

CHAPTER 5

REDD+ : PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

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1. Current status of climate negotiations

Member states of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) have been actively engaged in negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) since 2005.

At the 11th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Montreal in 2005, Costa Rica and Papua New Guinea introduced a proposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions originating from deforestation in developing countries.¹¹ This proposal was supported by numerous tropical forest countries, including those of the Congo Basin. In their view, the proposal would allow the climate change mitigation potential of forests to be developed and contribute to the UNFCCC objectives. Since then, the COMIFAC countries have spoken with a single voice at the UNFCCC discussions on REDD+.

Thus far, these negotiations have focused mainly on technical challenges (scale, measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) modalities, and reference levels) and REDD+ financing. The COMIFAC countries have adopted a common position on these issues. They have presented seven submissions to the UNFCCC (see table 5.1) and made ministerial level policy declarations. Their joint position notably contributed to broadening the scope of REDD+ by including reducing degradation and the conservation and sustainable management of forests.

In addition, numerous countries in the sub-region have regularly supported and contributed to various submissions made by the Coalition for Rainforest Nations.¹²

11 See FCCC/CP/2005/MISC.1

12 See for example : FCCC/AWGLCA/2012/MISC.3 ; FCCC/SBSTA/2012/MISC.1/Add.1 ; FCCC/SBSTA/2011/MISC.7

Table 5.1: COMIFAC country submissions to the UNFCCC

Date of publication	REDD+ issues targeted	Participating countries	UNFCCC reference number
11 April 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> REDD+ scientific issues Key principles Policy and funding approaches Methodological issues Roadmap 	Submission of Gabon, in the name of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.	FCCC/SBSTA/2006/MISC.5
2 March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principles Policy approaches, including scale of application Funding: market and stabilization fund approaches Levels of reference and adjustment factors 	Submission of Gabon, in the name of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.	FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.2
10 September 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of degradation National and subnational approaches Reference scenarios Market and stabilization fund approaches Roadmap 	Submission of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the name of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.	FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.14
22 April 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodological issues related to the sustainable management of forests, degradation, and reference levels Subnational approaches and leakages Funding mechanisms, including markets and other options 	Submission of Gabon, in the name of Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo	FCCC/SBSTA/2008/MISC.4
10 March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building REDD+ preparation fund Inclusion of local communities to define methodological guidelines 	Submission of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the name of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.	FCCC/SBSTA/2009/MISC.2
21 May 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding: public sources and REDD+ financing governance Appropriate discussion forum for REDD+ financing Consideration of multiple benefits of REDD+ 	Submission of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the name of Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe .	FCCC/AWGLCA/2012/MISC.3/Add.2
24 March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance and coordination of REDD+ funding Non-market mechanisms and creation of new market mechanisms for REDD+ Relations between REDD+ MRV modalities and those of NAMA 	Submission of Chad, in the name of Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe , and Chad	Pending consideration during the 38 th meeting of the SBSTA ¹³

13 Available at: http://unfccc.int/files/documentation/submissions_from_parties/application/pdf/20130324_chad_subm_lulucf_sbsta38.pdf



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1.1 On technical issues

Photo 5.1: Forest north of Franceville, Gabon

In the UNFCCC negotiations, countries of the sub-region wanted all REDD+ activities to be treated equally, emphasizing the importance of rewarding virtuous behavior which reduces forest degradation and leads to forest conservation. This COMIFAC¹⁴ position is quite rational given that the sub-region is more affected by forest degradation than deforestation, and that efforts to preserve the forest cover have been made despite limited financial resources.

1.1.1 Safeguard information systems

During the 36th meeting (Bonn, 2012) of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), countries of the sub-region maintained that safeguard information systems (see Section 2.2 for a definition of safeguards) must be based on principles of transparency, rigor, consistency, and comparability, and take into account country circumstances. In their view, these systems must be able to evolve, be consistent with the progress of national REDD+ strategies, and be based on existing communication channels such as official national communications and biennial reports.

1.1.2 Reference emission levels and reference levels

When drawing up forest reference levels (RL) and/or forest reference emission levels (REL) (see Section 2.3 for definitions of RL and REL), the COMIFAC countries deem it necessary¹⁵ to take

into account, using an adjustment factor, previous good forest ecosystem management practices and the specific situation of each country, including socio-economic development policies. The countries of the sub-region repeatedly noted that participating REDD+ countries must be able to develop their RELs/RLs in a gradual manner and according to national circumstances.

1.1.3 Measurement, reporting, and verification modalities

The countries of the sub-region did not discuss MRV (measurement, reporting, and verification) modalities at length at the UNFCCC. However, at the 36th session of SBSTA (2012), the COMIFAC countries maintained that REDD+ MRV modalities should be based on IPCC principles, namely completeness, consistency, transparency, comparability, and accuracy, and that they be coherent with and conform to the guidelines and modalities for REL and RL development. These modalities must be flexible and able to evolve to take into account national capacities and circumstances, and must be compatible with the reporting and verification guidelines for Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA).

¹⁴ See FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.14 and FCCC/SBSTA/2008/MISC.4

¹⁵ See FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.2, FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.14 and FCCC/SBSTA/2008/MISC.4

1.2. On REDD+ financing

For the COMIFAC, REDD+ financing should be both public and private (including market-based financing mechanisms). Different mechanisms and funds were suggested to finance REDD+: the creation of a dedicated carbon market, setting up a stabilization fund, and the introduction of a tax on goods and services with a high carbon footprint.¹⁶

For the COMIFAC¹⁷ countries, the choice of funding sources remains a sovereign exercise. Each country has the right to decide which funding sources are appropriate. The countries consider it essential that increased, new, additional, predictable, and sufficient financing be made available rapidly. They point out that the financial commitments made by developed countries must draw mainly from public sources supplemented by non-substitutable private sources.

The COMIFAC countries note the unique character of REDD+, which generates benefits

from climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the numerous socio-economic and ecosystem co-benefits.

The COMIFAC countries are concerned about the future financing structure of REDD+ which, in phase three (full implementation), might only compensate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and not forest conservation and sustainable management. Underlying this concern is the fact that many countries in the sub-region have low historic deforestation rates and their forest conservation and sustainable management behavior has been virtuous. In certain cases, this may be more a result of economic circumstances than national policy. Countries of the sub-region also supported the call for the creation of financing specifically dedicated to REDD+ within the Green Climate Fund to monetize the adaptation benefits generated by REDD+ activities.

1.3. The Warsaw Decisions: repercussions for COMIFAC countries

The Warsaw COP-19 (2013) allowed Parties to move forward on several contentious issues and to conclude certain discussions that had been left open in Doha (2012). In total, seven REDD+ related decisions were adopted. Notably, issues related to REDD+ financing, the governance and coordination of support, MRV modalities and forest monitoring systems, safeguard information systems, as well as those related to deforestation and degradation drivers were debated.

The Parties in particular redoubled their efforts to find a middle ground on the question of financing, notably using the report presented in Warsaw by a working group created in Doha. The objective was to increase REDD+ funding and improve effectiveness. On this issue, the Congo Basin countries repeatedly affirmed that efforts should not be limited to simply reducing forest-related emissions, but that they must also promote forest conservation and sustainable management. They noted that private REDD+

funding must not be a roundabout way to subsidize technology transfers from companies based in developed countries, but must generate concrete economic and social benefits for the host country.

In Warsaw, the Parties adopted a decision¹⁸ in line with positions held by Congo Basin countries over the years. In particular, the Parties agreed that REDD+ funding be allocated in an equitable and balanced manner, taking into account a diversity of approaches, notably “alternative” ones. The decision also calls for the Standing Committee on Finance, under the framework of its work on coordination and coherence, to work on funding forests in the broad sense, not only within the framework of REDD+, but also within the framework of alternative approaches. Furthermore, the Parties agreed to link the receipt of “performance payments” to performance measurement, reporting, and verification directives during the REDD+ full implementation phase,

¹⁶ See FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.2, FCCC/SBST A/2008/MISC.4 and FCCC/AWGLCA/2012/MISC.3/Add.2

¹⁷ See FCCC/AWGLCA/2012/MISC.3/Add.2

¹⁸ See the advance version of the Decision “Work programme on results-based finance to progress the full implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70”. Available: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_redd_finance.pdf

and to publish this information on the UNFCCC REDD+ website. Finally, the Parties reiterated the importance of providing incentives for non-carbon related benefits in order to ensure the sustainability of REDD+ activities.

Following a request made in Doha, the Parties meeting under the auspices of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the SBSTA, considered different options to improve REDD+ coordination and governance, notably through the creation of an agency, a council or a committee. The COMIFAC countries supported the establishment of a REDD+ Council. In Warsaw, the Parties decided, however, to create instead a voluntary discussion platform to improve the coordination of support which will meet once a year during the first annual meeting of subsidiary bodies and which will be supported by the Secretariat.¹⁹ To participate in this discussion, the Parties were invited to nominate a focal point at the UNFCCC who would be in charge of coordinating support. The Parties also were invited to identify national entities eligible to receive results-based funding. The first meeting of this discussion group will be held during the COP-20 in Lima (2014).

While good progress was made in Doha on REDD+ MRV modalities, the Parties did not succeed in coming to an agreement on verification, notably on the differences between the verification modalities for REDD+ and NAMA activities. In this regard, COMIFAC countries regularly upheld that NAMA methodological approaches should be defined separately from those of REDD+. During the COP-19 in Warsaw, Parties agreed on the verification procedure for REDD+ activities by specifying that the Parties seeking funding for REDD+ results must submit a technical annex with their biennial updated reports. The results presented in the annex in the form of tons of CO₂ equivalent will be analyzed by a team of technical experts appointed by the UNFCCC according to International Consultation and Analysis (ICA) modalities. This decision, which confirms that verification of REDD+ activities will be performed in a non-intrusive and non-punitive manner, is consistent with the position historically defended by Congo Basin countries.



Photo 5.2: REDD National Coordination communication campaign, DRC

Lastly, the Warsaw COP allowed the Parties to advance on other key issues, notably REL and RL submission modalities, national forest monitoring systems, drivers of deforestation and degradation, and submission modalities for summaries of information on safeguards. Details of these decisions, and their potential impacts, are presented in their respective sections below.

On the whole, the Warsaw COP clarified numerous issues which will enable COMIFAC countries to make progress implementing REDD+ and to benefit from its potential. During 2014, countries of the sub-region must nonetheless remain vigilant to ensure that their remaining concerns are considered at the COP-20, notably those concerning benefits unrelated to carbon and alternative, non-market funding approaches.

¹⁹ See the advanced version of the Decision “Coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries, including institutional arrangements”. Available: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_mitigationactions_forest.pdf

2. REDD+ technical challenges

This section reviews four aspects of REDD+: (i) a phased approach to REDD+; (ii) REDD+ safeguards; (iii) reference levels; and, (iv) MRV.

The gradual and cumulative nature of the international climate change negotiation process has resulted in a series of decisions relating to REDD+ activities that are a combination of principles, rules and modalities, including methodological guidance (e.g. Decisions 1/CP.13, 2/

CP.13, 4/CP.15, 1/CP.16). The result of this process is a series of provisions including both institutional and technical recommendations and requirements. This section presents some of the background on the current recommendations and requirements for REDD+, especially key strategic components such as safeguards, reference levels and MRV. These requirements are discussed further in the Congo Basin context as experiences from the field, highlighted in section 4 below.

2.1 REDD+ in three phases

Given the technical and procedural complexity involved in implementing REDD+ activities, the Parties agreed that this process should be undertaken in three phases, as set out in Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 73:

Decides that the activities undertaken by Parties [...] should be implemented in phases, beginning with the development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, and capacity-building, followed by the implementation of national policies and measures and national strategies or action plans that could involve further capacity-building, technology development and transfer and results-based demonstration activities, and evolving into results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified.

The importance of national circumstances for the implementation of REDD+ activities, in the context of the phased approach, is also recognized in Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 74:

Recognizes that the implementation of the [REDD+] activities... including the choice of a starting phase as referred to in paragraph 73 above, depends on the specific national circumstances, capacities and capabilities of each developing country Party and the level of support received.

2.1.1 Phase 1

Phase 1 includes all of the efforts required to define a national REDD+ strategy, including the policies and measures (PAMs)²⁰ and REDD+ activities that a country wishes to implement, and the consequent capacity building needs. This phase also includes the testing and selection of methodologies for reliable, robust and transparent national Monitoring (M) & MRV functions. Phase 1 is often referred to as “REDD+ Readiness”. An important part of this phase is national capacity building, which is designed to give the Parties the knowledge and technical abilities necessary to enter Phase 2. This includes practical training on the pillars of the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) and development of the necessary systems and infrastructure to implement them.

2.1.2 Phase 2

Phase 2 entails implementing demonstration activities to test and refine the methodologies, action plans and PAMs defined during Phase 1. Demonstration activities should focus on establishing whether the PAMs can produce positive and measurable results in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. They can focus on monitoring and reporting at the sub-national level as an interim measure, as specified in Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(c). Phase 2 can also be considered a part of REDD+ Readiness, as it is still

²⁰ Policies and Measures are often used to describe, in general terms, the variety of public policies, incentives, financial and fiscal instruments, regulations, laws, etc., used by a country to curb deforestation and degradation and/or incentivize REDD+ activities that may enhance carbon stocks. There is a wide variety of potential Policies and Measures relevant for REDD+, which may include, for example, increased forest enforcement, forest policies geared to improve land use planning, land tenure reforms, sustainable forest management guidance, fiscal incentives for the forestry sector, etc. Many other examples could form part of a country's Policy and Measures package.

part of a country's efforts to prepare for the full implementation of REDD+ activities.

Awareness raising, capacity building and technology transfer may continue throughout Phase 2, particularly for technical elements that do not need to be fully operational until Phase 3, such as the national forest inventory and satellite remote sensing system. However, it is desirable that the monitoring function of the NFMS be operational in Phase 2 in order to evaluate the outcomes of demonstration activities and to provide information on land use and land use changes to assess whether they are “results-based” (i.e. resulting in net positive outcomes), as required by Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix 1, paragraph 1(j). The forest monitoring system will generate feedback on the performance of the demonstration activities, allowing methodologies to be refined where necessary to improve performance.

2.1.3 Phase 3

During Phase 3, “national implementation”, the monitoring function should ultimately be extended to cover the entire national territory so that the country can assess the impacts of PAMs at the national level and to address the issue of displacement of emissions (leakage). Monitoring, in the context of REDD+, will allow countries to assess the performance of its PAMs and whether they are effective for reducing emissions and enhancing sequestration in the forestry sector. Monitoring for REDD+ could also support countries in the distribution of results-based payments, allowing them to assess where particular PAMs have resulted in net positive outcomes. The monitoring function could also provide additional geospatial data and information to help the countries improve their national communications and biennial update reports to the UNFCCC.

