus, the final list differs from those in the Prioritization Report.

REDD+ was developed to serve as a mechanism to support the financing of activities for forest conservation, reforestation and reduce deforestation. These result-based incentives, aside from bringing direct benefits to forest health and quality, bring direct benefits for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Since the Cancún Agreements at the COP 16 in 2010, the climate change agenda has been promoting co-benefits for the environment in general and for the communities benefiting from REDD+ activities, both short and long term.

The benefits during consultations were divided into two main categories: environmental and social benefits. As the line between environmental and social benefits can sometimes be blurry, since many environmental benefits have the ultimate purpose to benefit people as well, the benefits presented for the SESA report after expert review and incorporating other benefits, these were organized into new categories:

1. Improved Forest Governance
2. Protection/Conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity.
3. Community Benefits and
4. Economic benefits

Under each category, there are subcategories of benefits. The aim was to clarify all the benefits that could be derived from REDD+ implementation if properly designed and implemented.

Yet even with these new categories it should be clear that there is never a definite limit between benefits, as it is a feedback process, where benefits in one category, positively feed into others. Also, the contrary is true, when one benefit is not achieved or a risk is triggered, this negatively trickles down to communities and the environment, disrupting other benefits.

Sub-Component 2d. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) in the Formulation of the REDD+ Strategy

Indicator 25. Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) – Significant Progress

What evidence is there that the ESMF is in place and managing environmental and social risks / potential impacts related to REDD+ activities?

The ESMF proposes measures to reduce, mitigate, and/or offset potential adverse environmental and social impacts and, where possible, enhance positive impacts and opportunities of future REDD+ policies, regulations, activities, and projects.

The mitigation measures have been identified based on all available information about the risks, their impacts, how existing PLRs and the National REDD+ Strategy address them and the applicable social and environmental safeguards requirements of the World Bank. Some of these mitigation measures at the same time address certain obstacles. Within the ESMF, each obstacle, benefit and risk are addressed and an overview of the extent to which the current draft version of the National REDD+ Strategy addresses the obstacles and where further potential lies in the Strategy or ESMF is provided. However, there are certain issues that are National or Regional contextual realities beyond the scope of what a National REDD+ Strategy or an ESMF can address. In addition, due to the importance of the risks identified under OP 4.10 Indigenous Peoples and OP 4.12 Involuntary Resettlement, an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) and a Process Framework (PF) have been developed as part of the ESMF. Gender considerations have also been mainstreamed throughout all mitigation measures.

Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF): The combination of weak legal security, very limited engagement in decision-making and direct dependence on the forest and its resources makes Belize's Indigenous Peoples particularly vulnerable to decisions regarding the forest, such as the development of new or updating of existing legal instruments. The ESMF provides a comprehensive approach to avoiding, and where this is impossible, minimizing and managing REDD+ risks to the rights of IPs, their livelihoods, traditions and culture. The tailored Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework can be regarded as a summary of Belize's approach to addressing risks to the country's IPs in REDD+ implementation. The topic of FPIC was mainstreamed throughout the elements of the ESMF IPPF. The ESMF and IPPF were also developed through consultations that adhere to FPIC requirements. Also, the National REDD+ strategy will need to be further refined and improved to support, facilitate and reward contributions from IPs to advancing the goals of REDD+.

Process Framework: Falling under WB OP 4.12 is the risk of **Economic Displacement** (. Economic displacement happens when people cannot continue (all of) those activities needed to maintain their livelihoods compared to the situation prior to implementation of a project or program. Where new legislation is developed for access and use of the forest and its resources or existing legislation gets much stricter enforced, e.g., in the context of protected areas, this may mean that local community members, very likely including IPs in the case of Belize, are affected. The ESMF provides a comprehensive approach to avoiding, and where this is impossible, minimizing and managing the risk of economic displacement. The tailored **Process Framework** can be regarded as a summary of Belize's approach to addressing the risk of economic displacement in REDD+ implementation. The topic of FPIC will also play a role in the PF with respect to economic

displacement of IPs. In turn, also, the National REDD+ strategy will need to be further strengthened to support and facilitate the economic and sustainable development of communities.

A number of the risks identified through the SESA process can be addressed by ensuring meaningful and culturally appropriate **stakeholder engagement** throughout REDD+ implementation. The ESMF also include a dedicated section on stakeholder engagement to summarize the engagement that has happened to date and provides an outlook towards the different levels of engagement expected during REDD+ implementation.

Component 3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level

Sub-Component 3. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level

Recent UNFCCC decisions request countries to develop a REL/RL as a benchmark for assessing performance in implementing REDD+ activities at a national level, with subnational approaches as interim measures. The REL/RL should be established transparently taking into account historical data and can be adjusted for national circumstances as appropriate.

Sub-Component 3. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level

Indicator 26. Demonstration of methodology – Significant Progress

Is the preliminary sub-national or national forest REL or RL presented (as part of the R-Package) using a clearly documented methodology, based on a stepwise approach, as appropriate? Are plans for additional steps and data needs provided, and is the relationship between the sub-national and the evolving national reference level demonstrated (as appropriate)?

To respond to the set of international reporting requirements inscribed in the UNFCCC and in the Paris Agreement, Belize fully committed to establish a coherent, overarching governance structure to coordinate climate change management initiatives at the national level. Belize submitted its first FREL in 2020 and have continued work on updating of data in preparation for their next submission.

The process started with review of previous emission estimation methods and estimates, identification and formation of the teams, allocation of tasks, technical training, data collection, data analysis, QA/QC procedures, and finalized with a compilation of the FREL. The process was completed by external independent review and structuration of an improvement plan.

The Belize GHG inventory was conducted from a series of steps and using a range of data from diverse sources. The estimation of the emissions and removals used a combination of (a) country-specific methods and data, (b) IPCC methodologies, and (c) emission factors (EFs). The methods were consistent with the 2006 IPCC guidelines for national greenhouse gas inventories and are to the extent possible, in line with international practice. IPCC methodology tiers 1, 2 and 3 were applied.

Table 25 shows the schedule of inventory tasks among agencies in Belize.

Schedule of inventory tasks	Responsible
Identification and formation of the teams	National Climate Change Office (NCCO) & Forest Department (FD)
Allocation of tasks	National Climate Change Office (NCCO) & Forest Department (FD)
Technical training	CfRN, GHG Institute, FAO.
Data collection	Forest Department, NCCO, R+CU
QC/QA procedures	QC: NCCO, Forest Department, R+CU / QA: CfRN
Data analysis	NCCO, Forest Department, R+CU, CfRN
Compilation of the GHG AFOLU inventory	NCCO, Forest Department, R+CU, CfRN
QC/QA procedures	QC: NCCO, Forest Department, R+CU / QA: CfRN
Independent review	CfRN Independent Panel of review
Improvement plan	NCCO, Forest Department

The Forest Department identified all the national experts and/or institutions where the data would be sourced. All data are documented and stored as per archiving and documentation procedures, with the main custodian being the Forest Department in its database for archiving and retrieval.

The archives database contains; (a) all inputs datasets and datasheets; (b) country-specific excel calculation tool, including Forest related-GHG emission and removals estimates from 2000-2017, (c) manuals and protocols, (f) literature reviewed, (g) completed QA/QC templates and protocols, and (h) all reports and documentation. Belize followed 2006 IPCC guidelines structure for the AFOLU sector, including the six main land uses proposed: Forestlands, Cropland, Grassland, Wetlands, Settlement and other lands (Level 1). Additional subdivisions were defined following national circumstances, including climate, soil and disturbance history in line with IPCC guidance (Levels 2 and 3).

As outlined in the Belize 2001-2015 FREL Report¹⁷, the following set of gaps and challenges on institutional arrangements and legislation in view of REDD+ implementation have been identified:

1. Institutional arrangements

- Improve effective and full coordination among institutions involved in REDD+ implementation

The analysis of the institutional arrangements existing in Belize to manage environmental protection and climate change issues indicated that public sector institutions mainly operate based on individual institutional mandates derived from specific legislation and policies. As Belize's NDC indicates, the implementation of climate change policies and measures require a high level of cross-ministerial coordination and collaboration. REDD+ is a clear example of a matter that is covering several sectors and institutions and MSDCCDRM would require a higher degree of collaboration. However, the existing institutional setting does not ensure full coordination and cooperation among agencies. Furthermore, individual government departments, such as the Forest and Fisheries Departments bear multifaceted mandates of ecosystems management, sustainable resource use, monitoring and enforcement. The dualistic role of public service agencies must be also addressed in order to facilitate a focused and targeted approach to climate change, biodiversity conservation, and environmental management. This needs to be addressed before the second phase of REDD+ or within the first year of the action.

2. Capacity building

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation of national activities

Adequate monitoring and evaluation systems are generally lacking when it comes to policies and strategies achieved under ministerial and departmental mandates. Another challenge is for those policies and strategies that have monitoring and evaluation plans in place but still lacking adequate follow-up or technical capacity within the department and ministries to adequately monitor and evaluate effectiveness. One of the major constraints is the limited staff and the lack of technical capacities in ministries and governmental agencies. The lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation results in the failure to mainstream climate change considerations within national economic and development priorities. The building of capacity needs to commence as soon as possible and within the first year of phase 2 and continue throughout the duration of the implementation phase.

¹⁷ [Belize FREL Report \(2001-2015\). 2020.01.13.pdf](#)

- Institutionalizing data exchanges and archiving

Coordination among data providers needs to be strengthened to ensure that collection and reporting of data are done on a regular basis to support reporting responsibilities under the UNFCCC (National Communication and Biennial Update Report) and the Paris Agreement transparency framework (Paris Agreement) and institutional needs. Opportunities should be identified to link data collection needs with other data collection programs such as REDD+ initiatives. Capacity building and training will be an on-going effort at the institutional and technical level. Institutionalizing linkages between GHG inventory estimation with broader Climate Change research is very much needed.

Much effort is being put into searching archives of data stored by other organizations and digitizing those historical paper records. The addition of these records will increase both the spatial and temporal coverage of data under the NFMS stewardship. To enhance the completion of this process further support is needed. Staff members of the NFMS who have the capacity to undertake research studies are used to fulfill the operational demands of the Department such as maintaining operational forecasting and climate services. In order to affect significantly larger and more active participation in research, the NFMS should acquire a greater cadre of appropriately qualified individuals. Therefore, the Belize Forest Department, who is responsible for the measuring of AD, and EFs for the GHGI in the FOLU sector will continue to build capacity and improve their resources for the sustainability of this process. Currently the NCCO in collaboration with the FD lead the data collection from the sister departments/ministries, however continuous training is needed to ensure these agencies are properly trained in the collection of the data at the source level. While there was training for the different agencies, many still require follow up training to full grasp the methodologies, this needs to be done within the first year of the action.

