

TAP Review of the Readiness Package submitted by Belize

Independent TAP Expert Review of the Self-assessment Process of Belize's R-Package
November 2022

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1. Objectives.

The objective is to perform a desk-review of country's R-Package. Specifically:

1. Perform a review of Belize's progress and the self-assessment report, based on guidelines in the R-Package Assessment Framework
2. Review Belize's documentation of stakeholders' self-assessment, including the process that was used for the self-assessment and the reported outcome.
3. Review key outputs and documents that underpin, and are referenced in, the R-Package, including documents pertaining to the national REDD strategy and ESMF, reference levels and forest monitoring, and national institutional structures.
4. Provide constructive and targeted feedback, as required to align the processes used for self-assessment and reported outcome, comparing with the R-Package Assessment Framework guidance

The TAP expert verified the completeness of the R-Package, including:

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

The review is focused on whether a due process and approach was followed to perform the self-assessment and to receive constructive feedback of the stakeholders.

2. Methodological approach

The scope of the work performed for the TAP review, as per the Terms of Reference provided by the World Bank, is presented in three parts:

1. Review documentation of stakeholders' self-assessment, including the process that was used for the self-assessment.
2. Review Belize's R-Package report, based on the Guide to the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework and the reported outcome key outputs and documents that underpin, and are referenced in, the R-Package, including documents pertaining to the national REDD+ strategy and ESMF, reference levels and forest monitoring, and national institutional structures.
3. Provide constructive and targeted feedback, as required to align the processes used for self-assessment and reported outcome, comparing with the R-Package Assessment Framework guidance.

3. TAP Review

Belize submitted the REDD+ Readiness Package report to the FCPF dated March 2022. The report includes a summary of the REDD+ Readiness process and the country's progress with the four REDD+ Readiness components. The report was prepared following the FCPF's 2013 Readiness Assessment Framework.

a. Process and methodology applied to the Self-assessment of the RP.

This section reviews the process that Belize followed to develop the assessment of the Readiness Package (RP). The TAP review is based on the description of the process and on supporting documents referenced in the RP. The review takes into consideration the documents prepared for the assessment and the consultation process followed to involve the stakeholders in the Readiness process.

Belize has been engaged in various stakeholder consultations on different REDD+ components and sub-components, particularly since 2018. The country has been keen to involve the various indigenous peoples in the preparation process, for which consultation instruments and methodologies had to be prepared, which caused delays in the Readiness preparation process. The Belize multi-stakeholder self-assessment is described as 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 an evaluation questionnaire. The REDD+ Self-Evaluation framework was sent to stakeholders who were identified as being key to at least one of the components of the project and a one 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 to:

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 from 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 received the readiness assessment questionnaire, of those 137 recipients, 67.9% were males and 32.1% were females.

It is important to note 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, who only participated in 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 color scores described above.

According to the RP report, the 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”. All inputs to the assessment were compiled from the final reports and reviews carried out by the consultants and relevant committees of the project, as well as the lessons learned from the implementation of activities.

TAP assessment. *The Self-Assessment process did follow the recommendations of the FCPF Assessment Framework to report on the validation process of the Readiness Preparation report through a national multi-stakeholder self-assessment, applying the methodology as described above. Only a restricted number of key stakeholders were involved in the assessment process, that was executed through e-mail. No workshops, where opinions could be exchanged, were organized, due to COVID restrictions. The R-Package report did not permit an assessment of how the ratings were obtained and whether there were major differences in perception on REDD+ Readiness between stakeholder groups and if so, how these were treated.*

b. Review of Progress on REDD+ Readiness.

This section assesses the progress on REDD+ Readiness for each of the four Readiness components:

1. Readiness arrangements and organization,
2. National REDD+ Strategy preparation,
3. Reference Emissions Level, and
4. Monitoring systems and Safeguards,

and the 34 criteria. The progress of the sub-components were not assessed, as progress for these were not reported..

The assessment is based on the criteria that Belize used for its self-assessment. The TAP assessment discusses both the strengths and weaknesses of each Readiness component and the validation of the 34 criteria.

The TAP review is based on the REDD+ Readiness Package (R-Package) document prepared

for FCPF by Belize and on background documents referenced in the R-Package that were made available to the TAP or downloaded from the internet.

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) to implement 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. 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.

It is important to note that the national political and institutional context for Belize's REDD+ Readiness process has experienced important changes during the preparation stage. The REDD+ Project saw many setbacks over its four-year implementation. Initially implemented by the Belize Forest Department, the project saw delays in execution and therefore the decision was made to change the implementing body to the National Climate Change Office (NCCO). With this change in 2018, Belize was able to make significant progress in the process of REDD+ preparation. The year 2020 specifically was an extremely difficult year for the project due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, which resulted in a halting of approximately 90% of REDD+ activities during the lockdown period and affected particularly the consultation process required to complete the REDD+ Readiness Preparation.

These setbacks were further increased due to the national elections, held in November 2020, which resulted in a change of government. The project continued to experience staff turnover 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.

Component 1: Readiness Organization and Consultations

Within the existing natural resource management and sustainable development policy framework of Belize in relation to forests, there are various policies which promote directly or indirectly 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

In the Mid-Term assessment in 2019, Belize created the Indigenous Peoples Desk within the REDD+ CU. The IPD allows more meaningful engagement of and coordination with the Indigenous People in the REDD+ process and improves channels of communication with the IP communities. The IP Desk was tasked with the coordination between the four 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 three of the four IP groups.

