## Understanding REDD+ and the UNFCCC

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**Key Messages**

- REDD+ is an innovative initiative that aims at tipping the economic balance in favor of sustainable management of forests;
- Under the UNFCCC, REDD+ is understood to comprise reduced deforestation and degradation, forest carbon stock enhancement, sustainable management of forests and forest carbon stock conservation;
- During the UNFCCC negotiations, countries collectively agreed on the importance of having an iterative, flexible and learning-by-doing approach to REDD+ implementation;
- Several multilateral initiatives support countries in getting ready for REDD+ and starting to implement REDD+ policies and measures.
INTRODUCTION

This module presents the basics of REDD+ and the UN-REDD Programme.

The module includes explanations about:

- What is REDD+ and how it is being negotiated at the global level?
- The importance of REDD+ implementation at the national level and challenges
- International initiatives to support REDD+ implementation at the national level.

WHAT IS REDD+

As was discussed in Module 1: Climate Change and the Role of Forest, there is great potential for mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in the forestry sector. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of Conservation, Sustainable Management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+) is an effort to provide positive incentives to developing countries to contribute to climate change mitigation through activities in the forestry and land-use sectors. If financing for REDD+ implementation is scaled up, it could offer an opportunity to invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development with adequate and predictable support from developed countries and the private sector, although this has not been assured, yet.

Guidance from the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) on REDD+ has been published regularly since 2007, with the most substantial guidance being the seven REDD+-related decisions called Warsaw Framework for REDD+ adopted at COP19 in November 2013. Taken with earlier COP decisions, the UNFCCC has now set out the process for developing countries to receive results-based payments for results-based REDD+ actions, which can be considered as the ‘REDD+ rulebook’.

Before 2007, the concept encompassed only Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (hence the acronym REDD), but then several other elements were added (represented by the plus (+)). These additional elements are (see paragraph 70 of the Cancun Agreement):

- Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- Sustainable management of forests;
- Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

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1 Although the term ‘REDD+ rulebook’ is widely used to refer to the body of REDD+ decisions under the UNFCCC and there is a common agreement within the UN-REDD Programme to use this term, it is important to note that the REDD+ decisions under the UNFCCC have a margin of interpretation and flexibility built into them.
As the simplified graph found in Figure 2.1 shows, the principle of REDD+ is that through more sustainable forest management practices, it is possible to do both:

a) Reduce GHG emissions produced by the forestry sector; and 
b) Enhance the capacity of the forestry sector to act as a carbon sink, by storing and enhancing carbon in the five carbon pools (i.e. aboveground biomass, belowground biomass, soil organic carbon, litter and dead wood).

**EMERGENCE OF REDD+ AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL**

The idea to recognize the economic, social and environmental value of forests raises many questions.

- Implementation and the economic alternatives to finance it?
- What mechanisms should be put in place in order to provide the incentives and channel funds?
- Who should pay?

**THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)**

These questions have been (and are being) discussed and negotiated at the international level under the United Nation’s Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and entered into force on 21 March 1994. As of April 2015, the UNFCCC has 196 country members, also called Parties. Every year, the Parties gather to further negotiate several climate-related issues at meetings called Conference of Parties (COP). COP decisions are labelled in the following way: “# of decision /CP. # of COP”. For example, decision 1/CP.16 is the first decision taken in COP 16.

The goal of the Convention is to stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. It is through the UNFCCC that the Kyoto Protocol, a substantial extension to the Convention, was adopted at the UNFCCC’s 3rd COP in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997. Among other measures, industrialized states (the so-called Annex 1 countries) are required to reduce or limit emissions across sectors, which can include the land-use and forestry sectors.


2. Understanding REDD+ and the UNFCCC

The issue of carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries started to get attention in the mid-2000s. Tropical deforestation, however, was mostly excluded from the scope of the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which provides Certified Emission Reduction units which may be traded in emissions trading schemes.

In the period 2005-2010, the idea of establishing a global mechanism to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries emerged and gained traction in the deliberations under the UNFCCC.

At COP 11 in 2005, the governments of Costa Rica and Papua New Guinea submitted a proposal to include the effort to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation (RED) in the climate negotiations agenda. Definitions for certain important terms were also agreed (see side box 2.2). Two years later, as part of the Bali Action Plan, the UNFCCC COP 13 formally initiated negotiations to provide incentives and policy approaches for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries and supporting the conservation and sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+).

Over succeeding rounds of negotiations, the UNFCCC has adopted numerous decisions that have provided the architecture of an eventual global REDD+ mechanism. A large number of countries confirmed their support and pledged funding for the establishment of such a mechanism as part of the 2009 Copenhagen Accord.