- Partnerships

Formalize the collaboration between FAO and MSDCCDRM to include CE/OF activities to enhance the MRV and NFMS of the BFD is needed. This needs to be done within the first 6 month of the action.

Belize used a landscape approach using the gains/losses equation from IPCC. Since the Belize FRLs were not done per each REDD+ activity, a breakdown cannot be shown for the IPCC equations used to estimate emission.

For Belize to calculate a FRL for each of the 5 REDD+ Activities, it is recommended for the issuing of a 1-year consultancy to a local firm to provide science and technical support for emission factor development, activity data development and spatial stratification as per IPCC 2019 guidelines to move Belize to full Tier 2/3 FRL. This should be done within the first year of the action.

In addition to this, funding for personnel as well as trainings to build capacity in carbon accounting and MRVS is needed. These are recommended to commence within the 1st 15 months of the second phase.

Table 26 shows the linkages between the Belize REDD+ Strategy, the FREL/FRL and the NFSM.

	Belize REDD+ Strategy	Belize FREL/FRL	Belize NFSM
Coordination, Institutional arrangements, Policy development and revision	Pillar 1: Strengthen Institutional Coordination, Legal and Policy Framework and Enforcement	Improve effective and full coordination among institutions involved in REDD+ implementation	Collaborations between GOB (FD), NGOs and sister departments build on the established plots. Establishing of Destructive Sample plots to guide policies.
Community Engagements, capacity building	Pillar 2: Increased and meaningful community engagement and empowerment		the Forest Department with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), built capacities to process satellite imagery and other digital technology and to combine these with the use of GIS.

Sustainable Forest Management	Pillar 3: Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation	Strengthening monitoring and evaluation of national activities	National Forest Inventory based on a series of plots, the first of which were established in the 1990s
	Pillar 4: Forest Information, Monitoring	Institutionalizing data exchanges and archiving	Generation of wall-to-wall land cover/land use maps using open source satellite imagery, as a Quality Assurance Activity for Activity Data is being developed.

Sub-Component 3. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level

Indicator 27. Use of historical data and adjusted for national circumstances – Significant Progress

How does the establishment of the REL/RL take into account historical data, and if adjusted for national circumstance, what is the rationale and supportive data that demonstrate that proposed adjustments are credible and defensible?

Is sufficient data and documentation provided in a transparent fashion to allow for the reconstruction or independent cross-checking of the REL/RL?

The reference period for this FRL is 2001-2015 and includes yearly estimates of emissions and removals, as included in the national GHG inventory. This period covers 15 years which is the maximum allowed by the Green Climate Fund for REDD+ results-based payments.

The 2020 FRL was developed following the guidance provided in Decision 12/CP.17, decision 4/CP.15, and seeks to maintain consistency with the anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks with the national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory contained in the country’s first Biennial Update Report, which is currently being developed following the UNFCCC reporting guidelines for Biennial Update Reports for Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (decision 2/CP.17).

The FRL values and the underlying historical emissions and removals are derived from the national GHG inventory database (attached to this report as a Microsoft Excel file), to maintain

full consistency and transparency in national reporting to UNFCCC. The national GHG inventory and the FRL were estimated following the 2006 IPCC guidelines. Both the National GHG Inventory totals and the REDD+ emissions and removals are based on the same data, methods, and assumptions and come from the same estimation procedure as explicitly shown in the attached database.

Belize’s National GHG Inventory includes a distinction of managed and unmanaged lands, following the 2006 IPCC guidelines and the managed lands proxy therein to exclude the effect of recurrent hurricanes and pests, which have historically dominated emissions and removals in the country. Total managed and unmanaged lands are shown in Table 18.

Figure 8 shows the emissions and removals relevant to REDD+, including those in Forest land, conversions to and from Forest land on managed lands.

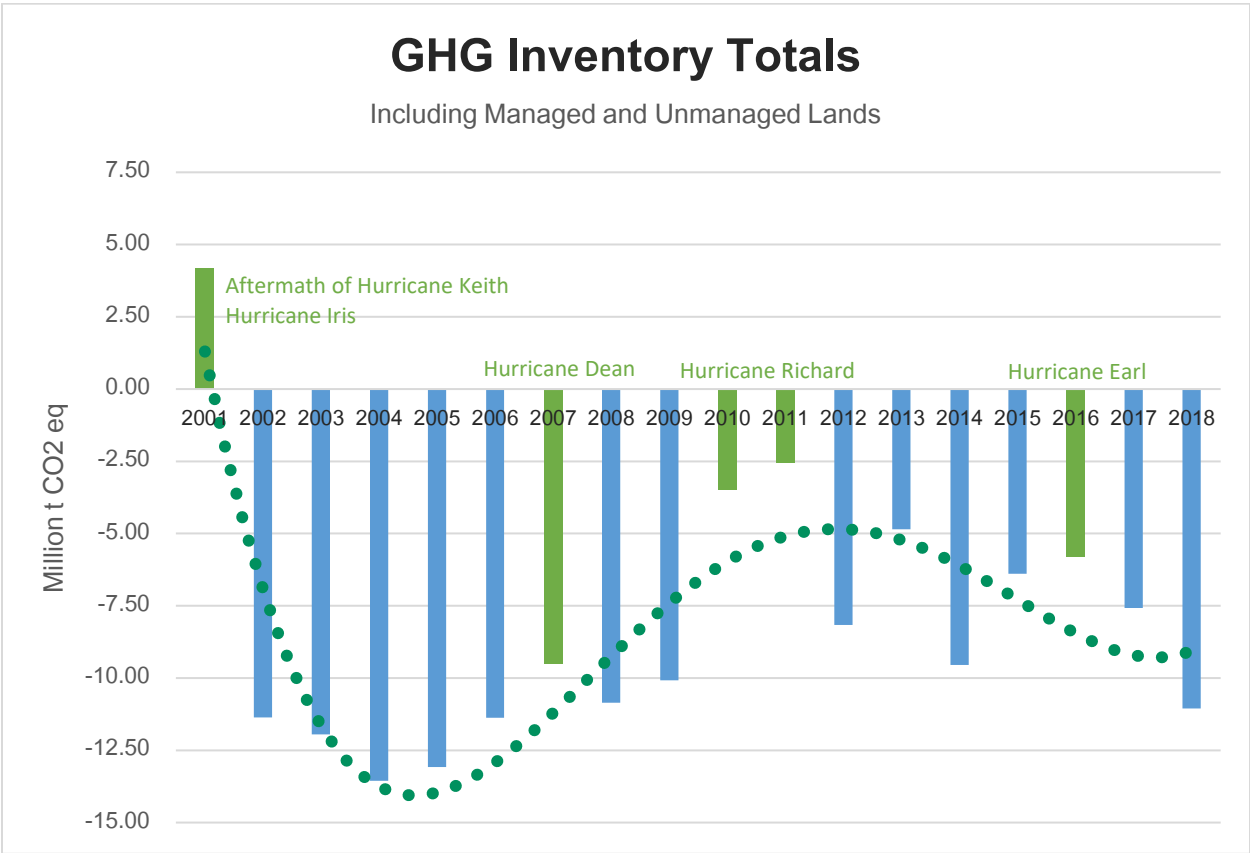


Figure 9. Total emissions and removals in Belize (including Managed and Unmanaged Lands)

Table 27. Area of managed and unmanaged lands in Belize in the period 2001-2018.

Category	Managed Lands	Unmanaged Lands
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Forest land (Undisturbed)	10,153.53	1,064,009.52
Forest land (Disturbed)	171,805.77	133,503.84
Cropland	207,896.04	0.00
Grassland	445,146.84	4,222.26
Wetland	151,699.77	0.00
Settlements	36,391.86	0.00
Other land	603.18	0.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	1,024,601.76	1,186,153.47
<i>National total</i>	2,210,755.23	
<i>% of Managed Lands</i>	46.3%	

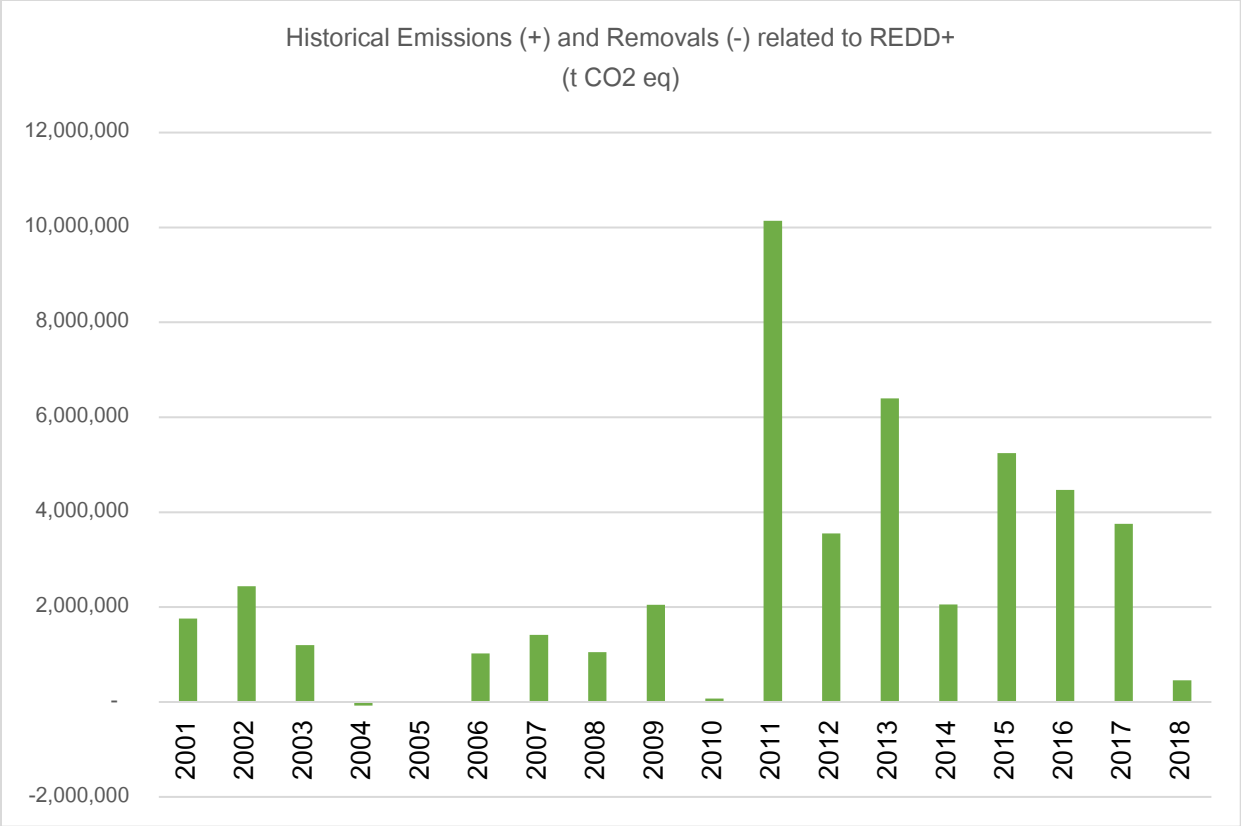


Figure 10. Emissions and removals considered for REDD+, including managed lands only and those sources and sinks relevant to Forest lands, conversion of Forest lands and conversion to Forest lands.