The collaboration of the IP Desk, REDD+ CU and the BENIC led to the creation of an Indigenous Technical Team that consisted 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 protocols 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.

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 in a culturally appropriate form.

Self-assessment. There is still work needed related to information sharing and 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 to the Indigenous population on these two points, the other stakeholder groups did not have this same experience.

TAP Assessment

The management of the implementation of the REDD+ readiness funding started slow, but after changes in the REDD+ management structure in 2018, the implementation of the REDD+ readiness funding was improved significantly. A REDD+ coordination structure was established, and so was for an agenda of regular meetings. However, the integration of REDD+ into broader national or sector strategies and activities is still very slow. An FGRM mechanism was established and operational, however the accessibility of information and consultation on REDD+ requires more attention, particularly for non-indigenous groups. The National REDD+ Strategy is still in a draft stage and no specific REDD+ activities have been prepared or implemented, which may explain the low response (3 REDD+ cases) in the FGRM by stakeholders. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating for the progress in Component 1.

Sub-Component 1a. National REDD Management Arrangements

This part of the Readiness Assessment Framework focuses on national REDD+ management arrangements and their effectiveness in fulfilling core functions. There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

1. Accountability and Transparency (Criterion 1: GREEN)

Self-assessment. The REDD+ management and coordination unit (CU) are operating in an open and transparent manner. The check and balance process put in place by both the Government of Belize and the World Bank ensure accountability at every juncture of the project implementation of this first phase. 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) and 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). 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, it's status and awareness on the FGRM structure. With COVID-19 affecting the project for two of its four 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.

TAP Assessment. *The national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements are operating in an open, accountable, and transparent manner. The check and balance process put in place by the Government of Belize and the World Bank ensure accountability of the project implementation. The TAP concurs with the GREEN rating.*

2. Operating Mandate and Budget (Criterion 2, GREEN)

Self-assessment. REDD+ institutions operate under clear mandates and budgets. The National Climate Change Office (NCCO) is guided 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 center 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.

TAP assessment. *Only the national REDD+ institutions that operate REDD+ have clear mutually supportive mandates, such as the NCCO, FD and MNR. It is not clear if they have adequate budgets. The mandates of the other participating institutions are not clarified. Some of them (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture) are very important as they are responsible to tackle some of the most important drivers of deforestation. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

3. Multi-sector coordination mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration (Criterion 3: YELLOW)

Self-assessment. 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. The REDD+ CU found it a challenge to get other ministries and/or their departments to actively partake in specific components of the project as needed and was met with some resistance from some departments. The REDD+ Strategy indicated that several 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 policies and laws that regulate the activities in their respective sector and as such effective coordination 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 updated and the different sectors continue to act independently of each other, the REDD+ initiative will fail in Belize. There had been regular communications 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. A program needs to be created to facilitate the mainstreaming of REDD+ priorities into sector policies and the engaging of sister ministries/departments should be a continuous process.

TAP assessment. *As pointed out in the self-assessment, the national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements are not yet in place to coordinate, integrate into and influence the broader national or sectorial policy frameworks. The TAP concurs with the YELLOW rating*

4. Technical supervision capacity (Criterion 4, GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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 Biannual Update Report (BUR). 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. 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.

TAP assessment. *The national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements are not yet in place as pointed out in the previous criteria. Multi-sector readiness activities have not been identified. The report does not mention that technical preparations of multi-sector activities are planned. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

5. Fund management capacity (Criterion 5: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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+.

TAP assessment. *The funds provided by the WB for the READINESS Preparation project were managed effectively, efficiently, and transparently. It is not clear how the coordination with other development partners will be carried out, particularly when funds will be managed by other ministries or departments for REDD+ related activities. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

6. Feedback and redress mechanism (Criterion 6: GREEN)

Self-assessment. A FGRM Log is being used by the REDD+ CU to monitor all grievances received. 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. 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. One gap identified is that there is a lack of a 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 and adequate treatment of the grievances.

TAP assessment. *There is no evidence that demonstrate that the FGRM mechanism is operating transparently and impartially at the national, subnational, and local levels. It has a well-defined mandate, but adequate expertise is not available yet and a multi-sectorial committee is needed. There is no evidence that potentially impacted communities are aware of, have access to, and know if the mechanism is responsive to feedback and grievances. To date only 3 REDD+ related grievances have been treated. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

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. There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

7. Participation and engagement of key stakeholders (Criterion 7: GREEN)

Self-assessment. To gain a better understanding of the REDD+ stakeholders, a stakeholder mapping was carried out and interviews were conducted to identify and integrate stakeholders' concerns, expectations, interests and needs in the strategic planning process. The REDD+ Project developed 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 and acceptance of the project among diverse stakeholder groups. While the project did it's best to adhere to the COVID-driven 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. THE REDD+ CU along with local partners, identified the 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. Education, and capacity building to vulnerable groups.

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 continuous engagement of stakeholders.