In Phase 3, the MRV function of the NFMS will be fully operational, resulting in national estimates of GHG emissions and removals from the forest sector, in line with Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and COP guidance (Decision 4/CP.15). This MRV function will allow countries to measure the aggregate mitigation performance of REDD+ activities at a national scale (in terms of tCO₂e/year), using a combination of remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory data (Decision 4/CP.15, paragraph 1(d)). This performance will be reported to the UNFCCC Secretariat as part of



Photo 5.3: Students departing fuel wood training field trip at the University of Kisangani



Photo 5.4: Farm clearing along the Ogooué River, Gabon

the Parties' biennial update reports. Subsequently, reporting of GHG mitigation performance will be analyzed by an expert team of the UNFCCC for a technical assessment that follows the ICA modalities, allowing for an appraisal of the data, methods and assumptions used by countries that wish to claim results-based payments.

2.2 REDD+ Safeguards

Social and environmental safeguards for REDD+ implementation are key and not only needed to ensure “no harm” is caused to people and to the environment by REDD+ activities, but also to maximize the potential social and environmental co-benefits from REDD+. There are potential risks associated with REDD+ implementation, such as: potential conflicts over land and forest rights; inequitable benefit sharing of REDD+ revenues; violation of the traditional rights of indigenous peoples and of other forest-dependent communities on forest lands; and, potential negative impacts on natural habitats from fast-growing tree species. In the Congo Basin, where conflicts over use, access and benefit sharing by forest dependent-communities and other forest users are frequent (including within logging concessions and conservation areas), the application of these safeguards is particularly important.

The Cancun Agreements, resulting from the 2010 UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP16),

set out seven safeguards that should be promoted and supported during REDD+ implementation (box 5.1). The Durban Agreement (2011) elaborated on those requirements, requesting that countries engaged in REDD+ provide a summary of information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the REDD+ activities. Finally, COP 19 in Warsaw confirmed that participating REDD+ countries are required to submit a summary of information on safeguards periodically in their national communications, following the initiation of REDD+ activities. On a voluntary basis, Parties may also submit the summary of information to the UNFCCC REDD+ information hub²¹. Finally, the recent Warsaw decision on REDD+ finance²² links the reception of results-based payments to the prior submission of the most recent summary of information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected.

Box 5.1 : Safeguards in the Cancun Agreement (2010)

- Consistency with the objectives of national forest programs and relevant international conventions and agreements;
- Transparent and effective national forest governance structures;
- Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities;
- Full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities;
- Conservation of natural forests and biological diversity and enhancement of other social and environmental benefits;
- Actions to address the risks of reversals; and,
- Actions to reduce the displacement of emissions.

21 See the advance version of the Decision “The timing and the frequency of presentations of the summary of information on how all the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected”. Available: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_safeguards_1cp16a1.pdf

22 See the advance version of the Decision “Work programme on results-based finance to progress the full implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70”. Available: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_redd_finance.pdf

Developing robust national systems to address safeguards is important for countries implementing REDD+ programs, not only because it allows them to comply with emerging guidance agreed to within the UNFCCC, but also because it increases the potential value of REDD+ investments, since safeguards can reduce the risk of social and environmental harm for both donors and private investors. Safeguards can also maximize the likelihood that social and environmental benefits will be achieved, which in turn enhances the sustainability of REDD+ achievements. Some of the Congo Basin countries, particularly those involved in the REDD+ Readiness process, have been actively seeking support to develop their

national-level safeguards systems and to incorporate these into their systems for measurement, reporting and verification of results.

As discussed by Peskett and Todd (2012), a safeguards system at the national level can be composed of two main elements: (i) policies, laws and regulations (PLRs) that clarify the objectives and requirements necessary to address the specific risks and benefits of REDD+ in the country; and, (ii) a safeguard information system that collects and provides information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected.

2.2.1 Instruments for safeguards design and implementation

In the Congo Basin, two international programs supporting REDD+ – the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility²³ (FCPF) and the UN-REDD Program²⁴ – have proposed a series of approaches and tools to build and implement REDD+ safeguards. These two programs are supporting capacity building at the national level towards REDD+ Readiness to ensure the Congo Basin countries meet the minimum requirements to access the results-based, positive incentives for REDD+ in the future. As illustrated in Box 5.2, building national systems that allow the country to comply with safeguards for the implementation of REDD+ is a key aspect of the REDD+ Readiness process.

Two of the main tools providing guidance for developing safeguards in the region are the FCPF's Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) and UN-REDD's Social and Environment Principles and Criteria.

The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment approach to REDD+

The activities financed by the FCPF (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility) must comply with the World Bank's (WB) Operational Policies and Procedures (Box 5.3), taking into account, among other things, the need for effective participation of forest-dependent indigenous peoples and forest dwellers in decisions that may affect them and respecting their rights under national law and applicable international obligations. Given the multi-sectoral, programmatic nature of the REDD+ Readiness process, a strategic approach to address safeguards was deemed necessary by the WB rather than the standard, project-level environmental impact assessments.

The SESA combines both analytical and participatory approaches which integrate key environmental and social considerations relevant to REDD+ at the earliest stage of planning and decision-making. SESA is expected to provide specific policy, legal and regulatory reform recommendations guided by the safeguards policies, while fostering institutional strengthening and capacity building. Another output of SESA is national-level Environmental and Social

Box 5.2 : Defining REDD+ Readiness and Safeguards: The FCPF R-Package

The FCPF has developed a series of criteria to guide a country's assessment of its REDD+ Readiness level. Countries receiving funds from the FCPF are expected to report on progress towards Readiness through an "R-Package" that includes the following assessment criteria:

Social and Environmental Impacts:

- a. SESA (Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment) coordination and integration arrangements;
- b. Analysis of safeguard issues;
- c. REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts;
- d. Development of the Environmental and Social Management Framework.

Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

- a. Identification of non-carbon aspects;
- b. Monitoring and reporting capabilities;
- c. Information sharing.

Management Frameworks (ESMF) based on the WB's safeguards policies, which guide specific, future investments and programs, including carbon finance transactions (payments to emissions reductions).

The FCPF strongly emphasizes and supports countries' development of national-level grievance and redress mechanisms. A grievance and redress mechanism is a process for receiving and then facilitating the resolution of queries and grievances from affected communities or stakeholders related to REDD+ activities, policies or programs at the level of the community or country. Typically, these mechanisms focus on flexible problem-solving approaches to resolve disputes, such as through fact finding, dialogue, facilitation or mediation. If well-designed, a feedback and grievance mechanism should improve responsiveness to citizen concerns, help identify problems early, and foster greater confidence, trust and accountability among program stakeholders.

23 The FCPF currently supports the REDD+ Readiness process in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. Although a member of the FCPF, Gabon has not been active in the Partnership. Equatorial Guinea forfeited its membership as they failed to sign a formal Participation Agreement with the FCPF.

24 The UN-REDD currently supports the REDD+ Readiness process in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo.

Photo 5.5: Social dialogue meeting – Ngounié Province, Gabon



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REDD+ Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria

The objectives of the REDD+ Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria are: (i) to address social and environmental issues in UN-REDD National Programs and other UN-REDD Program-funded activities; and, (ii) to support countries in developing their national approaches to REDD+ safeguards in line with the UNFCCC requirements. The criteria and principles seek to be coherent with the guidance provided by the Cancun agreements and subsequent COP decisions. Within each of the broad principles, there is a list of criteria to be met by UN-REDD Program-funded activities.

The seven principles adopted are:

1. Apply the norms of democratic governance, as reflected in national commitments and multilateral agreements;
2. Respect and protect stakeholder rights in accordance with international obligations;
3. Promote sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction;
4. Contribute to low-carbon, climate-resilient sustainable development policy consistent with national development strategies, national forest programs, and commitments under international conventions and agreements;
5. Protect natural forests from degradation and/or conversion;
6. Maintain and enhance the multiple functions of forests, including conservation of biodiversity and provision of ecosystem services;
7. Avoid or minimize adverse impacts on non-forest ecosystem services and biodiversity.

Box 5.3: The World Bank's (WB) Operational Safeguards Policies that apply to REDD+ initiatives

a. Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01). The Environmental Assessment (EA) is an instrument to examine the specific environmental issues and impacts associated with the formulation of the REDD+ Strategy. It evaluates and compares the impacts against those of alternative options; assesses the legal and institutional aspects relevant to those issues and impacts; and, recommends broad measures to strengthen environmental management in the country with particular attention paid to the potential cumulative impacts of multiple activities.

b. Natural Habitats (OP/BP 4.04). The conservation of natural habitats should take into account the protection, maintenance and rehabilitation of natural habitats and their functions in its economic and sector work, project financing, and policy dialogue. The WB stresses the application of a precautionary approach to natural resource management to ensure opportunities for environmentally sustainable development..

c. Forests (OP/BP 4.36). This policy aims to reduce deforestation, enhance the environmental contribution of forested areas, promote afforestation, reduce poverty, and encourage economic development.

d. Physical Cultural Resources (OP/BP 4.11). This policy aims to avoid, or mitigate, adverse impacts of development projects on cultural resources. Cultural resources are important as sources of valuable historical and scientific information, as assets for economic and social development, and as integral parts of a people's cultural identity and practices.

e. Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4.10). This policy aims to ensure that the development process fully respects the dignity, human rights, economies, and cultures of indigenous peoples. The WB requires the borrower to engage in a process of free, prior and informed consent for all projects proposed for WB financing and affecting indigenous peoples. Such WB-financed projects include measures to: (a) avoid potentially adverse effects on indigenous peoples' communities; or, (b) when avoidance is not feasible, to minimize, mitigate, or compensate for such effects. WB-financed projects are also designed to ensure that indigenous peoples receive social and economic benefits that are culturally appropriate and gender and inter-generationally inclusive.

f. Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12). This policy is triggered in situations involving the involuntary taking of land and involuntary restrictions of access to legally designated parks and protected areas. The policy aims to avoid involuntary resettlement to the extent feasible, or to minimize and mitigate its adverse social and economic impacts when it cannot be avoided. For projects involving the restriction of access, the borrower provides the WB with a draft process framework that conforms to the relevant provisions of this policy as a condition of appraisal. In addition, during project implementation and before enforcing the restriction, the borrower prepares a plan of action, acceptable to the WB, describing the specific measures to assist the displaced persons and the arrangements for their implementation.

g. Safety of Dams (OP/BP 4.37). The safe operation of dams has significant social, economic and environmental relevance. When the WB finances new dams, this policy requires that experienced and competent professionals design and supervise its construction and that the borrower adopts and implements dam safety measures throughout the project cycle.

h. Projects on International Waterways (OP/BP 7.50). Projects on international waterways may affect the relations between the WB and its borrowers, and between riparian states. Therefore, the WB attaches great importance to making appropriate agreements or arrangements for the entire waterway, or parts thereof, and stands ready to assist in this regard.

i. Projects in Disputed Areas (OP/BP 7.60). Projects in disputed areas may affect the relations between the WB and its borrowers, and between the claimants to the disputed area. Therefore, the WB will only finance projects in disputed areas when either there is no objection from the claimants, or when the special circumstances of the case support WB financing, notwithstanding the objection.

Find more information on : www.worldbank.org/safeguards.

2.3 Reference emission levels and reference levels

To measure climate change mitigation efforts, it is important to establish a reference point. This benchmark is for measuring the performance of policies and forest measures taken. The results of actions undertaken must be measurable, reportable and verifiable. Decision 12/CP.17 specifies that, “*forest reference emission levels (REL) and/or forest reference levels (RL) expressed in tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year are benchmarks for assessing each country’s performance in implementing the activities referred to in Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70 (i.e. the five REDD+ activities).*”²⁵

Negotiations on establishing RELs and RLs focused on five main points: (i) the scope; (ii) the geographic scale; (iii) methodological guidelines; (iv) data required (and their quality); and (v) submission guidelines.

The analysis below of UNFCCC decisions concerning RELs and RLs and their implications allows an understanding of the positions taken by the Congo Basin countries.

The 15th Conference of Parties in Copenhagen (2009) clarified numerous methodological questions regarding the development of RELs and/or RLs. In particular, RELs and/or RLs must take into account historic data and be adjusted to national circumstances.²⁶ The Cancun Agreements (COP-16, 2010) permitted other methodological elements to be clarified, and called on Parties to define a national forest reference emission level and/or national forest reference level (REL and/or RL) or, as an interim measure, subnational RELs and/or RLs. It was also agreed that RELs and/or RLs must take into account national circumstances, the provisions of Decision 4/CP.15 and eventual clarifications contributed by the COP.²⁷ This decision thus implies that the Parties can aggregate different RELs and/or RLs at the local level to build their national RELs and/or RLs.

The definitions of REL and RL are relatively imprecise. However, the Cancun COP accorded flexibility to countries with the opportunity to choose the scope of their REL and/or RL, namely the REDD+ activities that will constitute their “reference point”. In general, the Parties suggest that RELs only consider greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting activities, namely deforestation and degradation. On the other hand, RLs imply the consideration of all REDD+ activities, meaning activities which emit GHG and those which sequester carbon. In other words, the RL represents the net atmospheric effect while the REL represents the gross effect.

The COP-17 in Durban (2011) furthermore provided some clarification on methodologies, the types of data required and REL and/or RL submission processes.^{28,29} Recently, the COP-19 in Warsaw further clarified the information that must be provided by Parties when submitting their RELs and/or RLs, and on REL and/or RL submission and technical analysis processes.³⁰

Table 5.2 summarizes the different guidelines relevant to RELs and/or RLs adopted by the Parties at the Copenhagen to Doha COPs.

25 Paragraph 7, Decision 12/CP.17

26 Paragraph 7, Decision 4/CP.15

27 Paragraph 71(b), Addendum 1 of the Decision 1/CP.16

28 Decision 12/CP.17

29 See the annex of Decision 12/CP.17

30 See the advance version of the Decision “Guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions from Parties on proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels”. Available: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_frl.pdf

Table 5.2: Description of approaches to developing RELs and/or RLs

Topic	Principle implications
1. Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Parties can choose to establish a REL and/or a RL and, according to national circumstances, the REDD+ activities to be considered; The Parties must specify the REDD+ activities included, the sources, sinks, and gases, and must justify any exclusions.
2. Scale (geographic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Parties may establish one or several subnational RELs and/or RLs as an interim measure toward developing a national REL and/or RL.
3. Methodological guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The REL and/or RL must take into account historical data and can be adjusted for national circumstances; They must be established following the most recent IPCC guidelines; They must be consistent with information provided in each country's GHG inventories; The method used (approach, data, hypotheses, models, policies and plans) must be transparent; The REL and/or RL must be developed gradually and be updated (new gas and reservoirs, activities...).
4. Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data used must be exhaustive, accurate, complete, compliant, consistent and transparent; The historic data used must be presented; The definition of forests used must be precise; The data set, approaches, methods, and models used must be presented; The relevant policies and plans must be described, as must all changes made to the REL and/or RL over time.
5. Submission guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The REL and/or RL must be communicated on a voluntary basis following an annual call for submissions from the Secretariat; They are periodically updated and must allow for improvement based on new findings; Their technical evaluation will be based on the international analysis and consultation process as specified by the COP; The technical evaluation will be coordinated by the Secretariat and conducted by a team of LULUCF sector experts; The technical evaluation will result in an exchange of viewpoints between experts from the Secretariat and the submitting country, thereby enabling capacity building and, when required, revisions to the submission; The technical evaluation will conclude with a public report by the expert team which will contain the REL and/or RL submitted, as well as information on possible improvements, opportunities for capacity building, and responses from submitting countries.