Sub-Component 3. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Level

Indicator 28. Technical feasibility of the methodological approach, and consistency with UNFCCC/IPCC guidance and guidelines – Significant Progress

Is the REL/RL (presented as part of the R-Package) based on transparent, complete and accurate information, consistent with UNFCCC guidance and the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines, and allowing for technical assessment of the data sets, approaches, methods, models (if applicable) and assumptions used in the construction of the REL/RL?

Belize followed 2006 IPCC guidelines structure for the AFOLU sector, including the six main land uses proposed: Forestlands, Cropland, Grassland, Wetlands, Settlement and other lands (Level 1). Additional subdivisions were defined following national circumstances, including climate, soil and disturbance history in line with IPCC guidance (Levels 2 and 3).

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
Broad-leaf Mature Forest		Riparian Forest

		Swamp Forest	
		Other Forest	
	Broad-leaf Secondary Forest		Riparian Forest
			Swamp Forest
			Other Forest
	Pine Forest		
	Mangroves		Tall mangroves
			Dwarf mangroves
			Littoral forest
	Plantations		Teak
		Other Plantations (TEBABUYA SP.)	
CROPLANDS			
	Annual crops	Rice, Beans, Corn, Sugar Cane	
	Perennial crops	Banana, Coffee, Citrus	
	Follow lands		
GRASSLANDS			
	Pastures/Shrublands /Savannas/Ferns/Thickets	Riparian shrubland vegetation, Shrub land (thicket), Ferns, Savannah with scattered pine trees, Savannah with scattered shrubs, Bare-savannah, Agriculture-pasture	
	Regenerating Shrubs & Bushes		
	Regenerating Shrubs & Bushes (Mountain Pine Ridge)		
WETLANDS			
		Wetland, Coastal lagoon, Inland water bodies, Aquaculture	
SETTLEMENTS			
		Residential areas, roof tops, market, sport facilities areas and parking lots.	
OTHER LANDS			
		Roads, highways, quarries, eroded areas, beach sand, dried up soil in savannah areas, bare rock and exposed river beds	

Using the terminology of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), this is a combination of Tiers and Approaches. Tiers and Approaches are related to the IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories and are methodology classifications relating to the complexity and completeness of a model or method.

The three methodological Tiers listed below relate to the methods for estimating emissions associated with specific land use and land use changes.

Tier 1: methods use IPCC default emission and carbon stock factors based on global regionalization. They are designed to be the simplest to use,

Tier 2: can use the same methodological approach as Tier 1 but applies emission and stock change factors that are based on country- or region-specific data, for the most important land-use or livestock categories.

Tier 3: higher order methods are used, including models and inventory measurement systems tailored to address national circumstances, repeated over time, and driven by high-resolution activity data and disaggregated at sub-national level. (Department F. , 2020)

Component 4: Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Safeguards Systems

Sub-Component 4a. National Forest Monitoring System

This part of the Assessment Framework focuses on progress made in designing and developing operational forest monitoring systems.

Sub-Component 4a. National Forest Monitoring System

Indicator 29. Documentation of monitoring approach – Significant Progress

Is there clear rationale or analytic evidence supporting the selection of the used or proposed methodology (combination of remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches, systems resolution, coverage, accuracy, inclusions of carbon pools and gases) and improvement over time?

Has the system been technically reviewed and nationally approved, and is it consistent with national and international existing and emerging guidance?

Belize has been working with the Moja community to assess and test the implementation of the FLINT open-source software to underpin their MRV system. This provides a potential core mechanism for Belize to design and develop their MRV system around. A range of options for the implementation of a FLINT based system exist, involving the implementation of the FLINT core together with FLINT modules. FLINT modules range from Tier 1 - 2 methods through to Tier 3 (eg GCBM) configurations. Designing and implementing a FLINT based system needs to take into consideration the country context, policy priorities and reporting objectives.

To assist Belize on this pathway, a demonstration of the capabilities of FLINT, using simulations developed in FLINTpro. FLINTpro is a Software as a Service system that was developed by the

Mullion Group. FLINTpro is based on the FLINT architecture and provides a full cloud-based system incorporating user interfaces, cloud-based processing, data storage and visualization and analytics capabilities (Figure 5). This makes it a rapid process to setup and run spatially explicit simulations compared to the process of implementing a FLINT open-source implementation.

The MRV System produced for Belize provides the Landsat Vegetation Continuous Fields (VCF) tree cover layers contain estimates of the percentage of horizontal ground in each 30-m pixel covered by woody vegetation greater than 5 meters in height. The product is derived from all seven bands of Landsat-5 Thematic Mapper, Landsat Enhanced Thematic Mapper Plus, and Landsat 8 Operational Land Imager.

Tree cover, the proportional, vertically projected area of vegetation (including leaves, stems, branches, etc.) of woody plants above a given height, affects terrestrial energy and water exchanges, photosynthesis and transpiration, net primary production, and carbon and nutrient fluxes. Tree cover also affects habitat quality and movements of wildlife, residential property value for humans, and other ecosystem services.

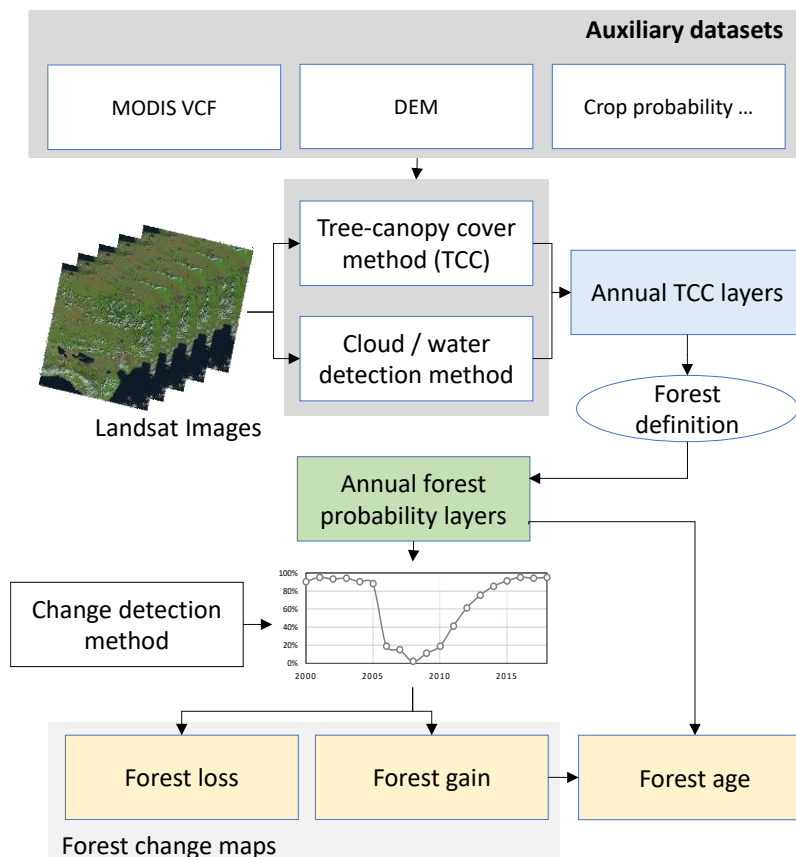


Figure 11. Process for estimating tree-canopy cover (TCC), forest probability, and forest change and age from time-serial Landsat observations.

The continuous classification scheme of the VCF product enables better depiction of land cover gradients than traditional discrete classification schemes. Importantly for detection and monitoring of forest changes (e.g., deforestation and degradation), tree cover provides a measurable attribute upon which to define forest cover and its changes.

Customized rules are adopted to adjust the forest activities, including:

- Cropland layer from land cover datasets is used to adjust false forest gains detected in fields with crops that have very similar spectral characteristics as forest.
- Savannah with scattered pine trees layer from land cover datasets is used to adjust the pine forest activity detection with a lower (e.g., 15%) TCC threshold to adapt to the low needle density of pine forest in the savannah area.
- Local knowledge of forest regrowth, e.g., minimum years of regrowth as well as possibility of forest recovery after forest loss, were considered to set up rules to adjust overestimation of forest regrowth.

(INC, 2022)

Assessment of bias requires external reference information from national or other sources, including existing field data or small-footprint lidar datasets. Thus, acquisition of independent reference information is often desirable to increase accuracy, precision, and the estimates thereof.

Two lidar datasets (see Table 28 for a complete list) were gathered and processed to create reference tree canopy cover (TCC) data. They represent the best available sources of reference for tree-canopy cover validation in Belize. These reference datasets allowed us to validate terraPulse tree-canopy cover for the years of 2009, 2013, 2019, and 2020¹⁸. As shown by Fig. 5, the reference dataset covers a diverse range of forest density, and vegetation type.

Table 28. List of tree cover reference datasets.

Mission/Campaign	Resolution	Extent	Year(s)	Reference
Caracol/Chiquibul Belize Lidar	20 cm	60 sites over Belize's Chiquibul forest	2009 and 2013	Weishampel, J. 2019
GEDI L2B	25 m	Global samples	2019-2020	Dubayah et al. 2020

¹⁸ [Technical_rpt-final terraPulse_MRVSys.pdf](#)

Sub-Component 4a. National Forest Monitoring System

Indicator 30. Demonstration of early system implementation – Significant Progress

What evidence is there that the system has the capacity to monitor the specific REDD+ activities prioritised in the country's REDD+ strategy?