TAP assessment. *This section explains how stakeholder groups were identified and their interests and expectations were mapped. Extra efforts were engaged to include indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities in the engagement process, although in this section it is not clarified what are the participatory mechanisms being used to ensure that marginalized groups, such as forest-dependent women and youth have the capacity to effectively participate in REDD+ readiness and implementation. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

8. Consultation processes (Criterion 8: GREEN)

Self-assessment. Engagement and participation by stakeholders in numerous sessions evolved and/or transitioned over time with an adaptive management to stakeholder engagement due to the COVID pandemic and allowed for the creation of the Indigenous Peoples (IP) 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 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. Participants of the awareness sessions communicated that deforestation was a problem and they were aware 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. To ensure participation of the IP of the south, the REDD+ CU entered in contract with the Julian Cho Society JCS, "Support Indigenous Peoples Representative organizations. 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. The JCS facilitated capacity building, coordinated and facilitated effective participation of the maya communities, strengthened the awareness among the Maya on the drivers and impact of climate change, and ensured the inclusion of the IP in all REDD+ processes. As a result of the awareness sessions carried out by the REDD+ CU with the indigenous groups, the REDD+ CU supported reforestation activities that the group/communities were interested in doing.

TAP assessment. *The consultation processes at the national and local levels are clear, inclusive, and transparent. Various indigenous Peoples institutions were involved in the self-selection process to identify key rights holders and stakeholders during consultations and to ensure that the correct decision-making processes are utilized to enhance consultations and engagement of the IP. In 2021 the communication team did not hold many sessions with the rest of the Belizean population, due to the COVID restrictions. It is important to note that the deforestation mainly occurs in areas without IP communities, as such it is recommended to maintain the other stakeholder groups involved in the REDD+ Readiness process. The TAP reviewer concurs with the GREEN rating.*

9. Information sharing and accessibility of information (Criterion 9: GREEN)

Self-assessment. The Belize REDD+ has generated information on the project in the major dialects of the country, including English, Spanish and 2 indigenous languages, thus targeting all key stakeholders. In the cases of consultation sessions, the project and partners ensured that one or two translators were present, when necessary. Overall, information on REDD+ is accessible to stakeholders. The project created a series of five short videos that seeks to educate viewers on the major activities and engagements of the project and other video and voice clips were produced and transmitted. The media campaign saw an increase in requests from the public for information on REDD+, requests for interviews and presentations, requests to be included in future consultation sessions as well as requests for documents produced. Feedback from the indigenous stakeholders indicated that the REDD+ project will need to engage stakeholders on what is considered reasonable deadlines for review and submission of inputs.

TAP assessment. *The national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements demonstrated transparent, consistent, comprehensive and timely sharing and disclosure of information related to readiness activities in a culturally appropriate form, although it is not clear if the information provided include all aspects of the Readiness process, such as the development of the REDD+ strategy, reference levels to be used, and monitoring systems. REDD+CU used different channels of*

communication (video, television, radio, brochures, posters, etc.) to ensure that stakeholders are well informed, especially those that have limited or no access to relevant information. The TAP reviewer concurs with the GREEN rating.

10. Implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes (Criterion 10: YELLOW)

Self-assessment. The REDD+ CU ensured that the outcomes of public consultations were properly documented and were considered in the design and development of forest management and REDD+ policy, and management arrangements. All documents produced were 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. 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. Consultation protocols adhering to FPIC requirements were developed in close consultation with the constituent members of BENIC. The BSM was halted in the late stages and the consultations with GOB/NGOs and Non-IP were not carried out due to the GOB needing more time to finalize the Carbon Rights legislation. One of the requests received from the indigenous groups, specifically the Maya of the south is to improve on disclosure of consultations. 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 recognized for their contributions and achievements. The outcomes of consultations were not properly integrated into management arrangements, strategy development and activities. The recommendation is to create a plan to facilitate mainstreaming of consultation outcomes into management arrangements.

TAP assessment *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 outreach and awareness as well as disclosure to the information for stakeholders who otherwise may not have been able to access the information The TAP reviewer concurs with the YELLOW rating.*

Component 2: Prepare the REDD+ Strategy

Within Component 2, delays were faced in the first half of the project, related to initiation of the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment, land tenure assessment studies, and benefit sharing mechanism. These delays were a result of the extensive consultation process with IPs as well as a collaborative approach undertaken in drafting terms of references (TORs) as well as challenges in the procurement processes. Nonetheless, the draft SESA and a Land Tenure Assessment were completed. The SESA contract was signed in 2020 and completed at the end of December 2021. The draft REDD+ Strategy, ESMF and SIS have also been successfully completed. The Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM) was finalized and operational in January 2021. The Lands Department through the Ministry of Natural Resources completed the Land Tenure Assessment for the Toledo district. Ethno-maps were completed in four villages in Toledo. These Land Tenure Assessment and Ethno-mapping were done with extensive consultations with the relevant stakeholders, including the representatives of IPs.

Self-assessment. The country developed a Land Use, Land Use Change (LULC) Assessment (CATHALAC, 2020) for the period 2012-2018, to understand the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. It was considered essential to the overall development of the REDD+ Strategy to complete 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 to be addressed.