2.4 National Forest Monitoring Systems and MRV

Initial methodological MRV guidance for REDD+ was provided at COP 15, Copenhagen (2009). Decision 4/CP.15, paragraph 1(d) "Requests" Parties to:

...establish, according to national circumstances and capabilities, robust and transparent national forest monitoring systems and, if appropriate, sub-national systems as part of national forest³¹ monitoring systems that:

i) *Use a combination of remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches*

for estimating, as appropriate, anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes [Monitoring and Measurement];

ii) *Provide estimates that are transparent, consistent, as far as possible accurate, and that reduce uncertainties, taking into account national capabilities and capacities [Reporting];*

iii) *Are transparent and their results are available and suitable for review as agreed by the Conference of the Parties;" [Verification].*

31 "Taking note of, if appropriate, the guidance on consistent representation of land in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry."

In addition, a recent decision³² from the COP 19 in Warsaw specifies that National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) should:

- Be guided by the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines, as adopted or encouraged by the COP;
- Provide data and information that are transparent, consistent over time, and are suitable for measuring, reporting and verifying emissions, removals as well as carbon stocks arising from the five REDD+ activities;
- Build upon existing systems, as appropriate;
- Enable the assessment of different forest types, including natural forests, as defined by the country;
- Reflect the phased-approach to REDD+, as appropriate;
- Be flexible and allow for improvement.

In addition, Parties have also recognized that NFMS may also provide, as appropriate, relevant information on safeguards.

In the IPCC's Good Practice Guidance, the most common methodological approach is to combine information on the extent to which a human activity takes place in a given area (activity data, AD), with coefficients that quantify the emissions or removals per activity unit (emission factors, EF). These data together comprise the "Measurement" contingent of MRV (figure 5.1).

32 See the advanced version of the Decision "Guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions from Parties on proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels". Available: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/warsaw_nov_2013/decisions/application/pdf/cop19_fms.pdf

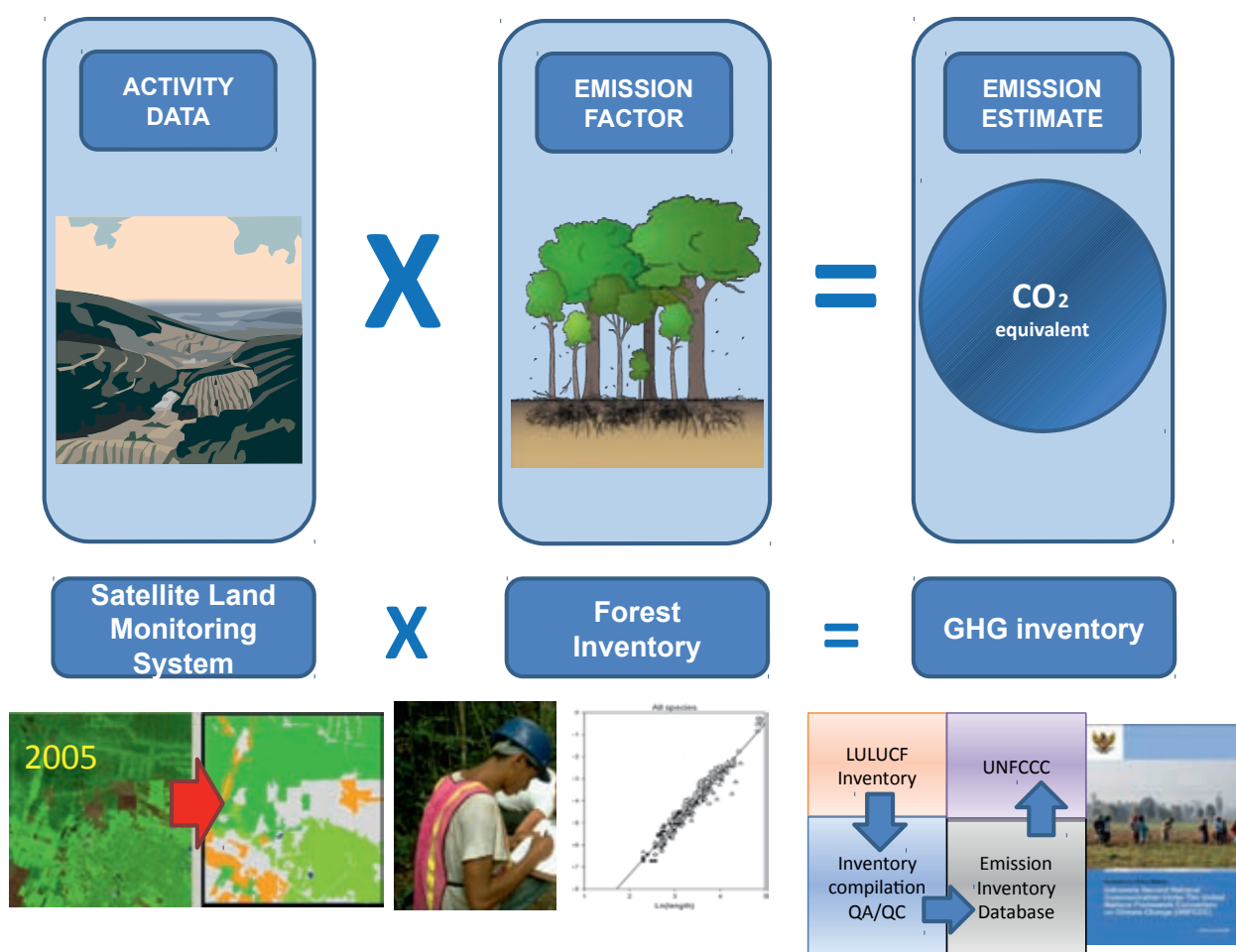


Figure 5.1: The IPCC's methodological approach to calculate anthropogenic GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks from forestland.



Photo 5.6: Transporting logs on the Lukenie – Bandundu, DRC

3. Political engagement in REDD+

This section presents how various Congo Basin countries are engaging politically in the REDD+ process.

3.1 REDD+ status in Congo Basin countries

COMIFAC countries share a common political will that is clearly visible at major international climate conferences. Nevertheless, the level of engagement differs from one country to another. There are three groups of countries: (i) countries where the R-PP (REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal) has already been drawn up and adopted (the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic); (ii) Gabon, which opted for a National Climate Plan integrating all GHG emission sectors; and (iii) countries without an R-PP (Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, São Tomé & Príncipe, and Chad).

3.1.1 Countries with an R-PP

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Thanks to a highly participative approach involving all stakeholders, and with the support of partners, the DRC has made remarkable progress in the implementation of its REDD+ process since 2009. In 2013, it started the gradual transition from the preparatory phase to the investment phase.



Photo 5.7: Kinkosi: reforestation village, part of the Makala project

2009-2012: REDD+ process preparatory phase

Since 2009, the REDD+ process has been steered by the Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism (MECNT), in partnership with the United Nations REDD program (UN-REDD) and the World Bank (FCPF program).

In January 2009, the first multi-lateral funding commitment was made in Kinshasa (0.2M\$ from FCPF, 1.8M\$ from UN-REDD) following a meeting between the MECNT, the international partners (FCPF, UN-REDD) and civil society organizations.

In May 2009, a National Committee, an Inter-Ministerial Committee, and a REDD+ National Coordination were created by decree of the Prime Minister.

In March 2010, the UN-REDD Policy Board and the FCPF (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility) Participants Committee approved supplementary funding for the implementation of the DRC's R-PP (3.4M\$ from FCPF and 5.5M\$ from UN-REDD).

Since then, the DRC has been recognized on the international stage as a major and credible REDD+ actor. Its achievements are as follows:

- First REDD+ Preparation Plan validated by UN-REDD and FCPF (World Bank);
- First Investment Plan validated by the Forest Investment Program (FIP) of the World Bank, securing a \$ 60 million commitment in June 2011;

- First African country to establish in 2012 a regulatory framework for the approval of REDD+ projects and to establish a National REDD+ Registry;
- First country to establish a National Forest Monitoring System (www.rdc-snsf.org);
- In April 2012, obtained a national consensus on the drivers of deforestation based on numerous qualitative and quantitative studies;
- Implementation of six pilot REDD+ projects funded by the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) valued at \$ 24 million;
- One of the first countries in the world to develop national REDD+ standards in conformance with UNFCCC principles (COP-16, Cancun) and an information system based on these standards;
- Implementation of a GLOBE Parliamentary Network in the DRC and a REDD+ legislative working group;
- REDD+ alignment strategy, aiming to bring traditional projects consistent with REDD+ objectives.

The DRC furthermore has been praised for the highly participative character of its REDD+ preparation process, involving continuous and intensive consultation with an ensemble of actors including public administrations, civil society, the private sector, and technical partners.

In June 2012, the mid-term assessment of the REDD+ process recommended finalizing the REDD+ National Strategy and gradually entering the investment phase.

In November 2012, the National REDD+ Strategy Framework was validated by the Council of Ministers. It aims, thanks to appropriate implementation modalities framed by relevant safeguard measures, for sustainable green growth based on human development. It relies on a financial mechanism: the REDD+ National Fund established in November 2012 through the signing of an Agreement Protocol between the Ministry of Finance and UNDP/MPTE.

This National REDD+ Strategy Framework and the REDD+ National Fund were presented at the COP-18 in Doha in December 2012, thus demonstrating a strong political buy-in of REDD+ by the DRC.

2013: start of the investment phase and implementation of the REDD+ Strategy

The DRC planned to move from REDD+ strategy preparations to the concrete testing of tools, measures, and activities in 2013.

A request for complementary funding was submitted to the FCPF to finalize the preparation according to Readiness Package indicators in order to render operational the national accounting system (MRV), create the REDD+ National Registry, and deploy REDD+ in the provinces.

In order to initiate the reforms needed for the implementation and success of REDD+ investments, in May 2013 the government integrated five REDD+ actions into its Economic Governance Matrix, a framework for monitoring the implementation of reforms agreed with multilateral financial institutions. The DRC thereby committed itself to implementing a national land use policy, to pursue land and forest reforms, and to supervise mining and oil investments with the aim to minimize their impact on deforestation and forest degradation.

The REDD+ National Strategy Framework has two main objectives:

- to develop an emissions reduction program for a 12 million hectares area (the future Mai Ndombe Province): an Emissions Reduction-Project Idea Note (ER-PIN) was submitted to the FCPF's Carbon Fund in June 2013;
- to capitalize the REDD+ National Fund before the end of 2013 and to develop an investment plan to demonstrate that REDD+ can have a leverage effect to establish a green development model based on sustainable rural development that produces multiple co-benefits, including the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, poverty reduction, and improved living conditions.

The Republic of Congo

In February 2008, following the drafting of its "Project Idea Note" (PIN), the Republic of Congo was selected as a pilot country by the FCPF. A \$ 200 000 grant agreement was signed between the Republic of Congo and the World Bank. The R-PP drafted in 2010 was validated in April 2012 and the operational plan was finalized in November 2012.

An already operational national coordination

In August 2012, the Republic of Congo created an operational REDD+ National Coordination supported by international consultants and assistants. The coordination comprises the following cells: (i) information, education and communication; (ii) legal; (iii) action and projects; (iv) environmental and social assess-



Photo 5.8: Makala Project poster campaign

ment; (v) modeling/reference level; (vi) MRV, (vii) logistics and IT, to which is added a "documentation and research" section.

A strategy developed in the implementation phase

The vision of the government of the Republic of Congo is based on improved living conditions and a revitalized economy to ensure sustainable development while limiting the risks of deforestation and forest degradation. This vision opposes those economic globalization forces that can act to the detriment of natural forests such as the development of large-scale agriculture, bioenergy, and extractive industry.

For the Republic of Congo, REDD+ is an opportunity to establish truly sustainable development within a green economy framework. The development of a national strategy started in February 2013 by establishing working groups in strategic sectors: forest, environment, agriculture, mines, energy, etc., and through the finalization of a REDD+ national strategy development protocol. All sectors with a direct link to forests and trees were taken into account in the identification of strategic themes and areas of intervention.

Necessity of developing a reference level

The Republic of Congo, which historically has had low deforestation rates, proposes that reference levels rely strongly on modeling future scenarios. Three main thrusts are envisaged for the development of RLs:

1. The estimation of deforestation and degradation over the last 20 years will be developed by the monitoring, measurement, reporting, and

verification system (M&MRV), which will determine forest carbon stocks, emission factors, and the mapping of land use changes;

2. Knowledge of the causes of deforestation and forest degradation based on a cartographic study of these phenomena;

3. The prospective assessment of circumstances that may result in significant changes in historical trends. This assessment will be based on current demographic and micro-economic data, the construction of possible future scenarios linked to changes in the economy and agricultural practices, notably cash crops such as oil palm, etc.

Financial support already available

The financial supports available are: UN-REDD: \$ 4 million; FCPF: \$ 3.4 million; FFBC: \$ 350 000 under the framework of support for MRV sub-regional projects; and GEF/World Bank: \$ 350 000 under the REDD+ subregional project to reinforce technical and operational capacities of the National REDD+ Coordination.

Cameroon

Establishing structures

After the R-PIN (Readiness Plan Idea Note) was adopted in July 2008, several REDD+ projects and initiatives were developed and implemented by civil society organizations and MINEPDED technical partners. Following REDD+ information, awareness building, and stakeholder consultation workshops, the R-PP drafting began in June 2011, the National REDD & Climate Change Platform was created by civil society organizations in July 2011, and the REDD+ process Steering Committee was established in June 2012. The national R-PP validation workshop was held in July 2012; this document was presented to the FCPF in August 2012 and approved in February 2013, followed in March 2013 by an R-PP activity planning workshop.

REDD+ coordinating structures exist at the national level (Inter-Ministerial Committee), the level of donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), notably CCPM (the coordinating circle of MINFOF/MINEPDED partners) which has within it a REDD+ subgroup, and the REDD+ and Climate Change (REDD+ & CC) National Platform established by civil society organizations.

Within the government, MINEPDED ensures the leadership of the process as the politi-

cal and operational focal point of the UNFCCC, in collaboration with MINFOF. A national coordination was set up to steer the REDD+ process, this body is composed of members of both MINEPDED and MINFOF.