How does the system identify and assess displacement of emissions (leakage), and what are the early results (if any)?

How are key stakeholders involved (participating/consulted) in the development and/or early implementation of the system, including data collection and any potential verification of its results?

What evidence is there that the system allows for comparison of changes in forest area and carbon content (and associated GHG emissions) relative to the baseline estimates used for the REL/RL?

The NFMS of Belize is based on two components, a National Forest Inventory based on a series of plots, the first of which were established in the 1990s; a Collection of Activity Data and Quality Assurance using high resolution imagery for visual interpretation classification in Collect Earth. In addition, as shown in figure 12 below, the Generation of wall-to-wall land cover/land use maps using open-source satellite imagery, as a Quality Assurance Activity for Activity Data is being developed.

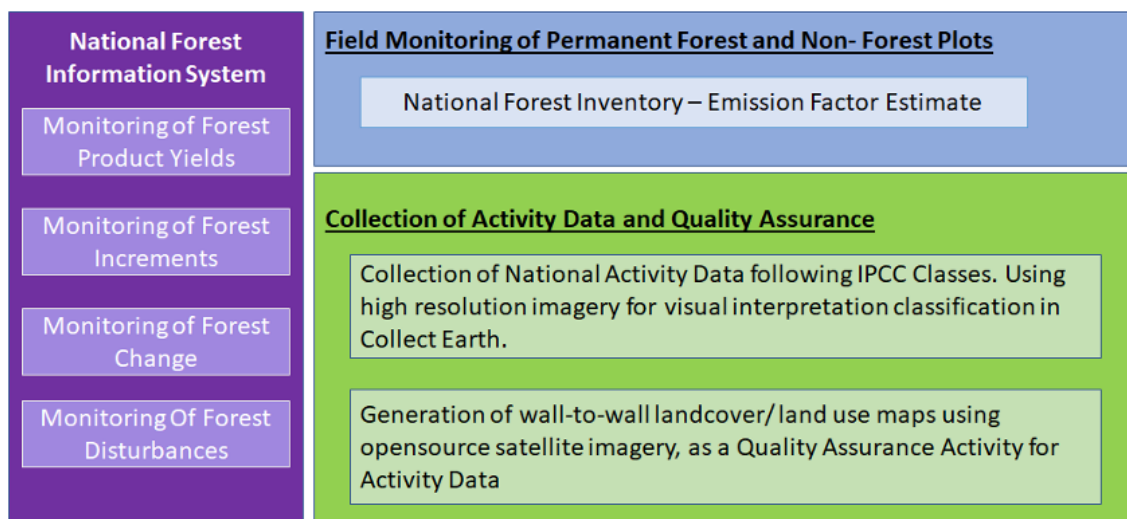


Figure 12 Implementation Arrangement for NFMS. Taken from the Technical Annex. Source: GOB 2021.

In 2018, the Forest Department with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), built capacities to process satellite imagery and other digital technology and to combine these with the use of GIS. The Forest Department has been using the Collect Earth/Open Foris tool as a central feature of its NFMS since 2019. This tool is adequate for Belize's national circumstances and complies with REDD+ requirements in relation to FREL and MRV (Forest Department 2019).

Sub-Component 4a. National Forest Monitoring System

Indicator 31. Institutional arrangements and capacities – Significant Progress

Are mandates to perform tasks related to forest monitoring clearly defined (e.g., satellite data processing, forest inventory, information sharing)?

What evidence is there that a transparent means of publicly sharing forest and emissions data is presented and are in at least an early operational stage?

Have associated resource needs been identified and estimated (e.g., required capacities, training, hardware/software, and budget)?

There is no denying that REDD+ is a multisectoral effort; without the collaboration of government agencies, NGOs and local bodies all contributing to Belize's sustainable development, coordinating and implementing specific institutional arrangements to ensure drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and barriers for more sustainable land uses are fully and effectively addressed it will not be successful.

Belize's GIS monitoring system maps changed events within the year of its occurrence and then monitor changes that occur within the area as the years progress. The FD through the GSMU and its newly formed MRV Unit coordinates this activity. The FD through the yearly mapping sessions funded by the REDD+ project was able to build the capacity of local co-managers of Belize's Terrestrial areas and in so doing so have expanded their network of technicians. In areas that hold co-management agreements, the FD work hand in hand with these co-managers to collect data, carryout ground truthing exercises as well as verification of points. Important to note is that the MRV Unit formed under the GSMU of the FD was staffed with four of the five technicians hired and trained under REDD+. This also allows for a smoother transition and ease in the continuity of work needed to carry Belize forward in becoming a REDD+ nation.

Through the REDD+ Project, the FD has also been able to secure Sentinel 2, wall to wall mapping that is utilized as a baseline along with the FLINTPro software. Because of Belize is small in size, verification of data is easily carried out. In addition, it allowed local experts to flag discrepancies in data sets presented in the MRV System. This allowed for a more accurate representation of Belize terrestrial cover.

The full time-series of results was developed for Belize. This output is available as a spatial file (raster time series) of annual forest carbon will automatically be developed. The view within

FLINTpro is based on a timelapse movie using this output automatically for users to quickly view the data. This will show areas of increases and decreases in forest carbon over the assessment period. These outputs can also be exported as a spatial file for in-depth analysis in a GIS system.

In order for Belize to continue on its current trajectory as it relates to NFMS and continue to build its data base, funding from donors is essential. The GOB cannot support the level of field activities needed to take Belize into a Tier 3 data base. Funding is needed to continue the ground truthing, for operational expenses, assist with financing of personnel/staff, purchasing of equipment and field gear, including specialized equipment for both the FD and NCCO.

Sub-Component 4b: Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

Sub-Component 4b: Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

Indicator 32. Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues – Significant Progress

How have relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental safeguard issues of REDD+ preparations been identified? Are there any capacity building recommendations associated with these?

In order to identify the relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental safeguard issues of REDD+ preparations, an assessment of the Belizean demography had to be carried out. The following other environmental benefits of REDD+ were identified: water quality, air quality and biodiversity conservation.

The Below are the Socio-Economic Context For REDD+ Implementation that guided the creation of Belize's SIS (AAE-CADS, Belize SIS Content Guide, 2021) and Strategy (AAE-CADS, Belize REDD+ Draft Strategy, 2021):

I. Poverty

The latest poverty study in Belize was conducted by the Statistical Institute of Belize with assistance of Statistics Canada during the first quarter of 2020 based on information from the 2018/9 Household Budget Survey (SIB 2021c). The General Poverty Line was defined at \$7961 based on the cost of acquiring food items. With this GPL, 52% of the population were living in poverty and 9% were indigent or critically poor. These numbers represent an 11-point increase in poverty and a 7-point decrease in indigent population with respect to 2009. In addition, 14% were classified as vulnerable to poverty. The rise in poverty rates IS explained mainly by the rise

from 28 to 43% of the poor population in urban areas; and by 3 points in rural areas, from 55 to 59%.

II. Employment

In 1999, 45% of all workers were employed in the primary and secondary sectors but that has now declined to 35% with the majority of new jobs created in the tertiary sector. This change in the structure of the Belizean economy does not augur well for the employment opportunities for the lower skilled workers in the country. The Belize and Cayo districts have the highest share of the working population with post-secondary and university level education (Naslund-Hadley *et al.* 2020).

III. Infrastructure

In Belize, there are distinct variations in people's overall access to services, standard of living and livelihood opportunities. Despite extensive expenditure on infrastructure such as dams to provide electricity and ongoing investments in education, technical training, health care and health service delivery there are still gaps in equitable access to service delivery and poverty reduction programs and initiatives.

Even with the additional electricity generated from dams, there are many households that do not yet have access to electricity services from the national grid. Most of the households without access to electricity services are rural communities located in the Cayo, Orange Walk and Toledo Districts. In the Toledo District, the unserved households are typically those that are located away from the major highways and secondary roads in mostly IPs communities. In the Orange Walk District, it is mostly the Mennonite communities that are underserved by BEL. Service in the Cayo district does not yet cover the communities that are in the Mountain Pine Ridge and along the border areas with Guatemala (BEL Annual Reports, 2015- 2019).

IV. Education

Education in Belize is compulsory up to the age of 14 years and children are expected to be in school as of age five, but early childhood education can begin at age three. Primary education is free at point of access, however preschool education is still not widely available and accessible, especially in rural communities.

While primary education is free and the government subsidizes secondary education for students from poorer households attending public institutions, access to basic social services including education has been dynamic. This is evidenced by the rate of primary school enrolment which stood at 76.8% in 2018 -2019. As it is one of the more developed districts in the central region of Belize, the highest school participation rates of the three priority districts with enrolment totals

was in Cayo (25,068) followed by Orange Walk (13,457) and Toledo (11,052). Enrolment by ethnicity is also indicative of education access by district, since some groups have greater presence in certain districts than others.

V. Health

Health care is provided through a national system of three regional hospitals and one referral hospital in Belize City. Additional services are provided through a localized system of 62 Health Centers and 84 Health Posts loosely linked to the regional hospitals. Health services are free at point of contact at public health facilities.

The 2019 Human Resources for Health Report by the Ministry of Health shows the inequality in the number of health workers and professionals in rural communities versus those in the urban areas since there are more health professionals in the urban areas than in the rural areas. At the same time, immunization rates for children have been relatively high.

VI. Gender

The government of Belize has engaged in legislative and policy changes to improve the status of women in Belize by encouraging gender equality and female empowerment. The predominantly centralized and limited capacities of the Women’s Department mean that support to rural women who are in abusive relationships is largely inadequate. In its documentation of Access to Justice, the National Gender Policy also notes the vulnerability of women and children who are victims of crime even as they seek advice and representation in the criminal justice system.

The Cancun 2006 Safeguards adopted by Belize were Safeguards A, B, C, D, E, F and G¹⁹ specifically. Using these safeguards and the assessment of Belize’s demography, Safeguards C, D and E below, look at the non-carbon aspects and social and environmental issues. For further review of Belize’s SIS can be done at www.sis.ncco.gov.bz.

