

Independent Technical Review: Republic of Congo National Programme Document

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

Reviewer: Stephen Cobb

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General comments to National Programme Document of Republic of Congo (maximum 200 words):

The Republic of Congo has been involved in preparation for REDD+ readiness since 2008, when it began taking part in the FCPF process. In 2010, it became a member of the UN-REDD Programme and was selected as a priority country in 2011. Work on REDD readiness preparation under both programmes, along with that of EU-REDD, has been coordinated and inter-related, including some joint workshops. An R-PP has been prepared and revised, and was finally approved in the FCPF Participants' Committee in September 2011. The present National Programme Document of the Republic of Congo is based on the R-PP, which is attached as its main appendix, with additional emphasis on areas of focus and expertise relating directly to UN-REDD. This NPD, thus, outlines the national REDD process, with the Republic of Congo's involvement in the UN-REDD Programme providing complementary support to the FCPF and other funding sources in its implementation of its REDD readiness planning.

As noted in the TAP Review of R-PP, the Republic of Congo has produced an impressive proposal for REDD implementation. The components are well described and the key studies that still need to be conducted in the implementation phase are described with short TORs. The coordination of the FCPF programme with UN-REDD personnel – from FAO, UNEP and UNDP (including the UNDP Country Office) – has ensured that additional elements of concern to UN-REDD are now part of the overall programme, and that elements of the original R-PP in need of strengthening are being addressed.

The implementation of aspects of the Programme – delivery of pilot projects, decentralisation and completing the MRV system – currently depend on considerable co-financing. Greater clarity on the sources of such funding, and scenarios for dealing with different levels of such funding, should be developed.

Assessing the National Programme Document against review criteria

(Please refer to the TORs and supporting documents)

1. Ownership of the Programme (maximum 200 words):

The NPD presents a statement of intent: that the Republic of Congo perceives REDD+ not only as a technical exercise to address deforestation, but as an opportunity to initiate strategic and developmental changes, creating a national dialogue on forest and land use, introducing policy and institutional reforms, and promoting a green economy with international support.

The National REDD+ Coordination, in place since 2010, is the executive body based in the Ministère du Développement Durable, de l'Économie Forestière et de l'Environnement (MDDEFE), with a team responsible for leading on key components of the programme. The National REDD+ Committee, which provides strategic guidance and oversight, is comprehensive (perhaps rather unwieldy in size); departmental committees are still in development. All these bodies require strengthening of capacity and work practices.

The REDD Programme is coherent with existing legislation on the environment (1991), forests (2000) and protected areas (2008). This legislation and its governance have been under review and receiving support from the FLEGT process since 2007. The Programme is also in line with National Action Plans for forestry (1992) and environment (1994), national frameworks for rural development (1997) and land use planning (2005), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2008) and National Action Plan (2008). The NPD states that the legal framework for REDD + will be consolidated by the establishment of a framework REDD + law, or by improving existing legislation on the protection of the environment through amendments and introduction of the principles related to REDD+.

A national REDD+ fund is proposed to manage the additional REDD+ financing and to channel investment and promote REDD. Government commitment to the Programme is on the order of US\$ 600,000, against a commitment by FCPF of \$ 3,400,000 and a request to UN-REDD of \$ 4,000,000. Additional co-financing of some \$ 9.5m is identified as necessary for pilot projects, completing decentralization of activities and consolidating the MRV system.

Development of the Programme has included joint exercises involving UN-REDD and FCPF experts/representatives and national stakeholders. The UN-REDD representation in the process included two experts from FAO (Rome), one expert from UNEP (Nairobi) and two from UNDP (Nairobi and Brazzaville).

The involvement of the UN-REDD Programme in the joint process has increased its focus on involvement of indigenous peoples' organizations during 2010-2011. In line with UN-REDD Programme Operational Guidance, there is now a framework for consultation with Consultation Framework with organizations of civil society and indigenous peoples (CACO-REDD).

2. Level of consultation, participation and engagement (maximum 200 words):

Thorough consultation processes have been underway throughout the preparation of the R-PP, including a national workshop (held in January 2010), 3 regional workshops, a pre-validation workshop of the draft R-PP held at the national level and additional validation meetings. Governmental, and some non-governmental and private sector, organizations have been engaged and are party to the National REDD+ Committee, such that it is now a rather large body. In the early stages, however, organizations of civil society and indigenous peoples were not sufficiently involved

in consultation and participation. However, since mid-2010, the preliminary commitment of the UN-REDD (through UNDP), has supported an exercise in internal organization.

Tools of the UN-REDD Programme, such as the Joint FCPF & UN-REDD Guide on the commitment of stakeholders to REDD+, the UN-REDD Programme Operational Guidance: Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest Dependent Communities and the Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria were used for this purpose, as well as experiences of the UN-REDD in other countries. Organizations of civil society and indigenous peoples concerned with and affected by REDD + were assisted in developing a process of mobilization during 2010-2012, and they are now able them to represent themselves more effectively in REDD+ discussions.