The technical secretariat includes the following authorities: the UNFCCC focal point, the national REDD Coordinator, and the Forestry Director. The technical secretariat includes four cells: (i) IEC (information, education, and communication), which also supports the technical secretariat when preparing documents for inter-ministerial and institutional strategy meetings; (ii) SESA (Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment) responsible for assessing and creating environmental and social management frameworks (ESMF); (iii) reference scenario and MRV cell, which manages the carbon stock management registry – it works in collaboration with the National Climate Change Observatory (NCCO); (iv) the cell responsible for setting up REDD+ projects and programs and supervising their implementation, optimizing their results, and strategy building.

Pending funding

Since the R-PP was validated by the FCPF in March 2013, consultations have been underway to find the financial means to implement this strategy.

The Central African Republic (CAR)

An institutional framework in place

In the CAR, the REDD+ institutional framework is composed of three bodies: (i) the REDD+ National Committee (REDD+ NC); (ii) the REDD+ Inter-Prefectorial committees (REDD+ IPC); and (iii) the REDD+ Technical Coordination (REDD+ TC). The REDD+ NC is composed of 20 members from civil society, the private sector, and the government. There are three REDD+ IPCs, each with 45 to 54 members from civil society, the private sector, and the government. The REDD+ TC includes the permanent technical Secretariat and five thematic groups: (i) information, education and communication (IEC); (ii) legal and land; (iii) modeling and reference level; (iv) socio-environmental assessment; and (v) Measuring, Reporting and Verification (MRV). The permanent technical secretariat is overseen by the national REDD+ Coordinator, assisted by a technical counselor and an expert responsible for monitoring REDD+ IPC activities.

Consultation, participation and dialogue: the priority

During the R-PP development phase, ten consultation workshops were held and over 100 key persons were individually consulted to obtain their viewpoints, ensure their support for the national REDD+ strategy, and explain the contents of the R-PP. These consultations will be continued through the 2nd quarter of 2014 with individual interviews and national and provincial workshops.

Understanding the causes of pressure on forests to better plan land use

The country has 28.3 million ha of forest, covering nearly 45 % of its surface area. Eighty percent of these forests are savanna forest while 20 % are dense forest located in the southwest of the country, where they are industrially logged, and in the southeast, where concessions have not yet been granted. The CAR's rainforest has lost 4 % of its total surface area in 20 years, or about 0.2 % per year, while the national deforestation rate is estimated to be approximately 0.13 % per year, equivalent to the degradation rate, which is relatively low.

The major pressures on the forest result from: (i) extensive livestock farming; (ii) slash-and-burn agriculture; (iii) uncontrolled exploitation of wood and non-timber forest products (NTFP); and (iv) the development of infrastructure (roads, mines, housing). To better understand these pressures, it is necessary to undertake studies on (i) woodfuel production and consumption; (ii) agricultural and pastoral production; (iii) logging for domestic and export markets; (iv) mining, artisanal and/or industrial (gold, diamonds, uranium, etc.).

REDD+ strategic options

In order to identify the policy options to fight the pressure on the forests, a synthetic analysis of past programs and possible future actions was conducted, using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats matrix. Four main policy options were identified: (i) complete the zoning of the territory; (ii) improve agro-silvo-pastoral yields; (iii) promote sustainable forest management; and (iv) reinforce institutions and governance.

The REDD+ implementation framework

The CAR wishes to develop an integrated, participatory, effective and efficient approach that fully and sustainably involves all of the stakeholders concerned to implement its REDD+ national

strategy, the aim of which is to contribute to the sustainable development of the country and to global efforts to combat climate change.

Social and environmental impacts

As soon as the implementation of the R-PP has begun, a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) will be conducted. This SESA will rely on the existing national and functional legislative framework. Following this SESA, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will minimize potential negative impacts and maximize co-benefits.

Necessity of developing a reference level

In order to establish such a level, it is necessary to have an assessment of past GHG emissions (not yet undertaken in the CAR) as well as disaggregated statistical data on the main pressure factors identified.

Given future anthropogenic pressures that could be under-estimated by applying approaches based on past data alone, the CAR favors the construction of a net GHG reference emission level using historical trends adjusted to future changes.

Of the different methods envisioned by the country for the prospective scenarios, the ones selected were (a) the use of the "CongoBIOM" equilibrium economic model (an adaptation of GLOBIOM³³ by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)) in a medium and long-term approach and (b) sectoral change predicted by different models for specific sectors. In addition to challenges inherent in modeling recognized by the country, the CAR intends to improve the collection of regular data for the analysis of sectoral developments, in part thanks to the MRV plan, and to reinforce the capacities of the Climatology, Mapping, and Geographic Studies Laboratory (LACCEG) for data processing.

The CAR was divided into four zones (Southwest Forest, Bangassou Forest or Southeast Massif, Sahelian Domain, and Sudanian Domain) to better identify the causes and factors of pressure on the forests and permit the development of subnational reference levels and a map of future deforestation probabilities based on the geographic variables obtained by the GEOMOD algorithm.

33 GLOBIOM model is used to analyse the competition for land use between agriculture, forestry, and bioenergy, which are the main land-based production sectors. <http://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/research/modelsData/GLOBIOM/GLOBIOM.en.html>



Photo 5.9: On the Ntem river in northern Gabon

The CongoBIOM “top-down” modeling approach and the “bottom-up” subnational spatialization will be compared to improve the reference level (box 5.7).

Gabon : a unique case

Gabon is committed to the “Gabon Emergent” Strategy, an overall policy framework spearheaded by the Head of State. This plan is the foundation of the country’s development policy (“Industrial Gabon, Green Gabon, and Service Gabon” are its three pillars) based on valuing human and natural resource potential.

Within this strategic plan is the National Climate Change Plan, which is dedicated to low carbon emission development, together with other plans in process of formalization such as the national land use plan. To ensure satellite-assisted environmental monitoring, a satellite receiving station also is being established. All deforestation, forest degradation, climate change and REDD+ projects and programs must align with the Head of State’s Strategic Plan.

Legal and institutional frameworks have been set up to promote the formulation and execution of different plans and strategies. Examples include (i) the Climate Council, responsible for drawing up the climate plan, established in 2010, (ii) the inter-ministerial commission on land use, (iii) the Gabonese spatial studies and observation agency for the satellite component, etc. The reforms underway, particularly the sustainable development law, await the creation of a National Sustainable Development Council under the

direct authority of the Head of State that will be responsible for orienting the implementation of plans and sectoral strategies.

Alignment of all REDD-related projects and programs with the national strategy

Gabon’s REDD+ strategy is based above all on knowledge and control of the country’s resources and space; this is why the country has committed to carrying out:

- a national climate plan;
- a land use plan to better manage its resources and development choices;
- the LEDS (Low Emissions Development Strategy) program supported by the United States government, which aims to introduce climate considerations into Gabon’s development plans;
- a multi-resource, national forest inventory;
- the creation of a Gabonese Spatial Study and Observation Agency (AGEOS) by order of 25 February 2010, responsible for following up the national climate plan and evaluating the impact of climate change on the environment;
- the creation of Central Environment Divisions in all concerned Ministries;
- an umbrella sustainable development act;
- a revision of the environmental code through the environmental protection act;
- a revision of the forestry code.

Gabon considers that its efforts to combat climate change must not be restricted to the forests, which are already taken into account through ongoing subregional initiatives. It finds that the REDD+ process, in its current form, is inconsistent with national conditions. It therefore has chosen other policy strategies to combat climate change. It fears that prevailing trends would put Gabonese forests under the control of international agencies.

3.1.2 The countries without an R-PP

Burundi

Burundi does not yet have a REDD+ strategy. It is at the beginning of the first phase. A request was sent to UN-REDD and to FCPF for the R-PIN. In 2012, Burundi nominated the REDD+ Coordinator and a climate focal point. In March 2013, with the support of the MRV regional project, Burundi began its deliberations during its inception workshop.

Rwanda

Rwanda is planning for sustainable development by promoting a sustainable, low carbon economic environment. The MRV regional project conducted an inception workshop at the end of May 2013, and it will support the start-up phase of the Carbon Investment Fund. In 2010, Rwanda nominated a REDD+ focal point and a climate focal point. It is important to note that Rwanda is implementing a project funded by the Congo Basin Forest Fund (€ 4.5 million over 4 years) with a “forest management” component whose main mission is to fight against deforestation and the degradation of forest resources.

Equatorial Guinea

The view of REDD+ is under development. A national team was set up to draft the R-PP, and is active. The foundation, Conservation International, is supporting the development of the REDD+ strategy. In March 2013, Equatorial Guinea signed the World Bank/GEF project and the MRV project.

Chad

Chad does not yet have a national REDD+ strategy. It is at the start of the preliminary phase and will prepare its R-PP with the support of the MRV regional project. The National REDD+ Coordinator was nominated in 2009. The inception workshop of the MRV regional project took place in Ndjamena 16-17 September 2012, and the National REDD Committee was set up. In the framework of the MRV regional project, Chad organized an awareness building workshop from 24 to 26 April 2013 in Ndjamena. An inter-ministerial committee plan is being finalized. Chad is among 17 candidate countries that have submitted an application to join the FCPF.

São Tomé and Príncipe

The country's efforts focus more on the climate than on REDD+. Nonetheless, the country nominated a REDD+ Coordinator in 2012.

3.2 Capacity Building and REDD+ on the regional level

Several REDD+ capacity-building initiatives currently exist on the regional level. This section provides a brief, non-exhaustive description of two initiatives.

Why take a regional approach?

A regional approach would allow the most to be made of the future REDD+ mechanism. Congo Basin countries must meet a number of shared challenges that are both institutional and technical. The regional approach, by complementing national efforts, is justified by the following:

- **From a political point of view**, the regional approach gives more weight to Congo Basin countries in international negotiations.

- **From a technical point of view**, it provides access to state of the art techniques and methodologies, notably to measure and monitor forest carbon.

- **From an economic point of view**, it allows substantial economies of scale thanks to a good regional coordination and sharing of costs related to capacity building and to analytical and field work.

- **From an ecological point of view**, the regional approach is relevant because it enables an overall vision of the causes of forest evolution.

3.2.1 The World Bank / GEF project

Thanks to the Global Environment Facility (GEF/FEM), the World Bank is supporting the Congo Basin countries' REDD+ regional approach with a grant of \$ 13 million. The objective is to reinforce the institutional and technical capacities of countries preparing for the future REDD+ mechanism. The project was approved in July 2011 and officially launched in March 2012. It will run for 5 years. It is structured around three technical components and one transversal coordination component:

Component 1. Improve knowledge and coordination

- a. Reinforce dialogue and coordination in the area of REDD+;

- b. Promote an inclusive approach and the representation of different stakeholders in technical discussions and REDD+ regional negotiations;

c. Respond to the specific needs of countries by reinforcing the national REDD+ Coordinations.

Component 2. Capacity building

a. Establish a scientific platform to measure and monitor forest carbon;

b. Develop allometric equations to estimate the biomass and carbon stock of Congo Basin forest ecosystems.

Component 3. Integrate the REDD+ concept into sustainable forest management projects

a. Set up a support cell for REDD+ pilot projects;

b. Define methodologies to promote REDD+ in the Congo Basin.

Component 4. Ensure the management of the project

a. Coordinate the activities of different components;

b. Ensure the project's administrative and financial management;

c. Contribute to reinforcing partnerships;

d. Ensure the project's safeguard policy.

3.2.2 The COMIFAC-FAO-INPE regional MRV Initiative

The Congo Basin countries currently lack a reliable, operational and REDD+-compliant forest monitoring system. In order to meet the UNFCCC commitments for REDD+ and allow a coordinated response within the COMIFAC countries, the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat (ES) initiated consultations with the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) to develop a regional Monitoring and MRV project for all ten COMIFAC countries

Under this Initiative, the Executive Secretariat of the COMIFAC asked the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the National Institute of Space Research of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Federal Republic of Brazil (INPE) to jointly prepare a full Monitoring and MRV project proposal. The Initiative proposes to build upon the FAO forestry management experience and the Brazilian forest monitoring experience to develop a NFMS in the Congo Basin countries, while also coordinating these activities with other international initiatives active in COMIFAC and to provide support for REDD+ activities. The initial proj-

ect of the Initiative is entitled: “*National Forest Monitoring and MRV with a regional approach to the Congo Basin countries.*” The overall objective of the project: Support the development and implementation of NFMS and MRV in COMIFAC countries. This initial project will build capacities and implement the systems through a preparation (quick start) phase and an investment phase.

The Initiative's core objectives

The core objectives of the Initiative are:

1. Raise awareness and train stakeholders;
2. Support clear institutional arrangements in the countries;
3. Develop a R-PP for countries that do not have one;
4. Develop a NFMS action plan for all countries;
5. Identify regional activities that can support NFMS;
6. Submit the NFMS projects and regional projects for funding in a second phase of the project.

Technical approach

Countries that elect to develop a NFMS under the Initiative will use the UN-REDD Program NFMS methodology. This approach allows countries to comply with the REDD+ requirements through a sustainable, stepwise approach. The process should allow for incremental efforts to improve performance, recognizing countries' varied capabilities and national circumstances. Under this approach, a NFMS can serve simultaneous functions; a monitoring function and a MRV function.

- The monitoring function of the NFMS is primarily a domestic tool to allow countries to assess a broad range of forest information, including information needed for REDD+.

- The MRV function for REDD+, on the other hand, refers to the estimation and international reporting of national-scale forest GHG emission and removals.

The monitoring function can be defined broadly, depending on national circumstances, but in the UN-REDD context monitoring relates to the outcomes of Phase II demonstration activities and national policies and measures for REDD+.

The MRV function comprises three main components: (i) the satellite land monitoring system (SLMS); (ii) the national forest inventory (NFI); and, (iii) the national GHG inventory. The SLMS and the NFI components are used to provide inputs into the forest sector component of the GHG inventory.

4. First experiences from in-country technical implementation

This section will examine certain aspects of REDD+ and describe how some initial, country experiences and studies are helping to advance our understanding of how REDD+ could be implemented. The section will review: (i) REDD+

safeguards; (ii) mapping of multiple benefits for REDD+; (iii) how REDD+ and FLEGT can be integrated together; (iv) the importance of land tenure and REDD+; and, finally, (v) reference levels.

4.1 REDD+ Safeguards design and implementation in the Congo Basin

Congo Basin countries are at different stages in the design and implementation of REDD+ safeguards, which is indicative of uneven REDD+ Readiness progress in general. Table 5.3 presents the status of REDD+ safeguards development in the four countries in the region which have prepared a R-PP: Cameroon, the CAR, the DRC, and the Republic of Congo.

The four REDD+ Readiness components discussed are:

- **Readiness Management Arrangements:** This component refers to the institutions leading the country readiness process at the national level. Congo Basin countries have established national-level institutions to lead the REDD+ Readiness process. These institutions normally include government representatives from different levels and sectors and a strong participation of civil society organizations' (CSO) and indigenous peoples' representatives. Nevertheless, the effective functioning of these institutions remains a challenge. DRC's national REDD+ committee, for instance "is not functioning within its mandate" and "does not provide orientation to the REDD National Coordination" (Hoefsloot, 2012).