UNFCCC Safeguard C	<i>Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i>
National interpretation:	The National REDD+ Strategy is implemented respecting and strengthening the rights of all Indigenous Peoples, including the Mayas (Yucatec, Q'eqchi' and Mopan), Garinagus and local communities that coexist in the Belizean territory. It also emphasizes on their land tenure security, traditional knowledge and livelihoods, respecting their free, prior and informed consent

¹⁹ [SIS Report Content - draft.pdf](#)

	(FPIC) and traditional decision-making mechanisms, as well as other relevant issues recognized in national and international laws, in particular, the recommendations and rulings by the Idem the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Caribbean Court of Justice.		
	Aspect: REDD+ in Belize is designed and implemented:	C1	Promoting Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ access to transparent and quality information and to take part in decision- making processes and good faith consultations in a culturally appropriate manner, respecting their traditions, languages and in conformity with national and international standards and best practice.
		C2	Respecting and strengthening traditional, national and international rights, procedures and tools for conducting and obtaining the FPIC of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities of Belize
		C3	Promoting access to and safeguarding the lands, territories, environment, and ensuring the social, cultural, and/or economic well-being of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, considering the recommendations of the cases of the InterAmerican Court of Human Rights and the Caribbean Court of Justice

How the safeguard is ADDRESSED

C1) Consultation with Indigenous Peoples and local communities

Although there are no specific domestic laws in Belize establishing special procedures for consultation with Indigenous Peoples or local communities during and/or after implementation of activities that may affect their rights, there are a number of policies and regulations that provide the basis for addressing this safeguard. In this sense, the National Forest Policy, 2015, specifically states that the development and management of natural forests on community-owned and managed land by Indigenous Peoples and rural communities will be promoted. From another perspective, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulation, 1995, mandates that during the course of an EIA the developer shall establish a dialogue with stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as it is addressed in more detail in Safeguard D.

C2) Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

Belize's obligation to recognize the requirement for the FPIC procedure is established in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 2007, signed on the same year, as well as in judge made law, derived from the case of the Maya Leaders Alliance and the Attorney General of Belize (Maya Leaders Alliance v. Atty. General of Belize, Judgment, 2015), endorsed by the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) and recently reaffirmed in Jalacte Village v. the Attorney General. However, there is still no official legislation on the matter.

C3) Land tenure

Belize’s judge-made law affirms that Indigenous Peoples’ (IP) customary and traditional legal rights to land and natural resources exist and are recognized in Belize. The case of the Maya Leaders Alliance and the Attorney General of Belize (Maya Leaders Alliance v. Atty. General of Belize, Judgment, 2015) recognized that Maya Peoples of Belize hold customary land rights over the land they occupy, which is equal to any other form of land ownership in Belize and is constitutionally protected. Additionally, the UNDRIP, 2007 adopted by Belize, requires members to ensure that IPs are not forcibly removed from their lands or territories and that no relocation takes place without the FPIC of the Indigenous Peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return (art. 10).

Additionally, IPs’ customary and traditional legal rights to land in Belize were again upheld by the Supreme Court of Belize in the case of Jalacte Village v. the Attorney General.

Rights of access to natural resources

The UNDRIP recognizes the rights of its IPs to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent (art. 28). It also establishes their right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources (art. 32).

Cultural heritage

Regulation 19 of the Environmental Protection (Environmental Impact Assessment - EIA) Regulations, 1995, provides that an environmental impact assessment report shall include a description of the likely significant effects, direct and indirect, on material assets, including the natural heritage and landscape; and the Outstanding Universal Values ascribed under the World Heritage Site Designation to the area under development.

For the case of culturally valuable or sacred sites, the National Institute of Culture and History Act, 2000, provides that the Minister responsible for Tourism may make rules governing “archaeological reserves”, which may specify penalties for any breaches of such rules recoverable on summary conviction thereof (sec. 68). An “archaeological reserve” is an area of unalienated national land containing or adjacent to an ancient monument, or any area of alienated national land, title to which has reverted to the State, containing or adjacent to an ancient monument.

Main Policies, Laws and Regulations

<u>National framework</u>	<u>International instruments</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental Protection Regulations, 1995 ○ National Institute of Culture and History Act, 2000 ○ Supreme Court case “Jalacte Village v. the Attorney General” ○ Maya Leaders Alliance v. Atty. General of Belize, Judgment, 2015 (CCJ 15) ○ National Forest Policy, 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 2007 ○ Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2018

How the safeguard is RESPECTED

A first step to increase engagement and achieve empowerment is promoting a clear recognition and respect for the rights of all stakeholders, in particular Indigenous Peoples and local communities who live in or have a traditional dependence on forests, and rural women who work closely with forest resources but have historically been left out of dialogue. This creates an understanding for the different interests and needs of stakeholders, builds trust and willingness to engage in REDD+ implementation, and can help resolve or reduce potential conflict between stakeholders, as well.

Land tenure

It must be noted that there are no reports on land occupation, nor relocation, met with violent evictions for the purpose of economic or development projects in Belize. In the past, the government of Belize has not recognized IPs' rights to certain lands, however, such "dispossession" was of a legal nature only and never took the form of forced relocation. While the Mayas and Garifuna had never had legal title to the lands they occupied for centuries, they have always remained in undisturbed possession of it. This is one of the reasons that explains the relocation of many Mayas from neighbouring countries. Besides, in the case of Jalacte Village v. the Attorney General, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Maya Peoples' constitutional rights to lands, forcing the government of Belize to return the lands to the village.

ALIGNMENT OF THE NATIONAL REDD+ STRATEGY WITH THIS SAFEGUARD

Regarding Indigenous Peoples and local communities' rights to consultation, Pillar 2 aims to foster meaningful, inclusive, and culturally appropriate community engagement. Specifically, it includes Strategic Line 2.1 "Enhance Recognition and Respect for the Rights of all Stakeholders" and Strategic Line 2.2 "Institute Inclusive and Culturally Appropriate Community Engagement and Participation Mechanisms" In terms of land tenure, Strategic Line 2.5 "Address Customary Land Tenure Issues, by creating appropriate norms and implementing existing rulings and internationally recognized rights", proposes efforts in this field. The focus of this strategic line is two-fold. First it entails the creation of a legal framework that recognizes the land ownership of those local communities and IPs that live in, and depend on, natural forests. Second, beyond the formal recognition of the rights of IPs and IPs rights to inhabit and manage the lands they have traditionally owned, it focuses on implementing and enforcing them on the ground. In other words, it is key that laws and legal cases recognizing these rights be implemented and respected on the ground, such as the CCJ 15 Court Ruling.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Despite the UNDRIP and the country's common law recognizing IP's customary and traditional rights on traditionally occupied lands and to FPIC, specific regulations on this matter would strengthen these minority groups' rights on the ground. It is worth noting that negotiations between and indigenous people to elaborate an FPIC procedure are undergoing.

MITIGATION MEASURES (MM) PROJECTED

In the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) a number of MM were identified to avoid or mitigate risks associated with safeguard C, including the following:

- **MM4.10.2a)** Finalize and adopt the FPIC protocol currently under development with involvement of the BENIC, while ensuring that the FPIC protocol covers all of Belize's IP constituencies.

- **MM4.10.2b)** Implement the Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) that has been prepared as part of the ESMF package, including the adopted FPIC protocol mentioned in MM4.10.2a), with the participation of BENIC, representatives of the Western Yucatec Maya in the Cayo District (as long as these have not joined the BENIC) and partner entities. This includes to follow the steps for consultation and the definition of organizational responsibilities along the process as identified in the IPPF.
- **MM4.10.2e)** Disclosure mechanisms of relevant safeguards instruments (IPP, Social Assessment Reports, LRP, etc.) will contemplate the use of cultural mediators for dissemination of information to IP communities.

COMPLIANCE INDICATORS

- **I4.10.2a)** Status of FPIC protocol and its coverage of all of Belize's IP constituencies
- **I4.10.2b)-1** Description of consultations held under the FPIC protocol
- **I4.10.2b)-2** Participation rates in consultation meetings held under the FPIC protocol (m/w)
- **I4.10.2b)-3** Survey based measurements of the degree of satisfaction and level of ownership during FPIC meetings
- **I4.10.2e)** Description of disclosure mechanisms of relevant safeguards instruments and of the use of cultural mediators, INSTITUTIONS, TOOLS OR

INITIATIVES RELEVANT FOR THIS SAFEGUARD

- Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Study on the theme of free, prior and informed consent (Maya Leaders Alliance, 2018);
- Guide for Maya Customary Use of Forest Resources (Toledo Alcaldes Association, 2015)
- FCPF/UN-REDD Programme (2012). Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ Readiness with a Focus on the Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest-Dependent Communities. Available here
- UN-REDD Programme (2011). UN-REDD Programme Guidelines on Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Available here
- UN-REDD Programme (2013). Legal Companion to the UN-REDD Programme Guidelines on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Available here
- UN-REDD Programme (2013). Asia-Pacific Lessons Learned: Civil Society Organizations and Indigenous Peoples Representative Selection (in Cambodia).

Safeguard D

UNFCCC Safeguard D	The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in the actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of this decision (REDD+ activities)	
National interpretation:	REDD+ activities, policies and measures in Belize ensure and support the full and effective participation of relevant rights holders and stakeholders related to sustainable forest and land use, whereby "full	REDD+ activities, policies and measures in Belize ensure and support the full and effective participation of relevant rights holders and stakeholders related

	<p>and effective" is understood to be considered as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prior access to information for consultations easily and freely accessible to all; ● Ensuring transparency and avoiding bribes and other deviations; ● Prior means before the start of any specific activity or action; ● Inclusion of women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups; ● In respect of traditional decision-making processes, authorities and organizations. 		<p>to sustainable forest and land use, whereby "full and effective" is understood to be considered as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prior access to information for consultations easily and freely accessible to all; ● Ensuring transparency and avoiding bribes and other deviations; ● Prior means before the start of any specific activity or action; ● Inclusion of women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups; ● In respect of traditional decision-making processes, authorities and organizations.
	<p>Aspect: REDD+ in Belize is designed and implemented:</p>	<p>D1</p>	<p>Ensuring the full and effective participation of relevant rights holders throughout all REDD+ design and implementation activities, policies and measures, and according to domestic and international regulations.</p>
		<p>D2</p>	<p>Promoting multi-stakeholder participation processes with a focus on vulnerable groups, i.e. ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities and others.</p>

How the safeguard is ADDRESSED

D1) Full and effective participation of relevant rights holders for REDD+

Meaningful participation and continued engagement of all stakeholders, including private sector stakeholders, is critical to the successful implementation of all REDD+ and other related forest activities as it improves acceptance and awareness of REDD+, builds trust and creates ownership of and commitment to REDD+. The country has in place multiple policies and plans to encourage meaningful and active engagement of communities in sustainable forest management. Among them, Belize Horizon 2030 explicitly supports "reforestation and sustainable local logging by communities to create jobs and reduce poverty" (GOB 2010, p. 28). The National Forest Policy encourages "the participation of all stakeholders in the planning and decision making process for effective protection, security, management and development of the forest resources". Moreover, the policy recognizes that "forest-dependent communities need to play a greater role in managing forest resources in Belize", while also suggesting that "a national standard for certifying forests should be developed with the full participation of all stakeholders" (GOB 2015c, p.39). The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 1995, also provides a number of provisions related to the full and effective participation in the EIA processes, stating that the EIA developer shall provide an opportunity for public consultations between the developer and interested members of the public, especially those within or immediately adjacent to the geographical area of the proposed undertaking. Similarly, the National Protected Areas System Act, 2015, in its Section 19, makes provisions for the involvement and participation of would-be displaced persons in the establishment of restrictions and measures related to the National Protected Areas System, as well as in the declaration, alteration, re-classification or revocation of a declaration of a protected area and the preparation of a protected area management plan. Additionally, Belize has signed (but not ratified yet) the recent instrument called Regional Agreement on Access to Information,

Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2018 (the “Escazu Agreement”), which guarantees the full and effective protection of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters, among others. As Belize has not ratified the convention, it has no positive obligations in regard to it.