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 that is needed for Belize to benefit from REDD+. In addition, it must assess its capabilities and identify the areas that require changes, improvements, or development. More groundwork is needed to continue on 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 taken since the Toledo District is the only district that has been recognized as having communal lands. The project unfortunately was not able to produce a final BSM due to setbacks on consultations along with the request from the GOB for time to develop a Carbon Rights Framework, which would feed into the BSM. At the close of the BSM consultancy, pending activities that were required to finalize the BSM 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+, for a final BSM to be drafted. It is important to mention that even with the extensive engagements 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 REDD+ Project. The REDD+ project developed an Operational Working Draft of the REDD+ Strategy, to guide Belize in the implementation of REDD+ within the second phase. The draft version of Belize's National REDD+ Strategy consists of four pillars, each of which has several strategic lines allocated to it but does not yet provide specific activities under each strategic line. Thus, the SESA and subsequently the ESMF were done based on possible lines of actions but not on 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

The final SESA Report was finalized, together with the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which both aim 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).

TAP assessment. *The country identified the key drivers of deforestation and/or forest degradation, although these are not separated for each activity. A key driver is related to shortcomings in land use legislation that triggers deforestation to guarantee land property rights. Barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement are not separated from drivers. Possible inconsistencies between policies and programs of other sectors were not analyzed. The country only identified strategic pillars and lines but did not develop any REDD+ activity or implementation framework that defines institutional, economic, legal and governance arrangements to implement REDD+ activities. The*

BSM is still in draft stage and a REDD+ registry is under development. Since the REDD+ strategy does not define any activities yet, the SESA and ESMF are rather generic frameworks that can be used in the future to identify the safeguards related to a specific REDD+ activity. The TAP reviewer considers that component 2 has a YELLOW rating.

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. There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

11. Assessment and analysis (Criterion 11: GREEN)

Self-assessment. After analysis of deforestation and forest degradation in Belize from 2000 -2017, it was noted that the predominant conversion was from Forest to Cropland which allow Belize 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. 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 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.

TAP assessment. *This section does not 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. It only presents some details on how the Land-Use Change was carried and what software was used. The only assessment was to assume a direct relation between the most important land-use change leading to deforestation (Forest to Cropland) and the existing land tenure. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

12. Prioritization of direct and indirect drivers / barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement (Criterion 12: GREEN)

Self-assessment. A total of 12 direct drivers of deforestation and Forest Degradation were identified in a study of direct causes of deforestation and forest degradation in the country, with conversion to grassland and cropland the major causes. The underlying drivers are land tenure legislation, control and coordination deficiencies, international demand for high value timber species, international markets, commoditization, road development, population growth, permeable boundaries, and migrants, with land tenure legislation as the main factor, as it provides an incentive for landowners to clear the land to meet the requirement of development. Control deficiencies come both from lack of personnel, capacity and financial resources and ineffective institutions and legal frameworks that inhibit enforcement of environmental regulations. Barriers tend to be mostly similar to underlying drivers.

Tap assessment. A study was carried out to identify the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, although these were not separated into drivers of deforestation and drivers of forest degradation. The study indicates that deforestation is preliminary related to intensive agriculture and grassland expansion, particularly in the central regions of the country. It is important to notice that deforestation and forest degradation are not defined and seems to be treated differently in the various documents consulted, e.g. slash-and-burn agriculture is mentioned in one document as a driver of deforestation and in another document as driver of forest degradation. The TAP suggests separating these two processes and their drivers, as more than 40% of total deforestation occurs in secondary forest (per definition forests that recovers from previous deforestation events). The major barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities are not identified as such, but are considered similar and/or linked to mainly underlying drivers. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.

13. Links between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities (Criterion 13: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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.

TAP assessment. Barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities (as appropriate) and other REDD+ activities were not identified separately but considered the same as underlying drivers. It may be helpful for the country to try to identify the barriers associated with the underlying drivers, for example why are changes in land tenure legislation not been implemented, as this has been identified as a major underlying driver and according to the RP document only requires simple amendments. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.

14. Action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure, governance (Criterion 14: YELLOW)

Self-assessment. 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+ program. 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 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.

TAP assessment. The country started a Land Tenure mapping exercise in one of the key indigenous areas, which is a sensitive area and required a lot of efforts. Additional efforts and resources are required to continue this process in other IP areas. The TAP concurs with the YELLOW rating.

15. Implications for forest law and policy (Criterion 15: GREEN)

Self-assessment. It is recognized that there is more work needed from the Government of Belize in relation to putting in place and/or updating relevant law and policies related to REDD+ activities. 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 others. 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 continued.

TAP assessment. *The assessment identifies some general implications for forest or other relevant law and policy, but details of the changes required, who is responsible to implement these changes, etc., are not presented. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

Sub-Component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

The REDD+ strategy forms the basis for the development of a set of policies and programs to reduce emissions from deforestation and/or forest degradation and enhancing carbon uptake from other REDD+ activities. There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

16. Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategy options (Criterion 16: GREEN)

Self-assessment. A Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis was carried out in September 2019 to identify 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 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.

Tap assessment. *The version of the REDD Strategy does not yet provide specific activities under each strategic line. The strategic pillars and lines are not prioritized according to drivers of deforestation and barriers to forest enhancement activities. The strategic pillars and lines were developed via a transparent and participatory process. The strategy does not include specific interventions, as such expected emission reduction potentials are not estimated. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

17. Feasibility assessment (Criterion 17: GREEN)

Self-assessment. The Policies and Measures (PAM) 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 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 during its implementation, due to the direct and indirect links of the proposed PAMs with the identified drivers.