- **Consultations during R-PP preparation and R-PP implementation:** In general, the Readiness process has enabled the participation of various stakeholders during the R-PP preparation (and implementation, in those countries already in that phase), particularly of CSOs' and indigenous peoples' representatives. In Cameroon and Congo, CSOs managed to strongly influence the R-PP. In the DRC, the Climate and REDD+ Working Group of CSOs have been closely involved in all aspects of the readiness process, including by leading in producing some of the main deliverables such as a study on the causes of deforestation and forest degradation. CSOs have also supported and engaged with the governments in developing working documents such as a communications and outreach strategy and a road map for governance reform.

- **National implementation framework:** In general, the Congo Basin countries identified weaknesses in their current REDD+ enabling regulatory framework and proposed new policies, regulations and/or legislation to address complex issues such as land tenure and forest rights, benefit sharing and funds management.

• **SESA and Safeguards Information**

System: All countries are going to conduct a SESA during the R-PP implementation. The DRC is the only country to have finalized the process and developed an ESMF (see below).

Table 5.3 : REDD+ Safeguards in some of the Congo Basin countries

Country	Readiness Management Arrangements	Consultation during R-PP preparation	Safeguards	Implementation Framework
Cameroon	- REDD+ Steering Committee created (19 members, including 1 CSO and 1 indigenous peoples (IP) representative) - National REDD & CC Platform of CSOs made up of 20 networks of organizations and social movements.	- National, regional and local consultations held by agro-ecological zones. Participation of CSOs estimated at over 60 %, 7 % for IPs. Consultation and participation plan prepared for R-PP implementation.	- SESA to be conducted as part of the R-PP implementation. This will be Cameroon's first experience with the tool.	- Revision of existing regulations to address REDD+ planned. The type regulations to be revised and the extent of the revision is currently under assessment.
CAR	- The National REDD+ Committee established by ministerial regulation (20 members, including 5 from CSOs in addition to 4 IP representatives).	- Ten consultation workshops completed during R-PP preparation. Consultation and communication plan for R-PP implementation approved.	- SESA to be conducted as part of the R-PP implementation.	- New regulations are planned (Presidential Orders, a REDD+ Law). - National REDD+ registry planned.
DRC	- National REDD+ Committee (14 members, 2 from CSOs and 2 from IP organizations) established. - GTCR – Climate and REDD+ Working Group, created as key partner in Readiness process.	- Multi-stakeholder consultations held at national and decentralized levels during R-PP preparation and implementation.	- National social and environmental principles and criteria for REDD+ - SESA / ESMF finalized.	- Adopted decree on REDD+ projects. - National REDD+ fund under advanced design. - Regulations on benefit sharing expected to be adopted.
Congo	- National REDD+ Committee (30 members, 8 from CSOs and 6 from IP organizations) established. - National CSOs Platform around REDD+ created and active, despite ongoing internal disputes.	- Major CSOs and IP organizations involved in forest and rural development participated. Consultations followed process similar to that of VPA-FLEGT discussions. - Consultation and participation plan prepared for next phase.	- SESA to be conducted during R-PP implementation, led by the General Direction of Environment of the Ministry of Forestry	- REDD+ Law is expected to be drafted during Readiness process. - National registry for REDD+ activities created? Agreed upon?

4.1.1 REDD+ Safeguards at the country level – the case of the DRC

The DRC built its national REDD+ strategy based on analytical work and on-the-ground experience from ongoing interventions that address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Safeguard considerations were incorporated into both of these work streams. On the analytical side, the strategic environmental and social assessment (SESA) helped make sure the emerging REDD+ strategic options duly considered social

and environmental risks. On the experimental side, six pilot government projects financed by the CBFF, and several additional REDD+ projects, are in the early stages of development across the DRC. A process to screen those projects against social and environmental safeguards has been elaborated and tested.

As project developers (private sector and NGOs primarily) attempted to get official permits from the Congolese government to develop REDD+ projects ultimately aiming to generate

tradable assets, the Ministry of Environment and its National REDD Coordination Unit developed regulations and procedures for the national approval of REDD+ projects (“homologation”). These include the establishment of an on-line REDD+ national registry to collect and make publicly available the information about these REDD+ projects. The regulations also determine the conditions under which project developers (private firms, NGOs, church groups, local communities and government agencies) can market emission reductions from REDD+ on international markets.

As part of that, a stepwise administrative process was established to ensure that: (i) project developers and their financial partners undergo due diligence and anti-money laundering controls, thus mitigating the risks of illegal activities; (ii) projects do not overlap, thus avoiding “double counting”; (iii) projects are approved by the multi-stakeholder National REDD Committee, thus promoting their legitimacy; (iv) projects are validated under internationally recognized carbon and socio-environmental standards – Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA), UNFCCC-IPCC – within four years of national approval, thus preventing speculation and promoting environmental integrity as well as ensuring the respect for safeguards; (v) projects report periodically on verified results, carbon transactions and lessons learned, thus contributing to building capacity through the national strategy development process and promoting better understanding of the feasibility of REDD+ under varying conditions (e.g. different project business models, different social, cultural and physical circumstances, and the variety of challenges that must be met in implementing REDD+ on the ground).

The DRC has also developed national social and environmental standards for REDD+ (Box 5.4) through a highly participatory process led by the CSOs. The purpose of these standards is to provide a standardized basis to assess the performance of specific REDD+ projects geared towards voluntary or emerging compliance carbon markets as well as REDD+ initiatives more generally. In time, these standards should replace the CCBA standards currently required for REDD+ projects. However, the standards will need specific operational procedures, and in-country capacity will need to be developed before they can be applied in the field.

Box 5.4 : DRC’s National Social and Environmental Standards for REDD+

The DRC’s National Social and Environmental Standards for REDD+ are composed of seven key principles. Each of these key principles contains a series of criteria and indicators. These standards will need to be met by all REDD+ projects and initiatives.

- **Principle 1:** Projects / REDD+ initiatives must protect natural forests, promote increased environmental services and enhance the conservation of biodiversity.
- **Principle 2:** Projects/ REDD+ initiatives should promote transparency and good governance.
- **Principle 3:** Projects / REDD+ initiatives should avoid loss or damage, provide remedies and implement mechanisms for just and fair redress for any loss and / or damage suffered by third parties (i.e. communities and other stakeholders).
- **Principle 4:** The economic and social benefits generated by projects / REDD+ initiatives should be equitably shared by the stakeholders.
- **Principle 5:** Projects / REDD+ initiatives should favor the emergence of new economic opportunities to contribute to the sustainable development of local and indigenous communities.
- **Principle 6:** Projects / REDD+ initiatives must ensure the effective and efficient participation of all stakeholders, including indigenous and local communities located within their boundaries.
- **Principle 7:** Projects / REDD+ initiatives must respect human rights, including the rights of the workers they employ and the rights of concerned communities (i.e. parties to the project) to land and natural resources.

To support the administrative processes associated with project approvals, a national REDD+ registry was created (Box 5.5). This system is expected to manage the information associated with the application of the National Social and Environmental Standards for REDD+ as well as the Environmental and Social Management Framework, among other things. The registry will provide information to the National Safeguards Information System, which, along with the National Forest Management System, serves as an institutional tool for the generation and sharing of data on the location of deforestation, forest degradation, and other biophysical parameters potentially relevant to safeguards application. Additionally, independent tools, such as “Moabi” (Box 5.6), could be used for collecting and distributing information on the drivers of deforestation and could help with monitoring the implementation of REDD+. Figure 5.2 shows how these systems are integrated and communicate with one-another.

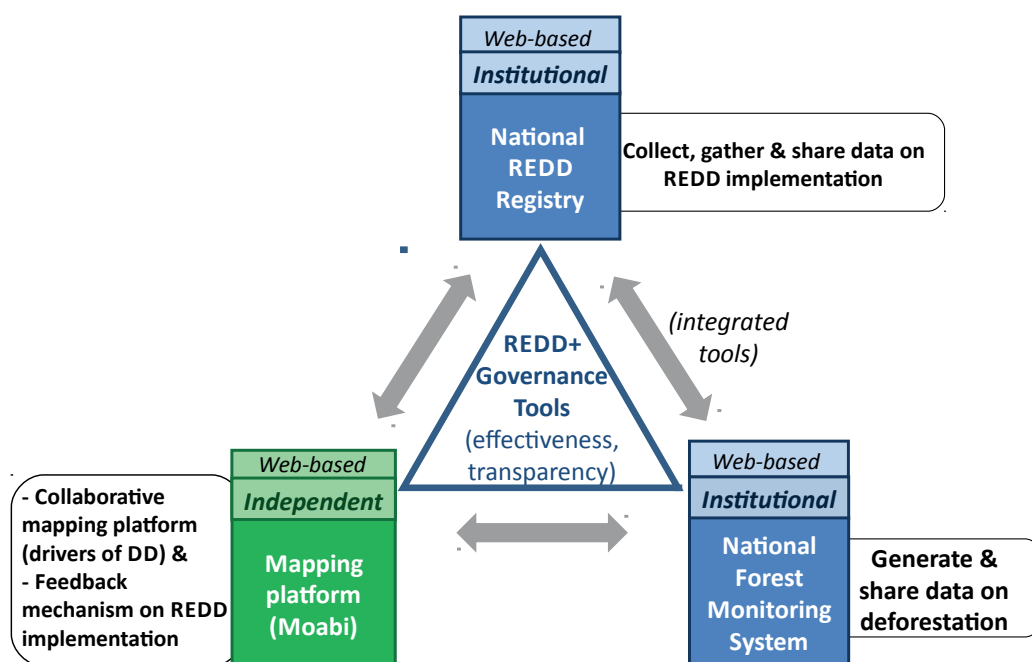


Figure 5.2 The REDD+ monitoring and evaluation tools in the DRC

Box 5.5: Registry of REDD+ projects in the DRC

Carlos de Wasseige
OFAC

In its strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from forest land conversion, the DRC has opted for a “projects”³⁴ option “which, via an interlocking approach³⁵, enables local contributions toward a national strategy.” These projects are financed and handled by external MECNT partners (private, civil society, international NGOs, etc.)

In the absence of a clear international regulating framework, a strategy which integrates the projects allows for better preparation of the national REDD+ program. With this gradual approach, the emerging national REDD+ program must show a clear path for projects which meet the minimum regulatory standards within national accounting and registry bodies (the Katoomba Group, 2011).

In order to document GHG emission reductions and ensure that environmental and social safeguards are respected, a decree was issued on 15th February 2012³⁶. This decree defines the eligibility criteria and the approval procedure of REDD+ projects; it specifies that all DRC REDD+ project managers must be registered in the DRC national registry and must follow the approval procedure manual.

This national register is the “public repository whose goal is to record information related to the REDD+ projects approval procedure, for which we wish to keep a record of in order to certify accuracy. This information includes names (of individuals and companies), legal documents, dates, geographic details, key numbers and proof of relevant information associated with REDD+ projects (consultations, verifications, validations, transactions, etc.)”.

It was developed by the REDD-DRC National Coordination in partnership with OFAC and its establishment has been the subject of several exchanges amongst international experts.

It is accessed via an online database within an IT platform and includes all features which allow the management of the administrative approval process and the endorsement of the projects.

34 See box 8.4 of the 2010 Report on the State of the Forest of the Congo Basin.

35 The English term “nested approach” is very often used in texts in French.

36 Ministerial Decree No. 004/CAB/MIN/ECN-T/012 of 15 February 2012 and the ratification procedure manual are downloadable on the site <http://www.observatoire-comifac.net/REDD.welcome.php>

As well as recording REDD+ projects, it allows all relevant information to be made available to the public. It therefore also ensures the transparency required to satisfy the international regulatory framework being created. Another advantage is that not only does it allow referencing of the REDD+ projects in the DRC, but also of the REDD+ initiatives³⁷. Internet links to other information tools on REDD in the DRC, especially the National System of Surveillance of the DRC Forests and the “Moabi” software, allow for the exchange of officially recognized and validated data.

This efficient tool, whose automatic saving system prevents any loss of data, will be made available to other COMIFAC countries.

37 A REDD+ Initiative: enabling or sectoral initiative having a direct or indirect short- or medium-term impact on greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation or forest degradation, conservation, sustainable management and the increase in forest carbon stocks and aimed to contribute to the national REDD + strategy.

Box 5.6: Moabi DRC and Independent REDD+ Monitoring in the DRC

Moabi DRC (rdc.moabi.org) is a collaborative mapping system that supports local civil society efforts to monitor REDD+ implementation in the DRC. It combines social networking and spatial mapping to create a community of users to collect and validate data on activities such as mining and logging which could cause deforestation (figure 5.3). Moabi DRC was initially piloted to track land use planning and monitor parameters related to REDD+, such as the displacement of deforestation and forest degradation beyond the boundaries of pilot project zones and unplanned deforestation and degradation. GIS data can be uploaded and updated directly on the platform with quality control maintained by experts from government ministries to NGOs collecting spatial data related to REDD+ pilot projects and drivers. With technical and the financial support from the WWF, the platform is managed by OSFAC – a DRC registered NGO specializing in forest monitoring of Congo Basin rainforests. It was endorsed by the DRC REDD+ Coordination Unit.