The UNFCCC COP has moreover established rules and provided methodological guidance for the eventual operationalization of REDD+ as part of the 2010 Cancun Agreements, the 2011 Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, the 2012 Doha Climate Gateway, and the 2013 Warsaw Framework for REDD+. Methodological guidance for REDD+ was concluded in June 2015, by agreeing on forwarding three additional decisions to the COP, to be considered in Paris in December 2015.

Decision 1/CP.16 taken during COP16 in Cancun requests countries to have the following elements in place for REDD+ implementation and to access results-based payments/results-based finance, each of which is discussed in more details in their own module:

- National Strategy (NS) or Action Plan (AP): (Module 4);
- National Forestry Monitoring System (NFMS) Module 5: including Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV);
- Safeguard Information System (Module 7);
- Forest Reference Emission Levels (FREL) and/or Forest Reference Levels (FRL): Module 6.

**Box 2.2: Definitions from COP11**

**Afforestation**

“... the direct human-induced conversion of land that has not been forested for a period of at least 50 years to forested land through planting, seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources.”

**Reforestation**

“... the direct human-induced conversion of non-forested land to forested land through planting, seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources, on land that was forested but that has been converted to non-forested land.”

**Deforestation**

“... the direct human-induced conversion of forested land to non-forested land.”
Figure 2.3 ELEMENTS FOR REDD+ IMPLEMENTATION DECIDED IN COP16

Source: UN-REDD Programme

Figure 2.3 presents the 4 elements as well as the related key COP decisions.

CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING FORESTS AND LAND USE IN CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

There have been several challenges in integrating forests in international climate negotiations.

HISTORICAL

As a principle, Policies and Measures (PAMs) (discussed in depth in Module 8: Policies and Measures) to stabilize global temperature increases should be implemented in a manner that takes into account a country’s historical contribution to current levels of GHG emissions and their respective capabilities for undertaking mitigation actions.

In response to this, the initial UNFCCC agreement recognized the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. As a result, developed countries should “take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof”, as they have historically made the largest contribution to the accumulation of GHGs in the atmosphere.

JURISDICTION

Some people perceive REDD+ as a way to impose international rules and assess the appropriateness of Policies and Measures (PAMs) adopted by countries. This raises a number of contentious political issues in developing countries about national sovereignty, economic well-being and local impacts on livelihoods.

APPROPRIATENESS

Reducing and controlling emissions based on forestry and land-use activities has also been criticized for doing little to move the world away from a fossil-fuel based economy. It has sometimes been perceived as delaying or preventing significant mitigation action, especially in developed countries.

REFLECTION POINT

Has REDD+ been discussed as a national policy issue in your country? When was this? What was the outcome?

REDD+ Activities

Under the UNFCCC, REDD+ is understood to comprise reduced deforestation and degradation, forest carbon stock enhancement, sustainable management of forests and forest carbon stock conservation. These five
activities cover three different principles as regards climate change mitigation: reduction of emissions; enhancement of the rate of sequestration; maintaining existing forest carbon reservoirs. The five activities are described in more detail below:

1. Reducing emissions from deforestation
Most definitions characterize deforestation as the long-term or permanent conversion of land from forest use to other non-forest uses. Under Decision 16/CMP.1, the UNFCCC defined deforestation as: “… the direct, human-induced conversion of forested land to non-forested land”. Effectively this definition means a reduction in canopy cover from above the threshold for forest definition to below this threshold. Accordingly, reducing emissions from deforestation is the slowing or reversal of human-induced conversion and an increase in canopy cover.

2. Reducing emissions from forest degradation
A direct, human-induced loss of forest carbon stocks which does not qualify as deforestation. The thresholds for carbon loss and minimum area affected need to be specified to operationalize this definition. In terms of changes in carbon stocks, degradation therefore would represent a direct human-induced/anthropogenic decrease in stocks, with measured canopy cover remaining above the threshold for definition of forest and no change in land use. Accordingly, reducing emissions from forest degradation is the slowing or reversal of human-induced decreases in carbon stocks.

3. Conservation of forest carbon stocks
The conservation of forests, their carbon pools and reservoirs and their ability to sequester and capacity to store carbon. Conservation is generally considered as an emissions neutral activity as it preserves a status quo, and can hence be considered as actively maintaining a carbon stock.

4. Sustainable management of forests
The management of forest areas designated for the production of timber in such a way as to effectively balance social, economic and ecological objectives and maintain or improve carbon pools. A narrower definition of sustainable management of forests refers to bringing the rate of extraction in line with the rate of increment.

5. Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
The creation or improvement of carbon pools and reservoirs and their ability to sequester and capacity to store carbon. It includes forest management activities such as restoring existing but degraded forests and increasing forest cover through afforestation and reforestation on lands that were previously not classified as forests.

Reflection Point
Why do you think the third activity, the conservation of forest stocks, was not considered prior to Cancun?
IMPLEMENTATION OF REDD+ ACTIVITIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Although REDD+ negotiations are conducted at the global level, the scope of the activities to be implemented will be national, although they can be sub-national at the interim. Here’s a short explanation by Josep Garí from the UN-REDD programme:

“In order to be effective and lasting, REDD+ was originally conceived as a mechanism with a nation-wide scope, anchored to national-level policies, national implementation measures and public/private transformational investments. Such national scope would foster, achieve and demonstrate sustainable development with a social and environmental performance of magnitude. The national scope of the REDD+ mechanism is thus not arbitrary – it lays the basis for mainstreaming, impact and permanence.

Conversely, local projects on REDD+ remain a tangible means to test innovations and to accomplish concrete results. In fact, REDD+ projects of diverse sizes and designs are advancing in several countries, such as Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Kenya and Tanzania. The investment phase for REDD+ also accepts pilot projects – as geographically discrete interventions – yet the underlying philosophy of REDD+ remains the achievement of country-wide performance and compliance with UNFCCC objectives and criteria.”

UN-REDD / Josep Garí, “Pilot Projects versus National Policy in the REDD+ Arena”.

Given the technical and procedural complexity involved in the implementation of the REDD+ activities, Parties agreed that this should be done in three phases: Readiness, Implementation and Results-based actions. Figure 2.4 provides more details on each step of the process.

**Figure 2.4 A phased approach to REDD+ implementation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Readiness</th>
<th>Phase 2: Implementation</th>
<th>Phase 3: Results-based actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries design national strategies and action plans with relevant stakeholders, build capacity for REDD+ implementation, work on policies and measures for REDD+ implementation and design demonstration activities</td>
<td>National strategies, policies and action plans proposed in Phase 1 are implemented and tested. This phase may include results-based demonstration activities and require additional capacity building, technology development and transfer</td>
<td>Results-based REDD+ actions are supported implemented at the national level and results are fully measured, reported and verified</td>
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Source: UN-REDD Programme

During the UNFCCC negotiations, countries collectively agreed on the importance of having an iterative, flexible and learning-by-doing approach to REDD+ implementation. In practice, however, the theoretical framework proposed in Figure 2.4 is a little too simplified and there is now consensus about the fact that the

three phases can overlap and intertwine. The actual process can be broken down into several overlapping steps, as shown in Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5 The iterative process of REDD+ implementation**

The following modules will present in more depth most of the elements found in this diagram:

- **Module 3: Drivers of forest degradation and deforestation (DFDD)**
- **Module 4: Nation Strategies or Action Plans (NS/AP)**
- **Module 5: National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS)**
- **Module 6: Forest Emissions Reference Levels and Forest Reference Levels (FREL/FRL)**
- **Module 7: Safeguards**
- **Module 8: Policies and Measures (PAMs)**

**Reflection Point**

How will your country interpret the “flexibility of implementation”?

**Benefits of implementing REDD+ activities at the national level**

In addition to contributing to global GHG emissions mitigation, the integration of REDD+ activities at the national level can provide several advantages:

- Support to design and implementation of Policies and Measures (PAMs) in the forestry and other sectors that have an impact on REDD+ efforts;
- Payments per ton of carbon emissions reduced or removed;
- International recognition for mitigation results;
- Multiple benefits: biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation, catalyze a green economy that integrates multiple sectors (e.g. forestry, agriculture, energy, finance).
Understanding REDD+ and the UNFCCC

Challenges in Implementing REDD+ Activities at the National Level

A number of technical concerns have hindered early action on deforestation in developing countries:

- **Permanence**: how to ensure that reductions in emissions from deforestation are not eventually reversed by later activities;
- **Displacement**: how to ensure that actions are not otherwise negated by increases in deforestation activities elsewhere;
- **Finance**: ensuring meaningful sources of finance and adequate private sector engagement;
- **Conflicting interests**: powerful political and economic interests may favour continued deforestation and degradation;
- **Institutional arrangements**: implementation must be coordinated across various government levels and agencies – e.g. Ministries of Environment and Forest should successfully coordinate with Ministries of Finance and Planning;
- **Benefit sharing**: if benefits are to be distributed, effectiveness, efficiency and equity need to be balanced; tenure insecurity and safeguards must be genuinely addressed; and transparent institutions put in place; and
- **Technical complexity**: measuring emissions from forestry and establishing reference levels can be a technical challenge.

