

Responses to Comments Received from PB Members on CBR+ Concept Note

The table below reflects the comments and concerns voiced by the UN-REDD Policy Board on the draft concept note for 'Support to Community-Based REDD+' that was circulated in March 2013. The concerns have been summarized and grouped by theme. The suggestions and concerns of the Policy Board have been taken into account and are reflected in the revised concept note. This document provides a brief summary of the most common comments received and responses to those comments.

1. THE PROJECT APPROACH
<i>a. Questions about effectiveness of a project approach and how to ensure consolidation of results</i>
Funded activities will be selected so as to align with the country's CBR+ strategy, which itself will align with national REDD+ processes (i.e. the National Programme) and (more loosely) with the national SGP strategy. The CBR+ strategy will be developed through participatory national workshops, and will provide coherence between CBR+ projects and the national scale. The risk of dispersal/'atomization' of effort will be reduced as a result.
<i>b. Concern that CBR+ risks raising expectation of REDD+</i>
With this concern in mind, the concept note has been adjusted to specify that grants should support "no-regrets" activities that have beneficial impacts regardless of the speed at which REDD+ progresses.
2. NATIONAL CBR+ STRATEGIES
<i>a. Questions about the scope of CBR+ activities</i>
Each country's national CBR+ strategy will be developed through participatory national workshops, and will align with national REDD+ processes (i.e. the National Programme). The scope of CBR+ grants will be limited to those activities that are aligned with the country's CBR+ strategy, so CBR+ activities will complement national REDD+ goals and objectives. However, this still allows for independent projects and a wide range of eligible activities, as outlined in the updated concept note. It also allows for different approaches to be considered in the development of CBR+ strategies (e.g. landscape-based approach, see below).
<i>b. Compatibility with landscape approaches and existing rural development frameworks developed by local community networks</i>
Stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide input into the development of national CBR+ strategies, which could be developed so as to promote landscape- or catchment-based approaches as appropriate. Partnership with SGP will be beneficial in this respect, as SGP has experience in landscape based approaches through a number of partnerships that promote community landscape approaches (e.g. COMDEKS; COMPACT). The plan for SGP OP6 (2015-2018) is to some extent to "combine" these two partnerships into a coherent 'Community Landscape/Seascape Conservation' Initiative. SGP's experience with this approach will be a valuable resource to CBR+.
Recognising that many communities and indigenous groups are already developing their own concepts of REDD+ through holistic approaches that encompass food security, forests, environmental and ecosystem services management and rural development, the concept note has been adjusted to allow for harmonization between CBR+ activities and community rural development framework, where they exist. Where appropriate, national CBR+ strategies could be developed so as to align with existing rural development frameworks developed by local community networks, as well as with national REDD+ processes. The concept note has been updated to acknowledge and better highlight these opportunities.

3. CSO REPRESENTATION
a. CSO representation on Global Steering Committee
CSO representation has been added to the Global Steering Committee (this omission was an oversight).
4. PILOT COUNTRIES
a. Concern that criteria for choosing pilot countries are too limiting
For the pilot phase, CBR+ will be implemented in countries with UN-REDD National Programmes. However, it is envisioned that CBR+ will later be expanded to countries at varying levels and stages of REDD+ progress, and there is a lot of flexibility in how an ongoing national REDD+ process can be demonstrated. We are confident that the criteria outlined in the concept note are necessary for the initiative to function as planned in the pilot phase.
4. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
a. How will knowledge management within CBR+ work alongside existing knowledge management mechanisms of SGP?
SGP already has a system in place for capturing case studies, and CBR+ projects will feed into this. Each project will be designed to produce clear lessons derived from assessment of project processes and impacts. A case study of each project's performance will produce information and knowledge that will be disseminated throughout the network of CBR+ communities, as well as throughout the SGP global network of 125 Country Programmes. At the same time, case studies will be presented to the National Steering Committee for review and discussion. Analyses of project portfolios will be undertaken and formally provided to relevant policy makers from the forestry, environment, finance and rural development sectors. Case studies and portfolio analyses will be made available on the UN-REDD website.
5. PARTNERSHIP WITH SGP
a. What is CBR+'s added value with respect to existing community grant mechanisms?
CBR+ will ensure critical links and improved coordination between community grants within the biodiversity, climate change and land degradation focal areas of the SGP and national REDD+ activities under the UN-REDD Programme, thereby multiplying potential impacts and results. As part of its co-financing of CBR+, SGP will direct a portion of its grant funding towards CBR+ specific activities, thus multiplying the amount of funding available for community-level REDD+ grants.
b. Will UN-REDD grants be diluted by partnering with SGP?
On the contrary, partnership with SGP will result in increased funding to REDD+ activities, as SGP will co-finance the initiative by directing some of its funds towards CBR+ activities. CBR+ is being designed so that grants would be awarded according to strict criteria that would be determined at the national level with stakeholders to ensure that funds reach the right actors and right activities.
c. What about the possibility of coordination with other grant mechanisms, besides SGP?
We have mentioned this possibility in the concept note as a future option to explore. However, for the pilot stage we will focus on partnering with SGP for grant delivery. There will already be a good deal of work and learning involved in setting up effective coordination with SGP and to develop a number of partnerships simultaneously at this early stage would be too ambitious.
d. Additional benefits of partnering with SGP
Creation of new implementation structures is reduced by partnering with SGP to utilise their grant delivery mechanism. CBR+ National Steering Committees will consist of the existing SGP NSC, supplemented by REDD+

expertise, while the Global Level Steering Committee will be a Working Groups associated with the existing UN-REDD Policy Board. Thus, existing bodies are used as far as possible.