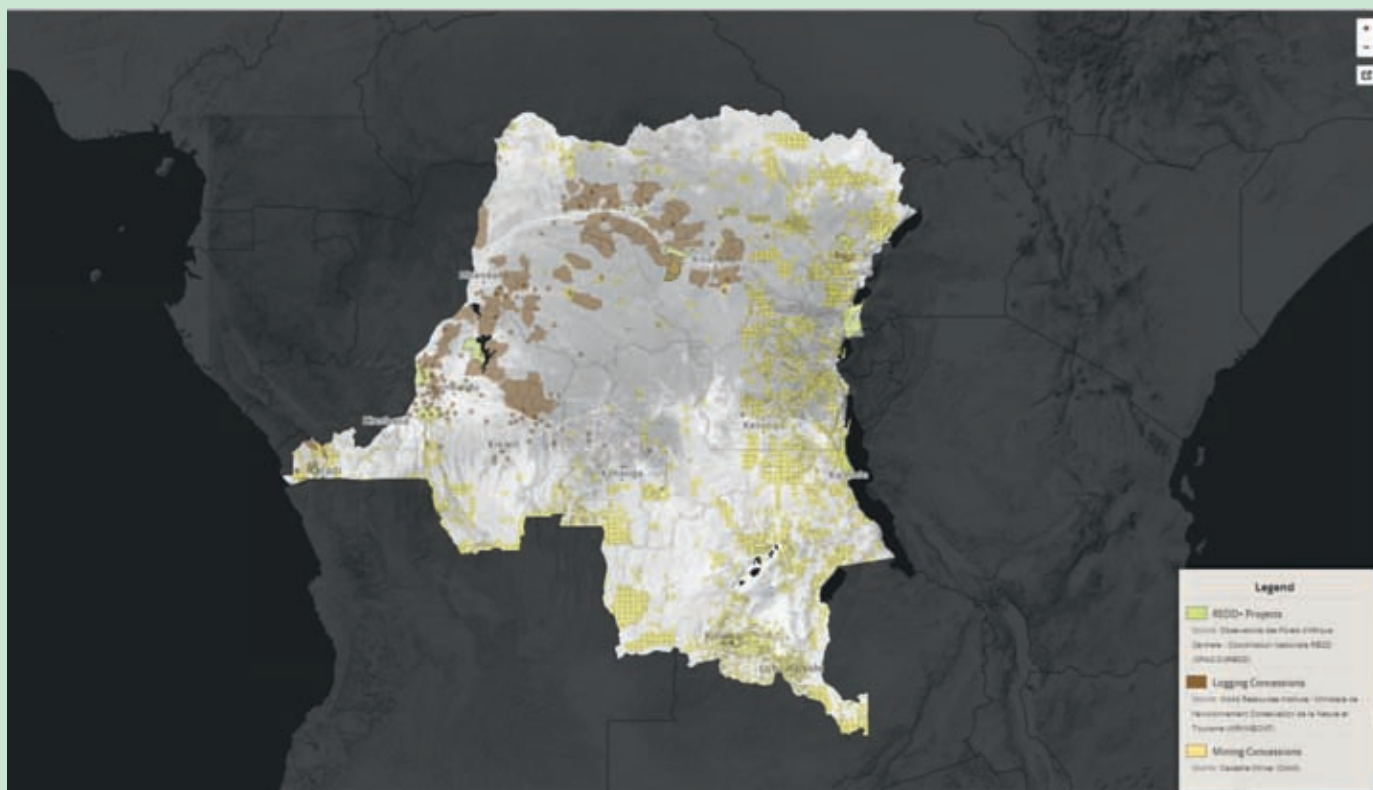


Figure 5.3: Screenshot of Moabi DRC

Since its launch in June 2011, Moabi DRC has demonstrated a novel approach to independent REDD+ monitoring and contributed to the implementation of REDD+ in the DRC. The platform hosts the largest publicly available database of drivers of deforestation in the DRC. These drivers include mining and logging permits, oil and gas concessions, road rehabilitation projects, and informal mining activity. These data were contributed through the development of both formal and informal data sharing agreements with government agencies, such as the Ministry of Mines and the Ministry of Infrastructure, and civil society groups, such as the International Peace Information Service. These data were used to conduct a spatial analysis of competing land use claims for REDD+ pilot projects. The study identified 190 competing claims within the domain of proposed REDD+ pilot projects in the DRC which could result in future deforestation, including 77 road rehabilitation projects, 58 mining permits, and 7 oil blocks which directly overlap with REDD+ project areas (figure 5.4). This information will support the development of more accurate deforestation and forest degradation reference scenarios and more efficient REDD+ project implementation.

Moabi's implementation raised a number of technical, institutional, and financial challenges. Because the platform was only available via the internet, field data collection by civil society groups and local communities was restricted. This limitation prevented the gathering of some types of field data, such as local opinions of REDD+ projects, community land tenure, and certain drivers of deforestation like illegal logging. Capacity restrictions also impeded the development of an independent consortium of NGOs and government institutions to support and maintain the platform. Additionally, the project did not have sufficient technical capacity for updating the platform code or for providing the necessary technical training for project partner organizations. Proprietary and sensitivity issues also restricted which data could be shared on the platform. Government ministries were often reluctant to disclose the financial information related to extractive and infrastructure projects, and civil society groups did not want to disclose community land tenure information. Finally, Moabi DRC did not have sufficient financial resources to cover the long-term costs of managing the mapping platform or a data-sharing consortium for the platform. Future independent REDD+ monitoring platforms will need to integrate mobile mapping tools for field collection and ensure that the system can be managed by the implementing institutions. Perhaps most critically, independent monitoring systems need sustainable financing models. To maintain independence from the government and key REDD+ implementing institutions such as large NGOs and donor agencies, costs need to be distributed among the consortium of organizations benefiting from the platform.

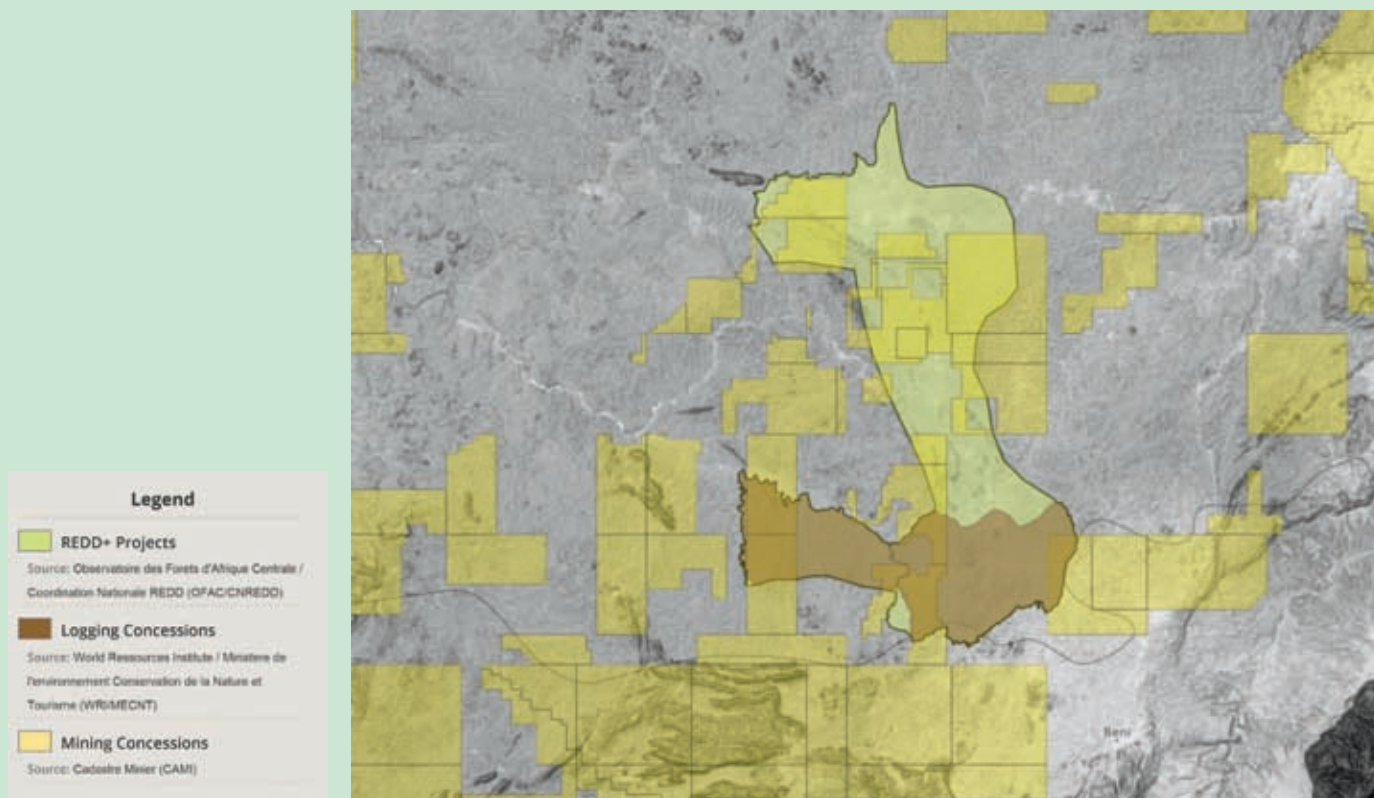


Figure 5.4 Competing land use claims within Mambasa REDD+ Project, DRC
Source: Moabi DRC

Major challenge in the DRC: implementation capacity

To mitigate the risks of corruption, the approval and reporting processes for the DRC's National REDD+ Registry are fully digitalized and accessible online to the public. Project developers report on projects using password-protected access and independent third parties verify the data. To promote transparency, all of the information is directly integrated into the NFMS.

The National Registry, the NFMS and Moabi have not been fully utilized, mainly because of the institutional and human capacity weaknesses to operationalize the safeguards information systems and effectively apply the safeguards procedures in the field.

More generally, the full establishment of the DRC National Environmental Agency, which is in charge of monitoring environmental safeguards for projects in all sectors (mining, forestry, energy, etc.), including those programs associated with REDD+, has been substantially delayed. Given its broader mandate and the higher institutional and human capacity required for its proper functioning, it is imperative that it received the appropriate resources to monitor the application of safeguards in REDD+ activities in the DRC.

4.1.2 Main opportunities and challenges for the implementation of REDD+ Safeguards

The design and implementation of REDD+ safeguards in the Congo Basin countries provide important opportunities for ensuring REDD+ contributes to poverty reduction and broader environmental protection. On the other hand, the implementation of these safeguards is also fraught with challenges.

Opportunities:

- Since monitoring and reporting on social and environmental safeguards is a requirement under the UNFCCC and from other multilateral and bilateral REDD+ initiatives, countries in the region have new incentives to adopt them. Countries with strong safeguards will likely attract more REDD+ investments, both from public and private sources, further strengthening the motivation for their implementation.
- The REDD+ Readiness process is promoting unprecedented levels of capacity building on



Photo 5.10: Selling firewood – Brazzaville, Congo

issues related to safeguards in these countries. As a result, some innovative national-level initiatives are being rolled out, such as DRC's Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria for REDD+. As seen in the Republic of Congo and the DRC, governments are also using REDD+ Readiness funds to strengthen the capacity of entities in charge of monitoring and reporting on safeguards (such as the National Environment Agency in both countries).

- The REDD+ Readiness process has opened new venues for the participation of other stakeholders in the decision-making processes, some of which have been traditionally excluded or marginalized, such as indigenous peoples' representatives.
- Effectively demonstrating sustainable emissions reductions from deforestation and forest degradation on the ground will require countries to tackle complex governance issues such as land tenure reform and forest-user rights.

Challenges:

- The Congo Basin countries have demonstrably weak capacity to monitor and report on safeguards, particularly at the local, decentralized level. In the DRC, the National Environmental Agency was created by act of Parliament, but it is not operational. The monitoring of existing Environmental Impact Assessments for other projects is spotty at best, and nonexistent in most cases.
- Regulations and legislations are often not enforced. As an example, although the DRC has

issued a decree outlining the “REDD+ Projects’ Approval Process”, no currently existing REDD+ project has followed the process nor registered its information in the National Registry. Again, this is likely linked to the government’s lack of capacity.

- The multiplicity of standards and approaches to safeguards, especially in a context of weak capacity, creates confusion for countries and increases implementation costs. Countries are often unsure how to respond to the requirements from different initiatives, and they are unclear whether following the requirements of these initiatives would allow them to comply with the UNFCCC requirements.

- Although CSOs and IPs are theoretically well represented in the national institutions in charge of steering the REDD+ process, often these institutions are not operational or do not have effective decision-making power. This has been the case with CSO and IP representation in the DRC National REDD+ Committee thus far.

- Addressing long-standing governance challenges in the forest sector will take time to complete, especially given the complex vested-interests surrounding them, as discussed elsewhere.

4.1.3 Conclusions and the way forward

Some of the Congo Basin countries (particularly DRC and Congo) have demonstrated significant progress in advancing their domestic REDD+ Readiness processes, including the

design of approaches and tools to deal with REDD+ safeguards such as the DRC’s Social and Environmental REDD+ Criteria and Principles. The REDD+ Readiness process in most of the Congo Basin countries has also exhibited high levels of multi-stakeholder participation, including by CSOs’ and indigenous peoples’ representatives. In addition, some countries, particularly the DRC, have already enacted regulations to deal with REDD+, which mandates REDD+ projects adopt internationally-recognized environmental and social standards as part of the project approval process.

However, implementation of these safeguards poses complex challenges. Given the weak capacity of most governments, particularly on the local level, monitoring and reporting compliance with the safeguards and then enforcing remediation will be difficult. Furthermore, the proliferation of safeguard principles, criteria and tools may add to the confusion.

As a way forward, continued capacity building at all levels is required. Countries should test new tools for monitoring and reporting, such as using new information technologies (Moabi being an example) or outsourcing some of the monitoring functions to third-party entities (such as to NGOs or even private firms). Instead of creating new institutions, as much as possible existing institutions, systems and processes should be further developed and build on. As an example, existing bodies in charge of ensuring compliance with national safeguards policies should be strengthened by the REDD+ process.

Congo Basin countries have an opportunity with the broad availability of donor funding to strengthen their national policies, laws, and regulations relating to safeguards and to create robust safeguards information systems so that in addition to climate change mitigation REDD+ will also result in social benefits to forest-dependent communities and broader environmental gains to the country and the region.

Photo 5.11: Sedimentation on the edges of a forest rig, Gabon



4.2 REL and RL: the position of COMIFAC countries

During the UNFCCC negotiations on REDD+, COMIFAC countries maintained a joint position on various issues pertaining to RELs and RLs.

4.2.1 Issues related to the choice of REDD+ activities

When choosing the REDD+ activities (among the five types) to implement, REDD+ participating countries determine the scope of their intervention. The COMIFAC countries always wanted the five REDD+ related activities to be considered on an equal basis. They also have consistently maintained that “reference scenarios” should take into account historic rates of forest degradation and efforts to conserve and increase carbon stocks through sustainable forest development. By considering emission-producing activities alongside carbon sequestration activities, the COMIFAC countries have advocated for the adoption of RLs rather than RELs. This position is justified because the Congo Basin forests are affected by degradation more than deforestation due to the steady efforts of several COMIFAC countries to sustainably manage their forests despite limited resources.

The countries of the Congo Basin have presented numerous submissions³⁸ to the UNFCCC:

- “the consideration of degradation as part of deforestation constitutes an essential priority for the countries of the Congo Basin... and the consideration of degradation does not pose a methodological problem” (UNFCCC on 10 September 2007);
- “The establishment of sustainable development schemes seeks to conserve forests and thereby prevent the emissions that would arise in the absence of such development schemes. These prevented emissions should be taken into account. However, initial emissions caused by the exploitation of forest concessions under sustainable management are not expected to be factored in. In the same vein, improved forest management may help mitigate emissions which should be estimated and compensated. Similarly, enhanced forest carbon stocks achieved through sustainable management also should be estimated and compensated. (UNFCCC of 20 March, 2008).³⁹

4.2.2 Issue of scale

The COMIFAC countries supported a flexible approach leaving room for the opportunity to progressively develop their REL and/or RL by starting with a subnational or local REL and/or RL before developing a national REL and/or RL: “The Congo Basin countries took note that the establishment of mechanisms for reducing emissions from deforestation can rely on various levels of action, local and national. Given the diversity of national circumstances, it is important to be open-minded and flexible in selecting the approaches and relevant level of action to be adopted” (UNFCCC on 10 September 2007⁴⁰) and “Subnational and national approaches are compatible and relevant in Congo Basin countries. The subnational approach helps to garner requisite experience to gradually progress towards a national approach.” (UNFCCC on 20 March 2008⁴¹).

