



Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+

Planning document: 2011 - 2015

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

25 August 2011

Programme Title:

UN-REDD Programme – Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+

Plans for 2011 through 2015

Programme purpose:

Providing a framework for a participatory process at the country level to conduct governance assessments for information sharing on how safeguards are promoted, addressed and respected in a systematic manner.

1: The importance of democratic governance in REDD+

The correlation between REDD+ activities and governance has been described in earlier notes presented to the UN-REDD Policy Board¹. The characteristics of weak governance manifest where there are few accountability mechanisms, low levels of transparency, as well as non-participatory decision making processes. Under these conditions the potential for corruption, illegal and unplanned forest conversion and use, conflicts over land and forest ownership and access rights are high. This is further backed up by Angelsen; [REDD + activities] ... *could exert a positive influence on human rights and governance.*²

At the national and local level, converting existing forests into timber, plantations or agricultural uses represent possibilities for short term income for the private sector, governments as well as local communities. However, at an aggregated level and over time, the ongoing forest degradation and deforestation cause a loss of biodiversity, ecosystem services and livelihoods. Adding to these challenges are the actors responsible for illegal and unplanned forest conversions.

One way of improving a country's governance may be to improve existing or develop systems for information sharing, which will affect the level of transparency and accountability in a positive direction given that the information is relevant and perceived as trustworthy, that capacity is developed to both demand and provide relevant updated information, and that the provision of information is institutionalized through the daily management of already existing institutions. The Cancun Agreements from the UNFCCC COP 16 meeting in Cancun in December 2010³ addresses this directly by requesting "*developing country Parties... to develop ... [a] system for providing information on how safeguards referred to in annex I to this decision are being addressed and respected*" when implementing REDD+.

Although there is currently a growing consensus on the importance of "good" or "democratic" governance for the success of REDD+, there are numerous approaches on how to improve the existing governance structures and systems in a given country. Independent processes or reports with recommendations for improved governance lack the ownership of national and local actors in both the process and follow up of the recommendations in the reports. Further, they fail to address capacity development to secure know-how on holding government agencies accountable and how governments can be accountable by sharing relevant information on a regular basis and policy uptake of recommendations for policy reform done through independent efforts is rare. Therefore, without national or local ownership of governance and subsequent recommendation to follow-up, they fail in being a sustainable measure to improve governance structures, systems as well as practice at country level.

The UN-REDD Programme proposes to pilot Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+ to tackle some of the governance challenges associated with planning for and implementing REDD+ strategies by building on UNDP Oslo Governance Centre's

¹ See "[UN-REDD Country-led Governance Assessments](#)" 2009, "[Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+ : a Policy Note](#)", UN-REDD/ UNDP 2010 and "[Supporting Effective and Inclusive National Systems of Governance for REDD+](#)" UN-REDD/ UNDP 2010

² [Angelsen et al, 2008: Moving Ahead with REDD](#)

³ Paragraph 71 d) from the AWG-LCA text from the COP 16 meeting in Cancun, December 2010

already established approach to governance assessments through their Global Programme on Democratic Governance Assessments. In addition, UNDP's approach to governance assessments will be complemented by FAO's long lasting experience in data collection and monitoring in the forest sector through its Global Forest Resources Assessment Programme. Further, the UN-REDD Programme's added value in this regard is the ability to convene relevant stakeholders - involving state and non-state stakeholders – creating a space for dialogue and constructive collaboration in the context of REDD+ governance.

2. Why a participatory approach for governance assessments?

Participation is one of the key democratic governance principles underlying the governance assessment approach proposed by the UN-REDD Programme which we have named "Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+" (PGAs). PGAs have to be initiated, implemented and sustained by national actors⁴. Further, it entails a country undertaking a reflective and systematic evaluation of its own national governance processes and practice. One of the advantages of a participatory approach is its potential for developing local capacity by investing in and drawing on local and national "know how".

To assess and measure progress

A governance assessment serves many purposes. It can enhance a country's capacity to evaluate measure and monitor progress towards democratic governance today and in the future. An assessment makes it easier to understand the quality of governance. With better understanding comes more effective action to improve the practice of democratic governance.