TAP assessment. *The strategic pillars and lines were not assessed and prioritized for their social, environmental, and political feasibility. Possible risks and opportunities associated with the implementation of the strategies were not identified, and no analysis of their costs and benefits were presented, as these are still very general strategies. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

18. Implications of strategy options on existing sectoral policies (Criterion 18: YELLOW)

Self-assessment. 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 to promote the implementation of REDD+ activities, in addition other activities presently being implemented in Belize also align. The country needs to work on updating its land use policies. 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.

TAP assessment. *Only a listing of the strategic documents and policies are presented, but no analysis of major inconsistencies between the priority REDD+ strategy options and policies or programs in other sectors related to the forest sector (e.g., transport, agriculture) is presented. Possible consistencies between the identified drivers and national policies could be a barrier for REDD+ implementation, such as improved access to local, regional and national markets, which is seen as driver of deforestation and is also a strategic pillar in the National Agriculture and Food Policy of Belize. There is no agreed timeline and process in place to identify and resolve possible inconsistencies to integrate REDD+ strategy options with relevant broader development policies and to obtain broad community support. The TAP reviewer considers an ORANGE rating more adequate.*

Sub-Component 2c. REDD+ Implementation Framework

The implementation framework defines institutional, economic, legal and governance arrangements necessary to implement REDD+ strategy options. There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

19. Adoption and implementation of legislation/ regulations (Criterion 19: YELLOW)

Self-assessment. 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, which can enable the implementation of future REDD+ activities. Belize is currently working on legislation under the Climate Change Framework Act, Market-Based 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.

Both the REDD+ Strategy and BSM produced under this action are only draft documents. The GOB is currently drafting the documents that will guide the definition of Carbon Rights, Benefit Sharing Mechanisms, REDD+ financing modalities and procedures for official approvals. Once these are in place, funding will be needed to re-evaluate and complete the REDD+ Strategy and the BSM.

TAP assessment. *A series of proposed goals and actions are presented in the Natural Resource and Sustainable Development Policies and their possible relation to future REDD+ activities, but no evidence is provided that shows to what extent these are actually implemented. The RP does not provide an effective implementation framework that is indicative of the country's capacity to undertake coordinated emissions reduction programs in the future. The TAP concurs with the YELLOW rating*

20. Guidelines for implementation (Criterion 20: YELLOW)

Self-assessment. Belize's National REDD+ Strategy includes several national policy level interventions and does not contain details about specific interventions to be implemented. However, the strategy includes policy lines that hint at future implementation of certain activities. Since it is yet unknown what kinds of activities will be implemented where, how, and by whom, it is difficult to assess precisely what the impacts of such activities will be. The REDD+ strategy requires a review in the 2nd phase and if necessary, a revision of the draft strategy produced in phase 1 to see what is still valid.

TAP assessment. *There is no implementation framework that defines carbon rights, benefit sharing mechanisms, REDD+ financing modalities, and procedures for official approvals (e.g., for pilots or REDD+ projects). A grievance mechanism has been established. The TAP reviewer considers an ORANGE rating more adequate.*

21. Benefit sharing mechanism – (Criterion 21: ORANGE)

Self-assessment. Stakeholder consultation was key to ensure that the various stakeholder experiences, contributions, and priorities were adequately reflected in the design of the draft REDD+ BSM. While Belize was able to produce a draft BSM, it is important to note that the draft document needs more work. Key stakeholder groups were not adequately engaged. The REDD+ CU needs other consultations to create a more inclusive draft BSM. While the project tried an alternative approach to secure meaningful feedback in the form of administering an online survey to the groups mentioned above, 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 for implementation of its BSM.

TAP assessment. *The BSM is still in a draft condition and requires more consultations. It also is dependent on the regulations of Carbon Right, which is currently under discussion in the GOB. The TAP reviewer concurs with the ORANGE rating.*

22. National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities (Criterion 22: ORANGE)

Self-assessment. There is no national geo-referenced REDD+ information system or registry and system monitoring of the REDD+ 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 will impact Belize's carbon activities in both terrestrial and marine environments.

Through the REDD+ Readiness Project, in collaboration with the MNR's Lands Information Unit a Land Tenure Assessment was carried out in the Toledo District that will serve as the baseline for land tenure within the country. There is a need to align this action with the Results-Based Payment (RBP) legislation being drafted.

TAP assessment. *There is no national geo-referenced REDD+ information system or registry operational. The country is working on Land Tenure Assessments that would be the basis of a geo-referenced REDD+ information system, but since this is a very elaborate process, this will take some time and resources to finish. It is unclear to what extent this information will be publicly available. The TAP reviewer concurs with the ORANGE rating.*

Sub-Component 2d. Social and Environmental Impacts

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. There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

23. Analysis of social and environmental safeguard issues (Criterion 23: GREEN)

Self-assessment. Consultation is an important element of a SESA and therefore the project had to identify its key stakeholders. 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+ Program in Belize. All the consultations with IPs were conducted in-person. The consultant team 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.

All consultations with stakeholder groups other than those with IPs were conducted through a virtual meeting platform (Zoom). The platform have facilitated the engagement of stakeholders who would not otherwise participate in decision-making processes because of distance and related transaction costs. Three main recommendations were identified for the follow-up SESA process:

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, to receive meaningful and useful feedback from all stakeholders.