D2) Vulnerable groups

The draft Belize National Forest Policy, 2015, provides that the Government will ensure that women, youth and poor people are particular beneficiaries in the development of the forest sector by encouraging active participation of women and youth in decision-making, resource management and sharing of benefits. It goes on to state as a principle that the active participation of women and men, young people and the elderly, and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups should be integrated into forest sector development (Principle 8). However, this approach is not enshrined in any domestic regulation yet.

Main Policies, Laws and Regulations

National framework	International instruments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 1995, and its amendment of 2007 National Forest Policy, 2015 	Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2018

How the safeguard is RESPECTED

In recent years, the country has made significant improvements regarding multi-stakeholders participation in its national forest governance, especially under the REDD+ Readiness Phase, for example, with the development of an Indigenous Peoples Desk and a REDD+ Indigenous Technical Coordinator. However, it should be noted that Belize has a large number of forest-dependent communities living in close proximity to forests which, on occasions, those rural groups, particularly women, are not sufficiently or appropriately involved in decision-making affecting forest resources.

ALIGNMENT OF THE NATIONAL REDD+ STRATEGY WITH THIS SAFEGUARD

Considering the above, the National REDD+ Strategy provides specific actions to address such improvement areas. In this sense, Pillar 2 “Increased and meaningful community engagement and empowerment”, aims to foster meaningful, inclusive, and culturally appropriate community engagement in discussions and activities related to REDD+ implementation. To do so, Strategic Line 2.1 “Enhance Recognition and Respect for the Rights of all Stakeholders” includes the development of a legal and policy framework that recognizes and respects rights such as the elaboration of an FPIC protocol in the case of Indigenous peoples. Strategic Line 2.2 “Institute Inclusive and Culturally Appropriate Community Engagement and Participation Mechanisms”, recognizes the importance of promoting adequate capacity-building for all stakeholders to participate, emphasizing those groups that have interests and rights in the forest resources of Belize, such as IPs, and those in certain situation of vulnerability, such as women.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Further efforts are needed to implement an effective gender and inclusion approach in participatory process related to forest governance, to ensure women are not left out of the decision-making process.

MITIGATION MEASURES (MM) PROJECTED

In the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) a number of MM were identified to avoid or mitigate risks associated with safeguard D, including the following:

- MM4.01.5c) Participation of all stakeholders, including women and youth, will be maximised by providing the necessary means for stakeholder to be present at consultations (e.g. internet cards for virtual consultations, transportation, accessible venues, time, child care, etc.).
- MM4.01.3c) Existing structures and processes are identified and used at community level to organize roundtables to discuss and resolve possible tensions between stakeholders regarding the accrual or sharing of REDD+ benefits. The meetings will be facilitated by a trusted person from within the community in a culturally appropriate manner, if necessary, with support from a professional mediator with appropriate language skills. Where no trusted person can be identified at community level, a professional mediator will be hired to facilitate the roundtables as needed. Participation of women and youths in such roundtables must be ensured.
- MM4.12.1b) For all subprojects with a risk related to economic displacement identified in the screening, leading to a safeguards categorization of B, an ESIA will be conducted with special focus on identifying stakeholders affected by economic displacement, with special consideration of the most vulnerable stakeholders, including IPs, women and youths, and to agree with them on adequate eligibility criteria and compensation, considering gender-differentiated needs, which will be reflected in a Livelihood Restoration Plan annexed to the ESMP.
- For more examples please refer to MM in Safeguard C.

COMPLIANCE INDICATORS

- I4.01.5c) Description of measures taken to maximise participation of stakeholder, especially Vulnerable Groups, including women and youths.
- I4.01.3c) Description of how existing structures and processes were identified and are used for community level roundtables to discuss and resolve possible tensions over REDD+ benefits at project and subproject level and how participation of women and youth is ensured.
- I4.12b)-2 Description of how gender-differentiated needs have been considered in determining eligibility criteria and compensation for subproject-level Livelihood Restoration Plans.

INSTITUTIONS, TOOLS OR INITIATIVES RELEVANT FOR THIS SAFEGUARD

- CEPAL's website for the Escazu Agreement;
- UN-REDD+ Programme (2018) REDD+ Academy Learning Journal: Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ (Edition 3). Available here
- FCPF/UN-REDD Programme (2012). Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ Readiness With a Focus on the Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest-Dependent Communities. Available here
- Government of Germany, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013). Participation and Consultation Standards, Guidelines and Country Experiences: National REDD+ Processes.
- UN-REDD Programme (2017). Methodological Brief on Gender. Available here
- UN-REDD Programme (2012) Implementing Gender-sensitive Effective and Sustainable REDD Strategies.

<p>UNFCCC Safeguard E</p>	<p>Actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits.</p>		
<p>National interpretation:</p>	<p>REDD+ actions, policies and measures are consistent with the conservation and sustainable use of natural forests, mangroves, biodiversity and ecosystems, while improving Indigenous Peoples and local communities' livelihoods and rights to access to environmental, social and traditional goods and services provided by nature, according to their needs and traditions.</p>		
	<p>Aspect: REDD+ in Belize is designed and implemented:</p>	<p>E1</p>	<p>Promoting the sustainable management and the conservation of native ecosystems, especially mangroves, wetlands and watersheds, with the aim of strengthening their environmental benefits, including quality of air and drinking water, soil fertility, provision of non-timber goods and other ecosystem services of special importance for Indigenous Peoples and local communities' livelihoods and traditions.</p>
		<p>E2</p>	<p>Promoting the enhancement of social benefits provided by native ecosystems, including communal forest governance and rights to traditional agricultural practices and sustainable forestry, among others, while promoting traditional uses of land such as for medicine, food, spiritual practices and other tangible and intangible benefits from forests and nature.</p>
<p>How the safeguard is ADDRESSED</p>			
<p>Both environmental and social benefits are ensured and promoted within the Belize' environmental (and forest) legal and policy framework, as briefly explained below.</p>			
<p>E1) Conservation and sustainable use of forest and other natural ecosystems:</p>			
<p>In the case of land use change (deforestation and the clearance of mangroves), the main regulations are the Forest (Protection of Trees) Regulations, 1992, which prohibits the conversion of any species of primary hardwoods and secondary hardwoods or softwoods into lumber without having obtained a Licence (reg. 3); and the Forest (Protection of Mangroves) Legislation, 1989, that prohibits any alteration of mangrove in jurisdictional waters without previous permit from the Department of Environment. This prohibition applies both to privately-owned lands and public lands (reg. 3). Moreover, The Forest (Rules), 1971 provides for forest licenses and permits to exploit forest produce.</p>			

It is worth mentioning that, despite there being no laws that prevent the establishment of plantations that involve any conversion or degradation of critical natural habitats, the Environmental Protection (Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1995, requires an environmental impact assessment or studies depending on the location and size of the project, and establishes especial provisions for development within or in close proximity to critical habitats for protected, threatened or endangered species of flora or fauna. Additionally, the National Lands Act, 1992, provides an implicit prohibition on the clearing of lands for development purposes within Forest Reserves, and also prohibits the clearing of lands for development purposes within other protected areas, in line with the National Protected Areas System Act, 2015. Similarly, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2016-2020, calls for the support of prioritized natural ecosystem maintenance through incentives for private landowners (p. 90); and amending legislation to incentivize location of new developments on degraded lands rather than removing natural ecosystems critical for climate change resilience (p. 61), among other things. Moreover, the National Protected Areas System Act, 2015, calls for the maintenance of the provision of ecosystem goods and services important for national development, including but not limited to timber and non-timber forest products, genetic resources, water catchment services and others.

Definition of forest

Despite there being no domestic laws defining forests, for REDD+ purposes the official definition used by Belize is “a plot of land with an area of 0.5 hectares or more, with trees 5 meters or higher, and a canopy cover of 30% or higher”. This definition also includes forest plantation and an ecosystem where, due to biotic conditions (terrain, soil type, rainfall, et cetera), the trees cannot grow higher than 5 meters (Belize Forest Reference Level 2001-2015).

E2) Social benefits from REDD+

The National Protected Areas System Act, 2015, regulates and promotes conservation incentives in the form of agreements between the Minister and an NGO, local community or other party or organization, for (a) the co-management of an area, or (b) the regulation activities that affect the environment in the area (sec. 30 (1)). Similarly, the National Forest Policy, 2015, specifically seeks to promote the development and management of natural forests on community-owned and managed land by Indigenous Peoples and rural communities. Moreover, the Belize National Agroforestry Policy, 2020, suggests that forests need to be managed as productive ecosystems, pursuing options of sustainable logging, harvesting non-timber forest products, and generating environmental services (i.e. water protection and carbon dioxide sequestration).