4.2.3 Methodological issues

The COMIFAC countries have defended the option of adjusting their REL and/or RL in accordance with national circumstances: “Reference scenarios based only on historical trends would severely penalize countries of the Congo Basin. The latter propose that the reference scenario (be it in a national or project approach) should, beside the historical trend, include a development adjustment factor which will take into account national and international circumstances (for example: demographic trends, agriculture, food self-sufficiency, development of infrastructure, renewable energy, etc.), ⁴²... The IPCC Good Practice Guidance on Forestry, Evaluating Emission Factors and Review Procedures provide data quality assurance”.⁴³

38 See FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.14

39 See FCCC/SBST A/2008/MISC.4

40 FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.14

41 FCCC/SBST A/2008/MISC.4

42 Idem 40

43 Idem 41

4.2.4 Data and submission issues

The Congo Basin countries maintained their position on data and the submission of REL and/or RL during negotiations: in Durban (2011), the COMIFAC countries argued that data used to develop RELs and/or RLs should follow IPCC principles, namely completeness, coherency, transparency, comparability and accuracy. They also proposed that RELs and/or RLs be reviewed every 5 years⁴⁴ (UNFCCC of 10 September 2007).

The Congo Basin countries consistently supported submissions to the UNFCCC made by the COMIFAC for the defense of rain forests, notably those related to RELs and/or RLs in preparation at the Durban negotiations.⁴⁵

Issues specific to the sub-region in the development of RELs and RLs

In the State of the Forest 2010, it is noted that *“common specifications for all countries in the Congo Basin should be used in methodologies to establish each country’s reference level”*, which should ensure a coherent approach, facilitate synergies, and prevent perverse effects such as leakage. Ideally, this methodology should be developed under the auspices of the COMIFAC, without preventing countries from adapting their REL and/or RL approach to national circumstances.

The adoption of a joint methodological approach means adopting a shared definition of “forest”, referring to the same historical reference period, considering the same REDD+ activities, harmonizing classification systems and using the same emission factors to estimate emissions and carbon sequestration. While this may not pose any particular technical problems, it can have important political implications: consultations regarding this harmonization have not yet taken place.

Issues related to methodologies for estimates

An important challenge for the COMIFAC countries is to accurately estimate the extent of degradation of carbon stocks in forest areas. Inventory data sets enabling an analysis of the evolution of these stocks are rare. Several approaches will thus need to be combined, including an analysis of the evolution of volumes of wood extracted on forest concessions and other forests (timber,

fuelwood, charcoal, etc.), the annual growth rates of forests, remote sensing, etc.

Free 30 m spatial resolution Landsat images could be used for historical analyses of forest degradation. However, to determine damage caused by selective logging, for example, high-resolution spatial images (with a resolution of 1-10 m) are required. Experts in the sub-region have not yet sufficiently mastered the use of radar or LIDAR imagery, which is often quite expensive.

Even with high spatial resolution satellite data, certain countries will encounter difficulties using these data to estimate forest degradation or enhanced stocks resulting from sustainable development schemes. This pertains particularly to dry forest and wooded savanna areas of Chad, the Central African Republic, northern Cameroon and southern sections of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. While field validation is indispensable, it is complex to implement in low density and highly fragmented forest ecosystems.

Data availability and accessibility

The availability and accessibility of various relevant data sets, whether satellite or field data, is an important issue in the sub-region.

The plethora of carbon stock MRV initiatives, coupled with a lack of coordination between donors, renders the progress of these initiatives difficult to monitor, calls into question the relevance of the data produced for developing RELs and/or RLs, complicates the identification of desirable synergies, leads to duplication and inconsistencies, and demands redoubled efforts. Furthermore, competent authorities are neither informed about certain research work nor allowed access to data and outputs due to intellectual property rights. Such counter-productive situations run against national interests. Aware of these challenges, the COMIFAC countries recently initiated two regional projects funded by the World Bank and the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) to create a regional registry of MRV initiatives and to reinforce collaboration and data sharing.

The high cost of high-resolution satellite images, as well as of radar and LIDAR data, limits the capacity of sub-region countries to use remote sensing to undertake the analyses needed to monitor forest degradation and restoration. The operating costs and technical challenges of

44 FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.14

45 See FCCC/SBSTA/2011/MISC.7

interpreting the data produced hinder countries in the sub-region from using these techniques on a regular basis or over their entire territory (see Chapter 1). Intellectual property rights limit access rights, notably for financial reasons, to data sets developed by others.

National circumstances

During UNFCCC negotiations, COMIFAC countries have steadfastly argued that RELs/RLs should be adjusted according to different national factors. The desire to consider factors with significant potential impact on forest cover makes sense because Congo Basin countries are at the very beginning of their “forest transition”, or at the level of Stage 1 in the figure below (figure 5.5). However, without the implementation of preventive measures, their development and demography could lead to sharp growth in their forest GHG emissions.

Diverse situations are found across the Congo Basin. Some countries can point to particular situations such as armed conflict, specific deforestation and degradation drivers, illegal extraction of wood, fires and other natural catastrophes, etc., that affect forest cover. The quasi-permanent cloud cover over certain regions and difficulties in accessing others for geographic or security reasons complicate the adjustment of RELs/RLs.

The next steps for the Congo Basin countries

Several countries of the sub-region are still in the planning stages of their REDD+ strategy⁴⁶ and the development of their RELs and/or RLs is far from imminent. Only the DRC, which has benefited from the support of the FCPF and UN-REDD Program over several years has made much progress. The other countries of the sub-region will benefit from the DRC's experience. Thanks to the technical support received, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo will soon begin to develop their RELs/RLs. The other countries of the sub-region, thanks to two regional capacity building projects funded by the World Bank and CBFF, are beginning their national REL/RL deliberations by developing a national MRV action plan.

These two regional projects will facilitate exchanges on the feasibility and relevance of common approaches, methodological and policy

questions related to the development of RELs and/or RLs, data sharing, and lessons learned.

Given the varying progress achieved by each country, it would seem that the submission of RELs/RLs will stretch over several years. Furthermore, it would be wise to wait while certain key elements regarding the MRV system (which will have certain consequences for the REL/RLs) remain to be defined, notably the parameters, supervision, and technical evaluation process of RELs and RLs.



Photo 5.12: Logs destined for export, transiting the town of Ndjolé, Gabon

⁴⁶ To date, only the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and the CAR have developed a Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP).

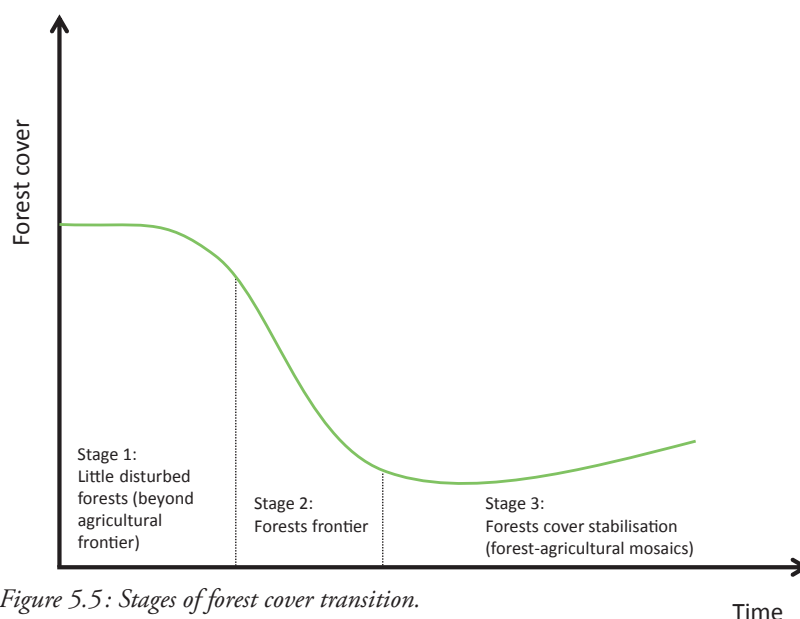


Figure 5.5: Stages of forest cover transition.

Source: Angelsen, A. (ed.) 2008 – (English and French).

Box 5.7: Quantification of future deforestation in the Congo Basin by means of a global partial balance model

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The aim of modeling deforestation in the Congo Basin countries is to gain a better understanding of the possible deforestation dynamics during the forthcoming decades by analyzing the impact of internal and external pressures on the region. This exercise can help build and support the position of the Congo Basin countries in international negotiations on climate and biodiversity. For example, the question of reference scenarios in REDD+ is among the points which have not yet been decided but are crucial for a region with a large area of forest cover and a historically low deforestation rate (Martinet *et al.*, 2009). Modeling will also make it possible to test policies and assist with planning activities in the region (European Commission, 2011).

GLOBIOM is a partial equilibrium model which can be used to study land use changes across the globe (Havlik *et al.*, 2013; Havlik *et al.*, 2011; Schneider *et al.*, 2007). The sectors of the economy integrated into this model are the most significant for land use, namely agriculture (18 crop types and six animal species) and the forestry sector. Production from these sectors may be used for animal or human consumption and for energy production. Production therefore depends on (i) population growth, (ii) changes in dietary habits, (iii) economic growth and (iv) public policies. GLOBIOM is an optimization model whereby the solution ensures the highest possible production and consumption levels taking account of the various constraints present in the economy. Maximization of producer and consumer surplus is also considered (McCarl and Spreen, 1980).

The model is founded on a global database which integrates information on soil type, climate, topography, land use, crop type and management type. The database is built with simulation units ranging from between 10x10 km and 50x50 km (Skalsky *et al.*, 2008). From this, one can “zoom” into the Central African region taking account at the global level of “shocks” which occur in other regions but which influence the regional balance through international trade. Simulations are carried out for every ten-year period, taking into account changes in land use in the preceding period.

Based on the GLOBIOM model, the CONGOBIOM model takes into account the specific characteristics of the Congo Basin countries (Megevand *et al.*, 2012) and has yielded the following results:

- Large risk of acceleration of deforestation in the Congo Basin over the next 20 years, notably due to the development of transport infrastructure (Mosnier *et al.*, 2012).
- The increase in agricultural yields may lead to an increase in deforestation if a resulting price reduction leads to a strong increase in demand, internal and/or from other regions, which would increase cultivated areas (Alcott, 2005; Jevons, 1865).
- The potential competition between the objectives of deforestation reduction and development of the sub-region must not be neglected.
- The introduction of strict constraints on deforestation without measures to assist the farming sector is liable to result in internal price increases and to increasing food imports, while the development of infrastructures and of the farming sector without reinforcing management capacities may increase deforestation.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of REDD+ policies depends on a good balance between control and incentives on the one hand, and on strong inter-sectorial collaboration on the other hand.

In order to take into account forest degradation processes and all existing information on land use in Central Africa, a second version of the CONGOBIOM model was introduced in 2012 for a four-year period as part of the REDD-PAC (REDD+ Policy Assessment Center) project (www.redd-pac.org). In that process, the model was adapted to the country level. The main goal is to identify REDD+ policies which favor economic development and biodiversity conservation.

4.3 Mapping REDD+ multiple benefits – the example of the DRC

The question of how REDD+ can be integrated with other benefits, such as biodiversity conservation, is often posed. Bonobo conservation in the DRC is presented here as an example of how this question may be approached.

REDD+ can contribute to a range of policy goals in addition to climate mitigation. Social benefits, such as poverty alleviation (including from carbon payments), clarification of land tenure and better forest governance may arise from the implementation of REDD+. In addition, REDD+ can help secure ecosystem services that underpin local livelihoods (e.g. non-timber forest products and soil erosion control) and national economies, (e.g. through the preservation of vital water cycles and by providing recreational benefits for tourism). At the same time, by maintaining or restoring natural forests, REDD+ can be beneficial for the conservation of forest biodiversity. However, there is also a need to avoid risks to biodiversity conservation from REDD+. For example, if plantations of non-native species are used to enhance carbon stocks, this may damage natural ecosystems.

The potential benefits from REDD+ interventions are highly context-dependent and depend on both the value of the individual forest in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services and on the pressure on the forest, which varies from place to place. Carefully designed REDD+ interventions in strategic locations could benefit the climate as well as help to conserve rare and endangered species.

The *Direction des Inventaires et Aménagements Forestiers* (DIAF) of the DRC's Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism, the OSFAC, and the United Nations Environment Program World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) are collaborating to map potential environmental benefits from REDD+ in the DRC with support from the UN-REDD Program. A first report, containing spatial analysis on the potential for biodiversity conservation benefits under REDD+, was launched in July 2012 (Musampa *et al.*, 2012).

Spatial analysis can also be used to identify and illustrate potential tradeoffs between the benefits from REDD+. For example, if REDD+ interventions were selected only for their carbon emission

reduction potential, there is a risk that valuable forest biodiversity and ecosystem services, which do not overlap with these areas of high carbon potential, will suffer negative impacts. In the following section, we use bonobo conservation as an example to illustrate these concepts.

Figure 5.6 shows a spatial analysis of the bonobo (*Pan paniscus*) range (Caldecott & Miles, 2005) alongside existing protected areas (WRI, 2010), logging concessions (WRI, 2010) and historic deforestation between 2000 and 2005, and 2005 and 2010 (OSFAC, 2010). Forests near areas that have recently been deforested are assumed to be at a relatively high risk of future deforestation. Table 5.4 indicates potential REDD+ interventions in the DRC and how they could be designed to secure bonobo habitat, based on the information presented in Figure 5.6. However, these interventions do not substitute for holistic conservation planning for bonobos, which should include determining where the largest populations of bonobos are located within their range.



Photo 5.13: Baka hut in north of Gabon

The bonobo is classified as an endangered species and, unlike its nearest relative, the chimpanzee, it is only found in the DRC (Fruth *et al.*, 2012). Bonobo conservation in the context of REDD+ planning illustrates a potential tradeoff between the benefits from REDD+. Bonobos do not continuously occupy the range shown on the map (figure 5.6) but, instead, favor mixed forest and savanna woodland habitats (Caldecott & Miles, 2005). Because savanna woodlands have lower carbon stock than other forest areas, these forests might not be targeted by REDD+ interventions. Furthermore, if the sole focus of REDD+ is on high biomass (and high carbon) areas without

regard to additional benefits, REDD+ activities may even be detrimental to biodiversity conservation, because REDD+ activities might shift land-use pressures from high biomass forest areas to savanna woodlands and thereby inadvertently but negatively impact important bonobo habitat.

In summary, spatial analysis of biodiversity and ecosystem services can help to identify REDD+ interventions that result in multiple benefits. It can also demonstrate where there is a tradeoff between potential benefits and highlight risks that may result from implementing REDD+ in certain areas.