TAP assessment. *Since the draft RP does not contain activities to be developed during REDD+ implementation, the applicable social and environmental safeguard issues relevant to the country context have only been identified/analyzed via studies or diagnostics, with very limited consultation processes, as pointed out in the three recommendations for follow-up processes. The critical issues of the SESA process require more attention, such as land tenure rights, a transparent and fair BSM, regulations and control regarding land use, and to integrate women and youth in the decision-making processes. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

24. REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts (Criterion 24: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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 OPs 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). Some of these risks will only become clearer or get confirmed once REDD+ implementation gets broken down into REDD+ implementing (sub-) projects. Other risks, however, can be addressed from the very start of REDD+ implementation, and ways to do so then need to be mainstreamed throughout every level of REDD+ implementation. 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.

TAP assessment. *The SESA results and the identification of social and environmental impacts (both positive and negative) could not be used to prioritize and design the REDD+ strategy options, as these are not defined yet. Only general strategic pillars and lines are developed for the REDD+ strategy and a list a possible positive and negative impacts of these are presented in the SESA and used in the ESMF to define a general strategy to avoid or minimize negative impacts and enhance positive impacts. The TAP recommends the country to prioritize the strategic pillars, identify the institutions that will take the lead to develop activities to be implemented for each strategic pillar and associated lines and to develop a timeframe required. TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating more adequate.*

25. Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) (Criterion 25: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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, based on the strategic pillars and lines.

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 draft National REDD+ Strategy or a draft ESMF can address. Several 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.

TAP assessment. *A generic ESMF is in place that manage the identified environmental and social risks / potential impacts related to the strategic pillars and lines. A strategy is outlined to identify possible additional risks of future REDD+ activities, that are not contemplated in the ESMF. Since the ESMF requires refinements once the REDD+ activities are identified, the TAP considers that a YELLOW rating may be more appropriate. .*

Component 3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level (FREL/FRL).

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

Component 3 has been one of the great successes for Belize under this initiative, through the development of its Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL). The report was completed and submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Belize has 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.

Self-assessment. 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. 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.

- The preparatory phase, which took approximately 7 months, involved a process of capacity building in the Forest Department to determine the Forest Reference Level (FREL) 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 to 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 were 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 in the FREL.

The FREL has been prepared following IPCC standards and in agreement with the Greenhouses Gases Inventory. At the preparation of the FREL in 2020, the decision was made 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 affected by hurricanes (Belize, Belize First Biennial Update Report to UNFCCC, 2020).

TAP assessment. *The FREL has some shortcomings that will complicate the quantification of all five REDD+ activities that Belize intends to use for carbon crediting. The definition of degraded forest is lacking in the FREL, and thus there are no data available concerning all possible transitions to and from degraded forest. It is also not clear if the transition of primary forest to secondary forest is considered as deforestation or as forest degradation. No data are presented on the effect of illegal or unsustainable logging on forest carbon. It is also not clear how all the EFs of recovering forests after disturbances are incorporated in the LU-change matrix, as these disturbance classes are not defined in the land classification. As Belize is a country with high impacts of natural forest disturbances, a clear definition has to be put into place of how to take into account emissions and removals in areas that transit from “disturbed by natural processes” to “human induced disturbances” and vice versa and how to monitor these transitions and the associated carbon accounting over time. The country recognizes that the database of national emission factors (EF) is far from complete. The TAP concludes that currently the country is not able to quantify emission reductions from reduced forest degradation, sustainable forest management, and stock enhancements in degraded forest. The TAP suggests using IPCC EFs for those cases where EF default values are available, instead of EFs derived from expert opinion. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating for this component.*

Self-assessment. 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. The archived 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).

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.

TAP assessment. *The national FREL (as part of the R-Package) uses a documented methodology. Steps to improve the FREL are identified, particularly in relation to improving emission factors. The TAP reviewer suggests clarifying the definitions of degraded forests(no definition found) versus secondary forests (regenerating forest after >70% tree mortality due to a disturbance), and deforestation versus forest degradation. The TAP noticed that around 40% of deforestation occurs in secondary forests and that shifting cultivation has been treated both as a driver of deforestation and forest degradation, which may be due to the lack of a clear definition of deforestation and forest degradation. A period of how long a forest can be temporarily without tree cover to maintain its definition as forest may help to distinguish these processes and to quantify these accordingly in the LU change monitoring. The TAP reviewer considers that a YELLOW rating may be more appropriate.*

27. Use of historical data and adjusted for national circumstances (Criterion 27: GREEN)

Self-assessment. The reference period for the FREL/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 FRL values and the underlying historical emissions and removals are derived from the national GHG inventory database, 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 the 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.

TAP assessment. *The FFREL/FRL considers historical data, based on a time-series analysis of satellite images, adjusted for national circumstances in terms of LU classification. The proposed adjustments are credible and defensible, although it is not clear how degraded forests are treated. Sufficient data and documentation are available on request, provided in a transparent fashion, to*

allow for the reconstruction or independent cross-checking of the FREL/FRL. The TAP concurs with the GREEN rating.

28. Technical feasibility of the methodological approach, and consistency with UNFCCC/IPCC guidance and guidelines (Criterion 28: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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).