3. Programme effectiveness and cost efficiency (maximum 150 words):

Since the REDD process, and the involvement of the UN-REDD Programme, in the Republic of Congo is building on the framework established and guided by the FCPF, and since its R-PP has now been accepted by the Partnership Committee, issues relating to its effectiveness have been examined thoroughly and largely addressed. The coordination between FCPF, EU-REDD and UN-REDD has identified areas where support from UN-REDD can improve effectiveness. These include support for:

- further stakeholder engagement;
- the launch of the decentralization of REDD+ and local dialogue;
- Information, Education and Communication (IEC) on REDD+;
- the analysis of strategic options for investment planning;
- technical aspects of pilot projects;
- further participatory development of social safeguards for the environment in REDD+, using the SEPC tool, in synergy with the exercise of strategic social and environmental assessment (SSEA), as recommended in the R-PP and piloted with the advisory support of FCPF;
- development of reference levels and the MRV system, including support for the creation of an independent REDD + Observatory.

There is a thorough, well-structured Results Framework and a comprehensive budget breakdown. Some of the details of pilot projects requiring considerable financial support are still relatively vague, but most other areas of the budget seem well justified. Specific support requested from UN-REDD to build the capacity of the National Coordination REDD+ (CN-REDD), as well as support for the operation of the management structures of REDD+ and interagency collaboration should improve the ability of the REDD Programme to deliver efficiently against its agreed targets and indicators.

4. Management of risks and likelihood of success (maximum 200 words):

As noted above, the basic structure of the REDD Programme, through its R-PP, has been subjected to scrutiny and recommendation during the initial TAP review and subsequent reviews for PC meetings. The Programme has, thus, been approved for funding by FCPF of its initial phase, which approval represents an endorsement of its risk assessment procedures and its provisions for risk management. There is still a recognized capacity gap in governance processes, both of the REDD Programme itself and in relation controlling drivers of deforestation, including industrial forestry. The former are to receive support from UN-REDD, while the latter are to be addressed by FLEGT activities. The success of the FLEGT process is by no means guaranteed, but the issues have been identified and are receiving attention.

The monitoring of co-benefits, and the analytical studies to address issues of insecure land tenure, carbon rights and benefit-sharing mechanisms, require support and effective implementation to be

of value to the Programme. Funding has been allocated under the R-PP for the former, but the latter studies have had only ToRs drawn up and should be financed as a high priority.

The remaining risks concern the co-financing commitment required. A considerable portion of the total budget (some \$9.5m), responsible for delivery of pilot projects, decentralisation and completing the MRV system, is dependent on the identification and successful realization of additional funding streams. There is little analysis of a Plan B, indicating how the Programme would cope in the absence of some or all of this co-financing.

Overall, the Programme has good prospects for success of its initial phase, with risks growing as implementation treads further into future planned stages. Such uncertainty may be inevitable in a phased programme, but there could perhaps be more discussion of options with low, medium and high co-financing scenarios.

5. Consistency with the UN-REDD Programme Framework Document and Strategy (maximum 200 words):

Many of the areas of concern in UN-REDD Programme Framework – articulation of national goals and planning processes, international cooperation, baseline identification, capacity needs) were already present in the R-PP. The coordination of the FCPF programme with UN-REDD personnel – from FAO, UNEP and UNDP (including the UNDP Country Office) – has ensured that additional elements of concern to UN-REDD are now part of the overall programme, and that elements of the original R-PP in need of strengthening are being addressed.

The NPD is consistent with the UN-REDD Framework in its definition of the appropriate support to be provided by the partner agencies:

- FAO: development of the reference levels and MRV system;
- UNDP: Organisation and consultation, REDD+ strategy, monitoring of benefits and impacts, and related governance support;
- UNEP: development, support and piloting of strategic options, measuring and mapping benefits

Consultation and validation exercises have been carried out thoroughly, under the R-PP with extension to indigenous groups by UN-REDD involvement, in line with the recommended procedures. Transparency and accountability are present in the design of the National Coordination and Committee and decentralization has been identified as a process to be supported by UN-REDD.

National capacity building, particularly in the establishment of a national REDD+ observatory, has been emphasized and is a key aspect of the UN-REDD Framework. The R-PP process ensured that national goals were aligned sub-national actions, an aspect that was lacking in earlier versions of the document.

6. Compliance with UN-REDD Programme Rules of Procedure and Operational Guidance (maximum 200 words):

Efforts have been made to ensure compliance with the UN-REDD Programme Rules of Procedure and Operational Guidance. The NPD is endorsed by national authorities. Stakeholders at all levels, in government, civil society and the private sector, are represented on the National REDD+ Committee, and have been consulted and informed during the development and validation of the document. There is now prominent representation of indigenous and forest-dwelling communities, as a result of the addition of UN-REDD involvement to the consultation process, and it is hoped that monitoring will reflect their active participation.

Suggestions for improving the technical design of the National Programme Document of Republic of Congo (maximum 400 words):

1. A considerable portion of the total budget (some \$9.5m), responsible for delivery of pilot projects, decentralisation and completing the MRV system, is dependent on the identification of funding sources. There should be a strategy, currently lacking, for finding this funding, whether from international donors or the private sector.
2. In relation to the co-financing requirement, there should be an analysis of the dependence of programme implementation on scenarios of low, moderate and full achievement of funding targets. Accompanying this analysis should be the development of options for dealing with the consequences of the different funding scenarios.
3. More in-depth analysis of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, particularly industrial logging and governance challenges, and specific options for addressing these drivers, should be clearly emphasised in the studies being considered.
4. The issues of insecure land tenure, carbon rights and equitable benefit sharing mechanisms should also be addressed in analytical study on the national REDD+ implementation framework.
5. The design of the REDD+ legislation, compared with the option of simply amending existing legislation, should receive support for both study and implementation.