National indicators developed by the country reveal, through statistical analysis, where problems may need to be addressed. An assessment can, for example, help to identify institutions and practices that perpetuate unfair and sub-standard provision of services to marginalized and vulnerable groups. The process also can provide opportunities for the poor to voice their concerns. Ultimately, governance assessments are an outstanding avenue for enhancing transparency and accountability.

A successful assessment is driven by the country itself and carried out with the active participation of national and local actors. A country's engagement in the data collection process, analysis of results and ongoing monitoring add value to the assessment far beyond its findings.

Source: UNDP Oslo Governance Fast Facts on Governance Assessments

Improving governance is as much about transparent and accountable *practice* for the delivery of results within REDD+ as it is about *planning*. PGAs therefore aim at develop capacity among government officials and non-state stakeholders on relevant governance issues in a specific REDD-country while identifying hurdles for democratic governance. The process of an inclusive and participatory assessment therefore creates the much needed ownership for a sustained effort to both demand and provide relevant information.

The *UN-REDD Programme Strategy 2001-2015* argues that "REDD+ needs to build on previous experience" in the relevant countries. Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+ (PGAs) build both on the UNDP/ Oslo Governance Centre's knowledge and experience within the field of conducting governance assessment for improved governance and on FAO's experience in data collection and monitoring in the forest sector by relating this combined expertise to relevant issues within REDD+⁵.

⁴ UNDP Practice note on "[Supporting country-led democratic governance assessments](#)"

⁵ See UNDP/ OGC's website for their "[Global Programme on Democratic Governance Assessments](#)" where around 20 countries have received technical advice and financial support so far. See FAO website for its "[Global Forest Resources Assessment Programme](#)", which provides support to national forest assessments in more than 50 countries.

UNDP Oslo Governance Centre has experienced through their governance assessments in the last decade that by involving actors from government, civil society, local communities, academia, media and even the private sector, ownership both of the process and the further follow-up is far greater than a more external or independent approach.

3: What are Participatory Governance Assessments (PGAs) for REDD+?

The UN-REDD Programme can offer PGAs for REDD+ as a policy tool for countries preparing for REDD+ aimed at both identifying governance challenges and providing responses to overcome them.

For governments to be able to provide credible information on the national REDD+ process, and more specifically on how safeguards are promoted, addressed and respected, mutual trust in both how this information is prepared, the relevance of this information and a capacity to both demand and provide this information are crucial. Therefore PGAs for REDD+ emphasize the inclusion of various stakeholders from the very beginning to ensure that there is a broad-based agreement on the governance indicator framework developed to monitor how governance issues are being addressed and how REDD+ safeguards are upheld. It is expected that such a participatory assessment will increase the legitimacy of the process and of the information generated.

Stakeholders are government officials, civil society actors, Indigenous Peoples and/ or local forest community representatives, journalists and academics and they participate to provide policy reform input. Resulting from the PGAs for REDD+ is a national system for sharing information on the REDD+ progress (based on the agreed indicators) which is easily accessible, such as the current rate of deforestation, REDD+ funding received as well as revenue distribution of REDD+ funds, cases tried in court, level of perceived corruption etc . These indicators will vary from country to country and are chosen by the participants themselves as the most critical indicators of the state of governance of the REDD+ process.

The UN-REDD Programme acknowledges that in most cases capacity development are required in order to define and identify relevant indicators, as well as how to address issues that are not working as intended. Hence, capacity development is central from the onset of a PGA for REDD+, both for non-state and state actors participating, whereas the inclusive process of identifying an indicator framework and shaping policy reform is believed to improve the access to relevant information.

UNDP Oslo Governance Centre has experienced through their Global Programme on Democratic Governance Assessments that when different stakeholders come together and sit around the same table during a governance assessment there is a willingness for collaboration to reach a framework of agreed upon indicators. Citizens and civil society actors have also expressed that this provides a platform of dialogue with the government that might not have existed previously. Also, the fact of having participated in a governance assessments process and having identified relevant indicators *together* there is an agency both to follow up and demand information (which is seen as credible from the non-state perspective) but also to share this information on a regular basis.

By including oversight institutions (e.g. the General Auditor's Office, National Statistical Offices and the Public Accounts Committee) as well as interdependent institutions in the assessment process allows for embedding the preparation and sharing of relevant information into already existing positions.