TAP assessment. *The FREL/FRL (presented as part of the R-Package) is based on transparent, information, consistent with UNFCCC guidance and the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines. The TAP considers that the information is not complete, since degraded forest is not distinguished from primary forest, and as such it will be difficult to quantify the emission reductions from reduced forest degradation, sustainable forest management, and stock enhancement of degraded forest as REDD+ activities. The FREL allow for a technical assessment of the data sets, approaches, methods, models (if applicable) and assumptions used in the construction of the FREL/FRL. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating of this criterion more adequate.*

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

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).

Self-assessment. Prior to the REDD+ Project, Belize had 51 Permanent Sample Plots (PSP) established, through the collaborative work of FD and other projects such as Key Biodiversity Areas (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. 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 additional plots which are classified as Destructive Sample Plots, allowed for Belize to collect data in the areas where gaps were identified for the country. 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 database, it enabled the use of IPCC Approach 3 and Tier 2 emission factors for developing the GHGi database.

TAP assessment. *The documentation of the monitoring approach shows that there is a rationale of the selected methodologies. The shortcomings of the approach are treated under component 3 and are also pertinent for component 4. The non-carbon aspects and safeguards of the REDD+ strategy are identified, but monitoring criteria and indicators are not defined yet. The institutions that will be responsible to carry out the monitoring and reporting are also not identified yet. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating adequate for this component.*

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. There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

29. Documentation of monitoring approach (Criterion 29: GREEN)

Self-assessment. The MRV System produced for Belize provides the Landsat Vegetation Continuous Fields (VCF) tree cover layers, which contain estimates of the percentage of horizontal ground cover 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, defined as the proportional, vertical 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. 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. Two lidar datasets 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 2020. As shown by Fig. 5, the reference dataset covers a diverse range of forest density, and vegetation type.

TAP assessment. *There is a clear rationale or analytic evidence supporting the selection of the used methodology (combination of remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches, systems resolution, coverage, accuracy, inclusions of carbon pools and gases) and suggestions of improvement over time. Some parts of the system have been technically reviewed. The TAP concurs with the GREEN rating.*

30. Demonstration of early system implementation (Criterion 30: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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, the generation of wall-to-wall land cover/land use maps using open-source satellite imagery, as a Quality Assurance for Activity Data is being developed. 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).

TAP assessment. *The country will use the 5 REDD+ activities for their future carbon crediting system. However, there is no definition of degraded forest and is not separated in the FREL/FRL and as such reduction of emissions due to forest degradation, sustainable forest management, and stock enhancement of degraded forest, cannot yet be monitored. Also, there are few Tier 2 data available to calculate the emission factors of LU transitions. National displacement of emissions (leakage) will not be an issue, as all activity data are collected nationally with quality assurance mechanisms available for these activity data.*

There is no mention how key stakeholders will be involved (participating/consulted) in the development and/or early implementation of the system, including data collection and any potential verification of its results. The system will allow for comparison of changes in forest area and carbon content (and associated GHG emissions) relative to the baseline estimates used for the FREL/FRL, taking into account the limitations mentioned in previous criteria. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating of this criterion more adequate.

31. Institutional arrangements and capacities (Criterion 31: GREEN)

Self-assessment. Belize's GIS monitoring system maps reports change 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, carry out ground-truthing exercises as well as verification of points. It is 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 data, wall to wall mapping that is utilized as a baseline. Because Belize is a small country, 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. The output will be available as a spatial file (raster time series) of annual forest carbon and 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. For Belize to continue 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 country. 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.

TAP assessment. *There are mandates clearly defined to perform tasks related to forest monitoring (e.g., satellite data processing, forest inventory, information sharing). A transparent means of publicly sharing forest and emissions data is available. Associated resource needs have been identified and estimated (e.g., required capacities, training, hardware/software). No budget is presented. The TAP concurs with the GREEN rating.*

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

There is no self-assessment of this sub-component, as such the TAP assessments will be explained for each criterion.

32. Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues
(Criterion32: GREEN)

Self-assessment. The following other environmental benefits of REDD+ were identified: water quality, air quality and biodiversity conservation. Poverty, employment and access to services are important social factors. 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. The Cancun 2006 Safeguards adopted by Belize were Safeguards A, B, C, D, E, F and G specifically. Using these safeguards and the assessment of Belize's demography, Safeguards C, D and E look at the non-carbon aspects and social and environmental issues. The SIS site is currently being housed with an independent source and will be transferred to 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 mechanisms be put in place to ensure continuous updating of the system as needed, this person can also oversee the FGRM. Because the SIS was not finalized until the end of the project, no follow up communication took place Outreach within the indigenous communities will require more time and efforts, as with all other aspects; the language and education barrier is always a challenge.

Tap assessment. *Relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental safeguard issues of REDD+ preparations have been identified. There are no capacity building recommendations associated with these issues. The TAP reviewer concurs with the GREEN rating*

33. Monitoring, reporting and information sharing (Criterion 33: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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. 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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 the following step.
- 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.
- 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.