Recognizing these challenges, the international community has aimed to provide guidance to handle these issues. One of the responses was to define Safeguards, which are further detailed in Module 7: Safeguards. Additionally, multilateral initiatives have been created in order to help countries address these challenges.

Multilateral REDD+ Initiatives

Several multilateral initiatives support countries in getting ready for REDD+ and starting to implement REDD+ policies and measures. The following section will describe a few of them, namely:

- UN-REDD Programme
- Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
- Forest Investment Program
- Other initiatives

**UN-REDD Programme (www.un-redd.org)**

The UN-REDD Programme was launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The Programme offers both Direct National Support (DNS) and Support to National Actions (SNA).

Examples of direct national support:

- Comprehensive REDD+ readiness support through National Programmes to selected partner countries to articulate a national approach to REDD+ implementation;
- Targeted support and technical advice to all partner countries on issues such as safeguards, benefit sharing, MRV, governance, etc.;
- Strong focus on country ownership and support to wide stakeholders consultation processes including Indigenous Peoples the civil society.
Examples of Support to National Actions

- Development of tools, methodologies and guidelines;
- Knowledge sharing and South-South collaboration;
- Building of awareness of and support for REDD+ at national and international levels;
- Secretariat services.

Figure 2.6 presents the 60 countries which were partners to the UN-REDD Programme as of May 2015.

**Figure 2.6 UN-REDD Programme partner countries as of May 2015**

Established in 2008, the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) is a global partnership focused on REDD+. FCPF’s Readiness Fund provides funding through to support capacity building and preparedness for REDD+ activities.

REDD+ preparedness activities include:

- adopting national REDD+ strategies
- developing reference emission levels (RELs)
- designing measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) systems
- setting up REDD+ national management arrangements (including environmental and social safeguards)

Moreover, FCPF’s Carbon Fund (operational since May 2011) is designed to pilot performance-based payments for emission reductions from REDD+ activities.

The FCPF and the UN-REDD Programme have developed a harmonized standard template for national programs. The Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) includes a number of conditions, addresses standard policy and governance issues, and is subject to review and monitoring.
FOREST INVESTMENT PROGRAM (HTTP://WWW.CLIMATEINVESTMENTFUNDS.ORG/CIF/NODE/5)

The Forest Investment Program (FIP) supports developing countries’ efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and promote sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. The FIP is active in the following eight pilot countries: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mexico and Peru.

The FIP enhances the importance of the REDD+ agenda by linking relevant mitigation and adaptation initiatives and providing additional motivation for comprehensive engagement and dialogue on the issue across multiple stakeholder groups. Channeled through the multilateral development banks as grants and near-zero interest credits, FIP financing addresses mainly:

- Promoting forest mitigation efforts, including protection of forest ecosystem services
- Providing support outside the forest sector to reduce pressure on forests
- Helping countries strengthen institutional capacity, forest governance, and forest-related knowledge
- Mainstreaming climate resilience considerations and contribute to biodiversity conservation, protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and poverty reduction through rural livelihoods enhancements

To extend its reach beyond national investment plans and encourage more private sector participation, funds are also being awarded on a competitive basis for private sector projects in pilot countries. A 2013 call for proposals resulted in four projects endorsements totalling US$31.3 million in Brazil, Ghana, and Mexico.

OTHER REDD+ INITIATIVES
- European Union’s FLEGT (http://www.euflegt.efi.int/home/) and REDD Facilities (http://www.euredd.efi.int/);
- Germany’s REDD Early Movers (REM) Programme (http://theredddesk.org/markets-standards/germanys-redd-early-movers-programme);
- USAID’s Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Project (http://rmportal.net/library/content/fcmc).

CASE STUDY

EXERCISES
1. Fill in the blanks using the following words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>developing countries</th>
<th>low-carbon</th>
<th>Financial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to sustainable development</td>
<td>REDD+</td>
<td>reduce emissions</td>
</tr>
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</table>

REDD+ is an effort to create a _______value for the carbon stored in forests, offering positive incentives for _______to_______from forested lands and invest in _______paths _______with developed countries’ adequate and predictable support.

2. Look at the graph below and label it correctly, using the following terms:

Emissions
Reference period
Year
2. Understanding REDD+ and the UNFCCC

Projection
Without REDD
With REDD
Actual emissions

i. What is represented by the triangle?
ii. Describe what the graph shows.