6. SCALING UP

a. What is meant in the concept note by 'scaling up'?

Scaling up refers to both within and between countries, as well as scaling up more broadly through strategically planning activities to that they are in line with other initiatives. Scaling up may occur in geographic terms involving a landscape approach, or coordinated regional approach, as well as replication within the country and outside. Additionally, scaling up may mean further developing a successful initiative within a national or international policy framework, building a larger scale national or regional initiative on the basis of lessons learned etc. Scaling up can also take the form of improving national policy and planning through sharing of lessons learned, appropriate approaches, and innovative methodologies resulting from CBR+ projects. CBR+ therefore integrates within each community project elements of communications and knowledge management as well as support for stand-alone activities such as networking across countries and between countries among CBR+ communities.

Since SGP's mechanisms for grant delivery and oversight are already in place, the learning period will be reduced compared to if CBR+ was to start from scratch, building its own mechanisms. The concept note proposes scaling up gradually over a three year period. Six pilot countries will be funded in the first year of operation, increasing to 12 countries in the second year.

7. FINANCIAL/BUDGET

a. Breakdown of CBR+ spending

The experience of the SGP in two decades of work with more than 16,000 communities shows that proactive support activities must be provided if poor and vulnerable communities in remote areas are to be given priority in grant-making. Many of these communities will not have heard of REDD+ and will have no experience of writing proposals. If grant-making simply involves announcing the availability of funds, it becomes skewed in favour of the few already capable NGOs. Thus, a CBR+ initiative must be more proactive and requires allocating funds for "non-grant costs" directed at activities that support reaching out communities, to help develop project proposals (i.e. grant writing workshops, training in financial management, participatory video, photo-story documentation); to develop national level CBR+ strategies through consultative meetings; to support knowledge capture and sharing; to monitor and evaluate grants to ensure achievement of intended outcomes.

Depending on country situations, anywhere from 10% - 20% will have to be allocated for these "technical non-grant costs". But it is to be noted that all these expenses are directed to support and benefit the communities. More detail on the breakdown of spending has been added to the revised concept note.

b. Clarifying SGP's contribution

SGP will provide 1:1 co-financing both of grants and of non-grant costs. SGP will match UN-REDD spending on grants by allocating a portion of its existing grant spending to activities that fall under CBR+ themes. SGP will co-finance non-grant costs by financing items such as in-country staff time, National Coordinators' salaries, office premises, and a portion of global level management costs.

c. Financial management

At the global level, SGP follows a set of Standard Operational Guidelines which guides the strategic grant-making and governance of the programme, and has a harmonized monitoring & evaluation policy. There is also a detailed set of Standard Operating Procedures to guide financial management.

d. Payment of overheads/ administrative fees to SGP

The proposed modality for the disbursement of the allocated funds from the UN-REDD programme will be through a "parallel" co-financing arrangement. In such an arrangement, GEF SGP will not manage the UN-REDD funds and

thus **no additional agency fee is required**. There will have to be sharing, however, of certain technical non-grant costs (e.g. visits to potential project sites to support communities in the development of projects, for review and approval of projects, M&E site visits, for communications and knowledge management, networking as well as proactively designed trainings and workshops that cannot be supported through community-based grants (i.e. where coverage is over a large landscape or at a national level).

8. CAPACITY-BUILDING OF COMMUNITIES AND TRAINING OF COUNTRY STAFF

a. What training will be provided to prepare communities for CBR+ and raise their awareness of the grants?

This is an important issue and is incorporated in the budget. In SGP's community-based approach, capacity development is integral to the objective and design of the projects. Thus, projects and funding can be phased. If need be, facilitative "planning grant" funding is provided first so that the awareness level and capacity of the community is built up first to the level where they can do the final design of the project themselves. Where the situation calls for the development of awareness and capacity of several communities at once, then stakeholder workshops can be organized and supported, where community representatives meet with selected resource persons and support groups, to help in the design of appropriate projects.

b. How will SGP staff be trained in the administration of CBR+ grants?

SGP staff in-country and SGP National Steering Committees have good training and experience in managing small grants. What they would need would be a more comprehensive orientation on UN-REDD, including the country REDD+ strategies, so that the grant-making becomes fully aligned to such a strategy. However, in each country, other stakeholders with knowledge of REDD+ will also participate in the grant-making process and in supporting the implementation of projects (e.g. sitting on CBR+ National Steering Committees) as well as in various follow up work such as scaling up particularly in terms of knowledge sharing and policy advocacy. These other support stakeholders (e.g. academics and researchers, lawyers, supporting NGOs/CSOs, government technicians and officials from local to national levels) will need at least a good orientation if not an intensive training.

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