TAP assessment. *A transparent system for periodically sharing consistent information on non-carbon aspects and safeguards is under construction and not yet in an early operational stage, since the REDD+ strategy and BSM are still in a draft stage. Sources and type of information being made available are not yet identified and it is not clear which qualitative or quantitative variables will be used to measure the impacts on rural livelihoods, conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services provision, key governance factors directly pertinent to REDD+ preparations, and the implementation of safeguards. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating of this criterion more adequate.*

34. Institutional arrangements and capacities (Criterion 34: GREEN)

Self-assessment. 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+ for Belize to benefit

Tap assessment. *Mandates to perform tasks related to non-carbon aspects and safeguards are not clearly defined. As mentioned under criterion 33, the SIS is still under construction and sources and*

type of information to made available are not identified yet. The TAP reviewer considers a YELLOW rating of this criterion more adequate.

4. Summary assessment and recommendations

a. REDD+ Readiness progress

Belize has made considerable progress on REDD+ readiness preparation since the midterm report, although it was confronted with COVID restriction protocols during 2020 and 2021, which slowed down many activities. The country has made significant progress in involving indigenous peoples in the readiness process and have designed various instruments and institutions to facilitate consultation with these important stakeholder groups. However, key stakeholder groups that are related to the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation have not been consulted sufficiently yet to consider them participants of the REDD+ readiness process. It is considered important to involve other ministries more actively in the readiness process to get these key stakeholder groups on board. Key documents are still in draft format and will require multiple consultation sessions with the key stakeholders. No key REDD+ activities have been identified and thus the SESA and ESMF are generic documents that need to be refined once the activities have been identified. The BSM is also still in draft and requires more consultations. The FREL has some limitations that will need to be attended to allow Belize to administer the five REDD+ activities, as planned. No data are available to help to country to quantify the impact of sustainable forest management on carbon and reductions of emissions due to reduced forest degradation and stock enhancement of degraded forests. Finally, the monitoring system of social and environmental safeguards is still under construction, The parameters to be monitored and the responsible institutions to collect the data are not yet identified.

b. Self-assessment process

Due to the restrictions implemented during COVID, Belize could only contact a limited number of key stakeholders for the self-assessment process. The TAP considers that the progress reported in the self-assessment has been rather optimistic and did not consider enough the amount of efforts still required to finish the Readiness Plan. The TAP suggests change the rating of 22 criteria to a lower level, as these do not show the advances required for the rating obtained during the self-assessment. The TAP suggests to adjust two YELLOW ratings into ORANGE and 20 GREEN ratings into YELLOW. All components are progressing well but require further development. Below a table with the ratings of the self-assessment and the suggestions of the TAP reviewer.

Table 1. Ratings of the components and criteria obtained in the self-assessment and suggested ratings from the TAP reviewer.

Components and Criteria	Self-assessment	TAP
Component 1. REDD+ Organization Framework, Consultations, and Grievance Redress		
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		
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 2. Prepare the REDD+ Strategy		
11. Assessment and analysis		
12. Prioritization 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		
16. Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategy options		
17. Feasibility assessment		
18. Implications of strategy options on existing sectoral policies		
19. Adoption and implementation of legislation/ regulations		
20. Guidelines for implementation		
21. Benefit sharing mechanism		
22. National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities		
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 4. Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Safeguards Systems		
29. Documentation of monitoring approach		
30. Demonstration of early system implementation		
31. Institutional arrangements and capacities		
32. Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues		
33. Monitoring, reporting and information sharing		
34. Institutional arrangements and capacities		

c. Overall assessment and recommendations

The TAP considers that Belize is on the right way to prepare the country for REDD+ implementation. The country has established solid instruments and institutions to involve the IPs in the preparation process. It is highly recommended to involve all key stakeholders in the process. More active participation of other governmental institutions is highly recommended, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and those institutions that can help with the legislative requirements defined in the strategic pillars and lines. The TAP also recommends defining the key activities for REDD+, together with the other institutions and key stakeholders, that are essential for the country to accomplish the emission reduction goals for 2030. The FREL/FRL requires some adjustments to allow Belize to report on emission reductions and increases in removal of all five REDD+ activities.

5. Background documents

The following additional documents were consulted during the TAP assessment:

- BENIC, 2019. BENIC REDD+ National Strategy Review Feedback Report. July 2019. 7 pp.
- NCCO, s.f. REDD+ Draft Stakeholder Engagement Protocol_V3. 3 pp.
- AAE-CADS, 2021. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the REDD+ Readiness Project in Belize ; Reporte 1: Scoping Report. 116 pp.
- AAE-CADS, 2021. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the REDD+ Readiness Project in Belize; Reporte 2: Prioritization Report. 58 pp.
- AAE-CADS, 2021. Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the REDD+ Readiness Project in Belize Reporte 3: SESA report. 185 pp
- Forest Dept, 2021. Belize National REDD+ Strategy. 71 pp.
- ECGD, 2022. Development of a Benefit Sharing Mechanism for the implementation of REDD+ in Belize. 36 pp.
- MAFFESDI, 2020. Belize Forest Reference Level (FrI) /Forest Reference Emission Level (Frel), 2001 – 2015. 97 pp.
- AAE-CADS, 2021. Analysis of causes of deforestation and forest degradation in Belize. 24 pp.
- MNRPM, 2022. Toledo District Land Tenure Final Report 2021. 22 pp.
- AAE-CADS, 2021. Environmental and Social Management Framework for the REDD+ Readiness Project in Belize. 116 pp.
- Min of Ag, 2015. National-Agriculture-and-Food-Policy-of-Belize-2015 to 2030. 126 pp.
- MAFFESDI, 2020. Belize’s Fourth National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report. 181 pp.