Benefit sharing

There are no specific regulations on REDD+ benefits sharing yet, however, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992 adopted by Belize, protects and encourages member countries to take measures for benefit-sharing on a fair and equitable basis of the results and benefits arising from the use of genetic resources (art. 19 (2)). Similarly, the National Forest Policy, 2015, provides a policy statement that the government shall create appropriate regulatory frameworks for forest financing mechanisms and the sustainable generation and equitable distribution of benefits derived from those mechanisms for indigenous peoples and other local actors. Moreover, the right of indigenous peoples to access to benefits from traditional forest lands uses are also recognized and upheld by the courts of Belize (Jalacte Village v. the Attorney General), as referred in safeguard C.

Main Policies, Laws and Regulations

<p>National framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental Regulations, 1995; o Environmental Protection Act (EPA), 1992; ○ Environmental Protection (Amendment) Regulations, 2007; o National Protected Areas System Act, 2015; ○ National Cultural Heritage Preservation Act, 2017; ○ National Lands Act, 1992; ○ Supreme Court case “Jalacte Village v. the Attorney General”; ○ Belize National Agroforestry Policy 2020; ○ National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2016-2020 	<p>International instruments</p> <p>Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992</p>
<p>How the safeguard is RESPECTED</p>	
<p>While some local communities are known to contribute to the conservation of forest and its resources and have done so for generations, practices used by others are also contributing to forest degradation and deforestation, especially those linked to deforestation practices due to large-scale intensive farming systems and infrastructural development, often export-oriented. Subsistence and slash and burn agriculture have also been linked to the forest degradation process, together with an increment of access to markets for food and agricultural products by small scale family farmers through linkages with the tourism and manufacturing sectors in the local market and exports. Moreover, there is a growing population of small integrating advanced technology and modern agricultural techniques.</p>	
<p><u>ALIGNMENT OF THE NATIONAL REDD+ STRATEGY WITH THIS SAFEGUARD</u></p>	
<p>Various activities planned in the National REDD+ Strategy will help to improve the implementation of this safeguard E in the ground, as follows:</p>	
<p>Pillar 3 “Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation” aims to promote the sustainable management and conservation of forests to increase their environmental, economic and sociocultural benefits through enhancing ecosystems resiliency and functions, ensuring their sustainable utilization by forest users and stakeholders, increasing the supply of forest products, planning and implementing strategies and actions with realistic, positive impacts and measurable results, and maintaining or increasing forest cover in conservation and priority areas. Specifically, it includes Strategic Lines such as 3.6. “Enhancing forest conservation through a set incentives and regulations”</p>	
<p>Additionally, the National REDD+ Strategy aims to strengthen EIA procedures with Pillar 1, Strategic Line 1.2 “Develop clear criteria and procedures for the review of development plans connected to land allocation approvals and EIAs in which forest lands are involved”, emphasizing the work of the National Environmental Appraisal Committee (NEAC), and information availability and delimitation of land types, especially “forest reserves” and “agricultural lands” across the country.</p>	
<p>Related to social benefits, Pillar 2, Strategic Line 2.3 “Support, enhance and reward the sustainable land and forest stewardship of local community and Indigenous Peoples” aims to understand, support,</p>	

enhance and reward the land and forest stewardship of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Also, Strategic Line 2.4 “Support, technically and financially, and Enhance Sustainable Development Initiatives and Livelihoods for Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples” aims to promote sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development initiatives for local communities and Indigenous People, providing capacity building and helping them to overcome challenges for accessing finance and maintaining alternative practices and technologies over time.

Related to the latter, Strategic Line 3.3 “Promotion of utilization of secondary hardwoods and lesser-known timber species” promotes diffusion in local and international markets and research in ecosystem use studies in close association with the timber industries in order to manage the forest resource endowment of Belize for value addition and favorable economic returns (Note: this Strategic Line is being reviewed and may change).

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

There is a need to strengthen monitoring and law enforcement capabilities (for example, with resources, personnel, training, authority, etc.), to control degradation and deforestation inside and outside protected areas (Walker 2020, in Belize National REDD+ Strategy).

MITIGATION MEASURES (MM) PROJECTED

In the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) a number of MM were identified to avoid or mitigate risks associated to safeguard E, including the following:

- MM4.36.1c) Where sustainable livelihood options are successfully established, availability of resources used and impacts resulting from their use get monitored beyond the runtime of the project and it is ensured that no over extraction with further impacts on people and nature occur over time.
- MM4.36.2a) Strategic line 3.3 Promotion of utilization of secondary hardwoods and lesser-known timber species will be designed to promote reduced impact logging practices, using best practice guidance such as Ellis and Ellis (2021) and IUCN (2006).
- MM4.09.2b) Belize's fire-control programmes are adjusted to increasingly involve local stakeholders in community-based fire management, as described in FAO (2011).
- MM4.09.2c) Belize's NFMS monitors forest fires and the information gets used to update any forest fire management plans and practices accordingly.

COMPLIANCE INDICATORS

- I4.36.1c) Description of how subprojects ensure that sustainability of sustainable livelihood options gets assured beyond the runtime of the subproject.
- I4.36.2a) Description of how reduced impact logging practices are considered in the further planning and implementation of strategic line 3.3.
- I4.09.2b) Description of progress made in adjusting fire-control programmes/establishing community-based fire management.
- I4.09.2c)-1 Description of how Belize's NFMS monitors forest fires and the response strategies in place upon detection of irregular fires.

INSTITUTIONS, TOOLS OR INITIATIVES RELEVANT FOR THIS SAFEGUARD

- Department of the Environment website: information and tools for EIA, including EIA submitted in the link;
- [Belize Forest Reference Level \(FREL\) 2001-2015](#) and other submission to the UNFCCC;
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2016-2020
- UN-REDD+ Programme (2018). REDD+ Academy Learning Journal: Forest Reference (Emission) Levels for REDD+ (Edition 3).
- Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) (2015). Forest Reference Emission Levels and Forest Reference Levels: Extended Methodological Advice.
- Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) (2016). Integration of remote-sensing and ground-based observations for estimation of emissions and removals of greenhouse gases in forests. (Methods and Guidance Document, Edition 2.0).
- International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) (2018). International Best Practice Principles: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Impact Assessment. Special Publication Series No. 8

The SIS site is currently being house with an independent source and will be transferred the Belize's Central Information and Technology Office (CITO) after the first year. Like the FGRM, there is no person in place after the end of the REDD+ project to ensure continuation. This needs to be strengthened. It is recommended that relevant mechanism be put in place to ensure continuous updating of the system as needed, this person can also be in charge of the FGRM and should be put in place within the first 6 months of the second phase.

Because the SIS was not finalized until the end of the project, no follow up communication took place. This is needed in phase two. For outreach within the indigenous communities, more time and effort will be needed as with all other aspects as the language and education barrier is always a challenge.

Sub-Component 4b: Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

Indicator 33: Monitoring, reporting and information sharing – Significant Progress

What evidence is there that a transparent system for periodically sharing consistent information on non-carbon aspects and safeguards has been presented and is in at least an early operational stage?

How is the following information being made available: key quantitative and qualitative variables about impacts on rural livelihoods, conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services provision, key governance factors directly pertinent to REDD+ preparations, and the implementation of safeguards, paying attention to the specific provisions included in the ESMF?

Stakeholder participation in the exploration of co-benefits and non-carbon schemes has been encouraged through training sessions and workshops. The development of information sharing

processes on the impact of REDD+ on rural livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, provision of non-carbon ecosystem services, and key governance factors is recommended.

Further work is required to develop both the final REDD+ National Strategy and the Benefit Sharing Mechanism that provides an integrated framework for the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services provision, key governance factors directly pertinent to REDD+ preparations, and the implementation of safeguards, paying attention to the specific provisions included in the ESMF. These are slated for completion in phase 2 of REDD+ Belize.

As is the REDD+ Project was able to create a Safeguard Information System for Belize which can be accessed online at www.sis.ncco.gov.bz. Belize's Safeguards Information System was developed in the course of 2021 in parallel to the strategy. It is based on the National REDD+ Strategy but also informed by the country's Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) and the resulting Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). The major steps of the SIS development include:

1. National interpretation of the Cancun Safeguards: this step is needed to understand how the different REDD+ stakeholders define the Cancun Safeguards and what topics are of particular interest or concern. The final interpretation presents the Cancun Safeguards in the national context of Belize and provides the basis for identification of relevant information for the SIS.
2. Determination of SIS goals and scope: this step refers to some basic decisions about the country's ambition regarding what the SIS should achieve (now and later) and what its focus is.
3. Identification of suitable information and indicators for inclusion in the SIS: this step will be based on the national interpretation of the Cancun Safeguards and closely linked to step 4.
4. Identification and assessment of existing sources of information: In order not to overburden the countries with additional requirements for monitoring, it is recommended to design the SIS on the basis of existing information systems, to the extent possible. The step also includes extracting relevant information from an analysis of existing Policies, Laws and Regulations and the extent to which they cover safeguards aspects.
5. Design of the SIS online portal: this step includes the design of the front end as well as the incorporation of the agreed information. User friendliness and simplicity will be of great importance in this design, so that the final portal is equally accessible to international as well as local REDD+ stakeholders.

Since the SESA and ESMF are conducted in alignment with World Bank Standards, while the SIS needs to follow the structure of the Cancun Safeguards, an equivalence analysis of the two safeguards standards was conducted at the beginning of the SESA and the linkages between the two systems were made throughout the analyses and outputs to allow for the SIS to be informed directly by the SESA and ESMF.

Sub-Component 4b: Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

Indicator 34: Institutional arrangements and capacities – Significant Progress

Are mandates to perform tasks related to non-carbon aspects and safeguards clearly defined?

Have associated resource needs been identified and estimated (e.g., required capacities, training, hardware/software, and budget)?

MSDCCDRM is the implementing agency for REDD+ activities in Belize. It makes such decisions as requesting funds for further REDD+ activities and deciding where in Belize those activities should be targeted. The MSDCCDRM also oversees the activities of the FD which has the legal mandate for sustainably managing Belize's forest resources which includes the administration, regulation and management of forests in Belize. This includes the elaboration of management plans of forest within protected areas; granting of licenses and intervention authorizations, and the collection of the royalties derived from the forest use and monitoring.

The Forest Department has a staff complement of 98 persons, 47 technical and 51 administrative and support staff. The technical staff cover a range of skills and expertise including areas such as Natural Resource Management, Business Administration, Tropical Forest Management and Conservation, Protected Area Management and Project Management. Staff also received training in Wildlife Management which helps to strengthen the overall competencies and capabilities in the Department.