Table 5.4: This table describes some possible REDD+ interventions that may be carried out in the DRC. It highlights how the map in figure 5.6 may help identify the location of the interventions that will deliver biodiversity benefits to bonobos. Support to bonobo conservation is used as an example of a multiple benefit from REDD+.

REDD+ interventions from the DRC's REDD+ framework strategy (CN-REDD, 2012)	Zone in which this intervention could be undertaken with potential benefit to bonobo conservation	Potential benefits for bonobo conservation ⁴⁸
Forest zoning through the definition of a Permanent Forest Domain and the designation of 15 % of forests as “ <i>Forêts classées</i> ” (classified forests).	Forests which intersect with bonobo range.	Zoning new areas as <i>Forêts classées</i> between existing <i>Forêts classées</i> may reduce fragmentation of bonobo populations. This intervention may be particularly timely as Junker <i>et al.</i> (2012) estimated that there has been a 29 % reduction in suitable conditions within the bonobo's range since the 1990s.
Tenure reform: Resolve conflicts between forestry concessions and protected areas. Clarifying the status of these areas of overlap may help avoid the deforestation and degradation associated with uncertain land tenure (Quan <i>et al.</i> , 2008).	Forest concessions that overlap with protected areas, in bonobo range.	Clarification of the status of these protected areas would inform the targeting of conservation actions and reduce degradation of threatened habitat.
Sustainable management of forests, facilitated by encouraging logging companies to undertake certification and improve their concessions' management plans.	Forest concessions that overlap with bonobo range.	Habitat degradation, partly through commercial logging, is one threat to the bonobo (IUCN, 2012). Prioritising sustainable management of forests in concessions which may contain bonobos could have a positive impact on populations, particularly if the management plans limit the number of logging roads opened, which have been shown to have a negative impact on populations (IUCN & ICCN, 2012).
Other possible REDD+ interventions		
Strengthen protected areas through participatory community forest patrolling.	Current protected areas where historic deforestation has occurred. Forests near to areas that have recently been deforested are assumed to be at a relatively high risk of deforestation in the future.	Commercial hunting for bushmeat threatens bonobo populations (IUCN, 2012). Guard protection within parks is associated with higher population densities (Guislain & Reinartz, 2010/2011), while also reducing deforestation.
Forest rehabilitation through the replanting of native tree species in degraded areas.	Forest areas in the bonobo range that have experienced deforestation between 2000 and 2010.	Restoring degraded land increases the amount of suitable habitat for bonobos, which is currently under pressure (Junker <i>et al.</i> , 2012).

⁴⁸ The distribution and population density of the bonobo is uncertain within its range, which is patchily occupied. Interventions could only be assumed to be beneficial for bonobos where they are present.

4.4 How REDD+ and FLEGT are coming together in the Congo Basin

FLEGT stands for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade. While REDD+ is associated to international negotiations on climate change mitigation, FLEGT is linked to a policy package put forward by the European Union – the EU FLEGT Action Plan – which aims to reduce illegal logging by strengthening sustainable and legal forest management, improving governance and promoting trade in legally produced timber (see Chapter 2). Timber-exporting countries can engage in FLEGT notably through a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), which is a legally binding trade agreement with the EU to ensure that timber products exported to the EU come from legal sources and benefit from preferential market access. By mandating consensus-building in the country concerned, FLEGT VPAs have prompted a broad range of stakeholders to come to the table and provided a forum for discussions about forest governance and sector reform.

The Congo Basin is a region with strong country engagement in both the REDD+ and FLEGT VPA processes. Three countries have signed a FLEGT VPA with the EU – the Republic of Congo, the CAR and Cameroon – and two countries have entered into formal negotiations for a VPA – Gabon and the DRC. The same countries have also engaged in REDD+, with varying degrees of advancement. The Congo Basin is one of the regions that have most evidently and simultaneously engaged in both processes.

The combined expected benefits of the FLEGT VPA (i.e. future preferential access to the EU market for timber products) and REDD+ processes (i.e. future incentives for reducing forest-related emissions) have helped to ensure that forest sector reforms remained high on the politi-

cal agenda over the last few years. Both processes work towards the common objective of improving forest governance and the sustainable management of forest resources. They also share the ambition to go beyond traditional forest sector interventions, and address underlying drivers of deforestation such as weak or inadequate policy coordination and land use planning, unclear legal frameworks, non-transparent decision making, corruption, etc. In a way, the FLEGT VPA and REDD+ processes are complementary and results-based, leading towards a more legal and sustainable timber trade (FLEGT VPA) and carbon and non-carbon benefits (REDD+).

The interactions between FLEGT and REDD+ are particularly important in the Congo Basin given the relative importance of the formal and informal forest sectors. FLEGT helps to clarify and enforce legal standards in the formal forest sectors, which tends to lead to more sustainable forest management and contribute to REDD+ objectives. The artisanal logging sector has been more challenging to include in FLEGT VPAs due to its informal nature in the region, and the incentive that REDD+ can bring to improve practices is expected to be essential. The issue of regulating informal activities is often related to forest rights and tenure reforms in the region, another area where the combined political importance of FLEGT and REDD+ stands a higher chance of advancing these difficult reforms. Also, with agricultural expansion expected to be the most important future driver of deforestation in the Congo Basin, FLEGT VPAs may provide lessons and experiences in promoting in-country dialogue to address challenging issues around clearing of forest for agricultural commodities.



Photo 5.14: Logs washed onto Gabon beaches

Despite these commonalities, the FLEGT and REDD+ processes are not always well-connected in the Congo Basin countries. In some countries, the process dynamics are different or stakeholders have engaged in each process without an integrated vision of how to advance the two processes together. Gradually, stakeholders in the region are starting to realize the opportunities to integrate the REDD+ and FLEGT processes more closely. In the Republic of Congo, for instance, where the R-PP identifies the implementation of the FLEGT VPA as a strategic option for REDD+ development, a common information platform has been created for both the FLEGT VPA and REDD+ processes in order to increase transparency and facilitate access to information. Also, the

civil society is organized to participate in a coordinated way in the two processes. In the DRC, common REDD+ and FLEGT institutional structures are now being tested at provincial level to avoid a duplication of efforts that the parallel decentralization of these processes could lead to. Significant experience in independent forest monitoring gained from the FLEGT process in the Republic of Congo, Cameroon and the DRC is relevant to REDD+ monitoring. Many of the national REDD+ strategies now seek to build on these FLEGT forest monitoring experiences to develop the structures and methods needed for independent monitoring in the context of REDD+.

4.5 REDD+: land rights and tree tenure

The REDD+ process requires definition and clarification of land rights and tree tenure.

It is difficult to imagine a national REDD+ land-use strategy without identifying and taking into account the zoning of forests to be conserved over the long term. The legal status (property of the state, individual persons or entities, public authorities, national estate or public estate) of these “permanent forests” or “permanent forest estate” remains open. In Cameroon, the permanent forest estate (legally constituted through a classification act) is the property of the state and local public authorities. In Gabon and the DRC, protected areas are classified as public domain, but the notion of the permanent forest estate is not directly understood as an explicit land-use planning category.

The permanent forest estate or the permanent forests is not entirely classified as a single legal category. Similarly, a forest land tenure classification can include both permanent and non-permanent forests. For example, within a community forest, wooded areas managed in a simple manner can co-exist alongside areas that have been or that will be converted to agriculture. In this case, “community forests”, often the only legal status accessible to communities, describe a social reality that is outside a single legal category: community land, an area where different user rights are exercised. In the DRC, where local community forests are undoubtedly more widespread than in Cameroon, one can imagine a portion of community forests with a forest management plan

contained within a future permanent forest estate while other community forest areas are designated for other uses.

The question of land rights and the sharing of carbon benefits depends heavily on the REDD+ architecture adopted by various countries. While, as foreseen in the negotiations, payments are made at the national (or provincial) level, the transmission of incentives to local actors will seemingly take place through “Payment for Environmental Services” (PES) type projects and programs, and the issue of carbon ownership should not arise (see box 5.8). However, the establishment of contractual agreements with populations (communities, family units), so that they preserve their forests or restore the ecosystem, will require the recognition of exclusive rights over the areas concerned. These exclusive rights do not necessarily imply a recognition of full and entire ownership (some rights can be restricted), but these factors must be taken into account in existing law.

In contrast, if REDD+ projects are compensated based on their performance, issues specific to carbon rights will arise. It is sometimes noted that local land rights must be clarified in order to plan how REDD+ carbon benefits are to be shared. This needs to be clarified. If one dismisses the idea of compensating local users for the carbon stock contained in their forests but adopts the principle of compensating measurable efforts (which assumes a reference scenario) the question of land rights (“who does the forest belong to?”) becomes secondary in relation to actors

engaged in conservation, reforestation etc. The question of ownership of carbon credits will only arise when there are huge profits (once all project costs have been covered). If, in this case, the holders of customary rights are able to claim a share of the benefits, what will the states, which often consider themselves to be the owners of the forests, demand?

Box 5.8: A national payment program for environmental services (PES) for the application of the REDD+ into the Democratic Republic of Congo?

The DRC has opted to establish a “National Redd+ Fund” (NRF), mainly with international financing, to fund the policies and measures intended to combat deforestation and forest degradation. These can be on the one hand, “REDD+ projects” advanced by private organizations which have available private or international public financing (World Bank funding, Congo Forest Basin Fund, GEF, FFEM, etc.); and on the other hand, the national PES program financed mainly by the NRF and other sources. The PES is one of the government tools intended to meet national deforestation prevention goals which aims to modify destructive «slash and burn» farming techniques practiced by villagers in forested and peri-forested areas. The PES consists of both contractual tools (including conditionality) based on incentives, as well as investment tools to enable building, with PES beneficiaries, sustainable and profitable alternatives to destructive farming practices.

The PES consists of two distinct, inseparable sections:

- Investments intended to structurally change the current agrarian system, –where this system negatively impacts the forest canopy– in order to increase crop yields from areas targeted by zoning plans, and to enable farmers to manage fertility via other means than the annual clearing of a new forest areas. These investments also enable diversification of local economic activity through the introduction of non-farming activities wherever possible and realistic. The creation of new plantations comes under this “investments” category (even if maintenance and upkeep may belong in the first category; commitment to a micro-zone plan, stabilizing land usage). Generally-speaking, these investments are aimed at households and rarely at communities.
- The creation of the national PES program must proceed after mapping the opportunity costs of maintaining the forest canopy. This will illustrate the average potential gross margins of different crops which could be produced in forested zones. This mapping of potential margins must allow for a choice of eligible areas for PES programs, prioritizing those areas where the likelihood of converting forest into farm land is very high in the short term and ignoring areas where the forest canopy is not seriously under threat in the short-run. Other criteria may be taken into account, such as the proximity to protected areas or transportation or restored transportation routes (increasing deforestation risk).

It has been suggested that PES projects should be identified and managed by organizations or companies on the basis of specifications drawn up by the CN-REDD, while the Environmental Services Division (ESD) refers these proposals to an experts committee whose responsibility is to evaluate their relevance and feasibility.

5. Lessons learned and considerations for future implementation

REDD+, as a new climate policy and finance instrument was welcomed by governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the Congo Basin, although with different expectations and understanding about what REDD+ could achieve and the associated risks. Despite the fact that the REDD+ mechanism entails sophisticated capacities to design and operate, many Congo Basin countries have embraced it and remained determined to try to implement it.

Furthermore, REDD+ has represented a revitalization of the importance of forest conservation and the promotion of sustainable rural livelihoods in the region after years with little political commitment and slow progress. REDD+, thanks to its potential trigger of international finance, has attracted political attention to the objective of forest conservation, while embedding it within a broader context of sustainable development.

REDD+ has attracted a wide array of stakeholders in the Congo Basin, bringing different experiences and priorities to the table. In this sense, REDD+ has created a multi-stakeholder dynamic around forest conservation and forest-related sustainable development not seen with previous endeavors. Although there has been a divergence of views and approaches, the integrating potential of REDD+ is powerful and should be further exploited. In essence, REDD+ has injected the participatory spirit of international climate-change policy into national forest policy, fostering a multi-stakeholder dynamic in forest policy reforms and in forest program design.

However, while there is a general feeling of optimism and enthusiasm surrounding the REDD+ mechanism in Central Africa, some stakeholders have grown skeptical. Some of the problems they have identified with the REDD+ process in Central Africa include:

- The creation of expectations that cannot be fulfilled, especially because progress has been slower than anticipated at the onset of the REDD+ Readiness processes;
- The generation of vague discussions, planning initiatives, and excess analytical consultations among development practitioners and officials (who are often members of the urban elite),

which are often disconnected from local realities; and,

- A focus on forest carbon, which may dilute other conservation and development priorities.

These concerns with REDD+ must be considered to raise awareness of risks, methodological shortcomings and misconceptions.

After four full years of REDD+ in the Congo Basin, many reports, analyses and urban-based consultations have been conducted (e.g. R-PPs, studies on the drivers of deforestation, mapping of carbon densities, and countless workshops and consultative meetings). While these processes may seem to be disconnected from the realities of forests, deforestation and forest peoples, this sentiment offers an incomplete reflection of the reality. REDD+ as a national – and new – mechanism does require substantial national-level analysis, dialogue and planning, especially if it is to influence and reform policies.

At the same time, over the past four years, REDD+ endeavors across the region have stimulated a number of initiatives at the local level, including new projects (and investments), consultations, and new approaches to development planning and project formulation (e.g. moving beyond traditional conservation to tackle the fundamental drivers of deforestation). In the DRC, national REDD+ Readiness efforts have mobilized and significantly raised forest investments (e.g. Forest Investment Program (FIP) or the CBFF), to levels never seen before in the Congo Basin. Overall, the region has witnessed a smooth blending between national analysis and dialogue, on the one hand, and pilot projects and local investments, on the other.

In spite of these encouraging developments, there are a number of pending issues and potential risks around REDD+ that are specific to the Central African region:

- If the conditions for the REDD+ mechanism become too complex (as defined by the UNFCCC negotiations), the Congo Basin countries may be left behind because of their comparatively weaker national capacities. There are two possible solutions to this problem: (i) countries

in the region could remain proactively engaged in negotiations to ensure that technical and policy requirements are adequately accessible to the region ; and, (ii) robust, credible and ad-hoc REDD+ systems that suit the current conditions of the region are designed and implemented.

- If donors do not further engage in REDD+ in the region and deploy the level of fast-start climate financing that has been pledged, countries will begin to lose hope in the benefits of REDD+.

- If governments in the Congo Basin do not conduct the fundamental forest sector policy reforms required for implementing REDD+, and

they do not demonstrate the ability to manage climate finance with due diligence and respect for key social and environmental safeguards, the flow of financial support required for REDD+ will not follow.

These crucial bottlenecks must be overcome to sustain healthy REDD+ processes, or this latest and promising endeavor for forest conservation and sustainable rural livelihoods will likely not succeed.

Photo 5.15: Fishermen on the Lukenie River, DRC