Consequently, the MSDCCDRM and the FD are technically supporting the National Climate Change Office (NCCO) which is responsible for the coordination of Belize's national, regional and international response to Climate Change. The NCCO currently only has an office status with four established officers and 6 contract officers. This body works closely with other sister agencies such as the FD, Department of the Environment (DOE), Agriculture Department and the Lands and Surveys Departments. As an example, the FD provides the technical inputs related to the collection of Activity Data and emissions and removals associated to the FRL report and to the MRV system. The NCCO spearheads the REDD+ Project on behalf of the Ministry, a responsibility previously executed by the FD.

The mandates to perform tasks related to non-carbon aspects and safeguards are clearly defined within the MSDCCDRM and across sister ministries/departments/agencies. Over the past four years of the project the REDD+ CU has been working diligently to build sister agencies understanding of the project and the role each of the ministries/departments/agencies play for a successful REDD+ in order for Belize to benefit.

With that said, the GOB does not have the financial resources to fully equip the FD, NCCO and other departments to carry out its duties. Funding from external donors is essential and projects

such as REDD+ allow Belize to implement its policies and regulations to fight climate change and deforestation. Continued donor funding in capacity building, equipment/software and administrative support is essential in order for staff to continue collection of data, establishment of PSPs, building of Belize's Tier 3 database, collaborations and building of cross-sectorial data sharing for emissions calculation as well as Geo-Spatial activities. Both the FD and NCCO have identified associated resource needs and estimated; in cases where collaboration is essential to fulfil REDD+ activities, the NCCO, through discussions, has also identified needs of different sister ministries/departments/agencies.

Conclusions and Next Steps

At the date of this report, all activities outlined in the R-PP have been completed or are being implemented and operational. These include establishing engagement protocols with all four Indigenous People groups in Belize, development of communication strategy and establishment of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Technical Expert Group (TEG) under component 1. In addition, the REDD+ Readiness Project was also able to produce a REDD+ Strategy, Social and Environmental Strategic Assessment (SESA), Safeguard Information Systems (SIS), draft Benefit Sharing Mechanism (BSM), development and launch of the Feedback, Grievance and Redress Mechanism (FGRM) as well as a Land Tenure Assessment for Toledo District under component 2. For component 3 and 4, the Development of Belize's Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL), a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS), and the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification tool (MRV) were also completed and currently being managed and updated by the Belize Forest Department.

Belize through the REDD+ Project and other grant projects, have invested heavily in building the capacity of its national institutions and human resources, specifically in the Belize Forest Department. These increases in capacities are evident in the country's strides in components 3 and 4 of the REDD+ Project, Reference Emission Levels/Reference Level and National Monitoring System for Forests and Safeguards respectively. These capacities and products produced under these specific components, in addition to the guidance provided by the UMFCCC, has provided the means for Belize to access payments for forest carbon services through the specialized GRIF mechanism. In addition, the development of these components allowed for further development of the other 2 components, specifically as it related to the REDD+ Strategy, BSM and the SESA/SIS.

Belize is in a prime position for implementing the REDD+ mechanism. The country still has vast areas of intact forest and the importance of forest ecosystems, and their goods and services are

recognised, as can be seen from a number of national policies and programmes, such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (Belize, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2016) and also the National Development Framework “Horizon 2030” (GOB 2010). The country’s intact forests contribute to conserving Belize’s outstanding biodiversity, providing an intersection for species from North and South America to occur alongside each other, but also including certain species that are endemic to Belize only. The forests also contribute to regulating the country’s water resources, which are of crucial importance to the people of Belize and also to the people of neighbouring Guatemala.

In addition to the above, Belize’s economy depends to a large extent on functioning ecosystems, with major contributions coming from the tourism industry, which attracts visitors especially due to the country’s spectacular natural and cultural sites. The maintenance of Belize’s ecosystems and cultural sites is thus directly linked to the country’s economic performance.

At the same time however, the pressure on forests and forest land is increasing as forests are converted to grassland for cattle ranching and to cropland to establish modern, intensive farming. The expansion of rural areas and infrastructure further impacts Belize’s natural ecosystems. The drivers point to the fact that there are a large number of stakeholders in Belize that in one way or another have an interest in decision-making power over and in the use of forest land and forest resources.

REDD+, the UNFCCC’s mechanism for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation while promoting conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks and sustainable management of forests, provides an opportunity to identify incentives directed at Belize’s multiple REDD+ stakeholders, including the indigenous Maya and Garifuna, with the overall aim to reduce pressures on forests while providing benefits to the people. This is a difficult balance to reach, and it requires that the voices of all those different stakeholders get heard and their perspectives considered in designing the country’s approach to REDD+.

The following key recommendations represent the response to the project and component, level analysis and related findings presented below are proposed to guide phase 2 implementation. The combination of planning, management, monitoring and evaluation, communication, stakeholder engagement, partnership development and coordination and long-term visioning is essential to successful completion of the BSM and the second phase.

1. Improve internal programme and activity level planning and communication
2. Improve Stakeholder Engagement Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
3. Address gaps in REDD+ implementation mechanism, Management, Administrative and Operation System
4. Strengthen Procurement and Financial Planning and Management
5. Establish mechanisms for long-term REDD+ programming, Expand Awareness Building, Branding and Visibility

The below recommendations are the result of the REDD+ readiness process:

Recommendation 1 – Belize as a country needs to continue the building of its capacities both human and institutional in order for it to continue to build on the advances made during this first phase of the REDD+ initiative. As it relates to human resources, continued capacity building is needed for the FD, NCCO, LD and other relevant departments in order for Belize to lead its region in sustainable forest management; this also includes the addition of human resource to build the departments to ensure data collection, monitoring and evaluations can continue. On the other side of this is the institutional capacities; the GOB especially over the last few years has struggled to regain its footing as it relates to financial stability, this means that in order for organizations/departments to continue to do the work needed under REDD+, financing support is essential.

Recommendation 2: With the COVID pandemic affecting half of the project, specifically the last 2 years, there is more needed as it relates to awareness and consultations with the larger Belizean demography. The COVID pandemic restricted the interactions with only key stakeholders of the REDD+ initiative, but even further to that, small core groups were formed within these key stakeholder communities with the projects relying heavily on these groups to be the disseminators within the communities. This approach lends itself to errors in communication and segregation. While there was significant progress made in the first year of the project as it related to communication and visibility to the Belizean population nationally, the late start fuelled the public's interest and requests for more information. This should that there were significant gaps in communication over the previous years and more work is needed as the work continues. Addition to this, capacities is needed within the REDD+ CU as well as relevant departments and committees to ensure proper monitoring, reporting and evaluation. This includes inclusive meetings across sectors to ensure all respective departments and ministries are operating in harmony to ensure success.

Recommendation 3: The REDD+ Strategy and the proposed institutional structure needs to be finalized. The strategy was shared with the GOB for them to address highlighted areas that required further input. These are key aspects of the strategy that shape how REDD+ will be carried out. The R+CU institutional structure for the REDD+ project in Belize was sound and serves its purpose adequately. For the implementation phase it is of key importance to have an optimal involvement of the FD in project activities since the Department has a fundamental role as manager of forests.

With the production of the draft BSM, greater work is needed to generate a final BSM. In addition to this, with the passing of the FPIC protocols by the GOB and the concerns raised by IPs; more needs to be done to create a document that is balanced as it relates to the needs of both the government and IPs of Belize. The GOB has been engaged in extensive work on Belize's Carbon Rights legislation which goes beyond the scope of REDD+ initiative. The finalization of this document is needed for the completion of the BSM in addition to the completion of the remaining consultations with the GOB stakeholders, NGOs and Non-IP communities. Without these consultations, the draft mechanism is one-sided; while the REDD+ CU tried to garner some

input from these groups via an on-line survey, many recipients communicated that their impression was that a more in-depth consultation would follow which resulted in some recipients not completing the surveys.

Another area that will require further resources and management to ensure success in phase 2 is the equipping of departments to ensure the elimination of the gaps identified during the readiness phase. There is a need for continued management and collaborations to allow Belize to continue in the building of its Tier 3 data collection. To date Belize has secured significant Tier 3 data, however there are still areas where the country continues to rely on Tier 1 and 2 data to complete its estimations. If Belize is to continue building and improving on its NFMS, NFI and MRVS, Tier 3 data collection is essential.

Recommendation 4: Another area that needs strengthening is the area of Procurement and Financial Planning; financial bottle necks need to be ironed out as well as continued trainings with changing of project accounts personnel to ensure smooth transition. And finally, Management, while one of the issues experienced in the first year of phase one was a transition of the project from FD to NCCO which resulted in successful completion of phase one, it is essential that the lessons learned during this period is carried over into phase 2 to ensure this is not repeated in order to maximize the execution period provided for activities.

Recommendation 5: The REDD+ Readiness project had developed a communication plan to bring awareness of REDD+ and its activities in Belize. While there was much done in year 2 and 3 to bring awareness, there were deficiencies which was compounded by the COVID Pandemic. The project CU was able to produce valuable visibility packages in its final year, but it was not able to properly distribute due to the time remaining within the project. It is essential that within phase 2, the project continues to build on its mechanisms for long-term REDD+ programming as well as explanation of awareness, branding and visibility.

Despite the follow-up work that needs to happen as presented throughout; REDD+ has made a significant impact in the country of Belize in terms of assisting in closing technical gaps, increasing capacity, strengthening coordination with the indigenous peoples on the forestry issues, opening to door to carbon credit which has led to not only Green Carbon in the terrestrial environment, but also Blue Carbon Credit within the Marine environment, building of cross-sectorial collaborations and data sharing, as well as the enhancement of Belize's robust conservation activities during this REDD+ Readiness Phase.

With the completion of the readiness phase and preparations to start the implementation phase of REDD+, the expectations are that the follow up work needed will be completed in Phase 2 and that GOB and its people will continue to work towards a REDD+ structure that will ensure equitable distribution of the REDD+ benefits.

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Annexes

- a. Annex 1: BENIC REDD+ National Strategy Review and Feedback
- b. Annex 2: Draft Stakeholder Engagement Protocol - REDD+ Belize
- c. Annex 3: Belize SESA Report
- d. Annex 4: Belize SESA Prioritization Report
- e. Annex 5: Belize SESA Scoping Report
- f. Annex 6: Belize Draft REDD+ Strategy
- g. Annex 7: Belize Draft Benefit Sharing Mechanism
- h. Annex 8: Belize Forest Reference Emissions Level Report 2020
- i. Annex 9: Analysis of D&D in Belize
- j. Annex 10: Land Tenure Final Report - Toledo District 2021