Through an inclusive and participatory governance analysis, recommendations for policy reform, provision of relevant information to enable the follow-up of agreed indicators, as well as a potentially greater likelihood of consequences when attention is given to what is not working according to plan or regulatory frameworks - that "answerability and enforceability" are in place - PGAs for REDD+ will serve as a critical accountability mechanisms for local stakeholders and non-state actors.

Moreover, nationally owned REDD governance assessments provide upward internal rather than external pressure for reform. The transparency of information stemming from them could be a catalyst for greater citizen engagement in democracy processes and for demanding greater effectiveness of governance actors.

3.1 Key principles for Participatory Governance Assessment for REDD+

The same four key democratic governance principles which underlie the governance assessments in UNDP Oslo Governance Centre's portfolio are also valid for the PGAs⁶. These are:

Accountability: The assessment process can act as a critical accountability mechanism for local stakeholders with regard to governance performance.

Participation: A broad and representative range of national - and where applicable also local - actors have opportunities to provide input to key stages of the assessment process.

Transparency: National – and where applicable also local - actors have unbiased access to information on the assessment process, and the results of the assessment are made available to the public as a public good.

Legitimacy: National – and where applicable also local - actors agree that the assessment process and its results are legitimate through.

3.2 Main components in a Participatory Governance Assessment for REDD+

The UN-REDD programme emphasizes capacity development of national and local participants throughout the PGA for REDD+ process in order to ensure the sustainability and that transparency and accountability are sustained after the initial PGA has been undertaken.

The UN-REDD programme is aware that forest countries are at different levels of REDD readiness. Therefore, all steps or components below are not necessarily applicable everywhere. However, the main steps or components in PGAs for REDD+ will be⁷:

3.2.1: Identifying and convening relevant stakeholders and participants

This includes identifying and convening participants representing the government, civil society, local forest and indigenous peoples' communities, and sometimes media and academia, to explore the possibilities for a management structure for the PGA relevant for the national context. Drawing upon management structures utilized through UNDP Oslo Governance Centre portfolio, there is usually a **Steering Committee** discussing and identifying the areas of governance to be addressed and giving general guidance in the assessment process. Sometimes there is also an **Advisory Committee** providing feedback to the Steering Committee – and there may also be a **Technical Working Group** assisting both the Advisory Committee and Steering Committee carrying out a lot of the work suggested by the Steering and Advisory committees, providing background information to the different committee meetings, as well as providing quality assurance on technical matters.

3.2.2: Defining targets and indicators for prioritized areas of concentration

Once the participants have been identified and the management structure is in place, prioritization on areas of relevance (such as Human Rights, anti-corruption, coordination, forest law enforcement, sustainable forest management, transparency on REDD+ funding and expenditure and land tenure issues) will be discussed. Based on this discussion, the participants will agree on targets and on a framework of indicators. Parallel to the development of indicators, an informed discussion will also be needed on how the necessary data will be collected and by whom, including an assessment of existing data sources and the identification of potential data gaps. The regular information-sharing and communication of these targets, relevant indicators and data collection methods may facilitate an increased level of transparency on the prioritized areas.

⁶ UNDP [Practice Note](#) on "Country-led Governance Assessments", 2009, pp 10-11

⁷ These steps are based on OGC's model of work when conducting Country-led Governance Assessments, as illustrated in the [GAPortal](#)

By embedding information provision and sharing on the agreed indicators, targets and data collection methods in already existing institutions, such as adding relevant questions in already regular household surveys by National Statistical Offices, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre's experience indicates that sustainability of the information-sharing is better achieved.

3.2.3: Analysis of governance structures and systems to inform recommendations for policy reform

The participants will analyze the current governance structures and systems in place to identify shortcomings and obstacles to democratic governance as well as opportunities for improvements. This analysis, together with the component below, forms the basis for recommendations for policy reform and changes to facilitate improvements in relevant governance structures and systems.

3.2.4: Training and capacity development – targeting both the demand and supply side of accountability

This involves building capacity of non-state actors and government officials both to provide and demand relevant information and status on the agreed indicators from the participatory governance assessment process, including on data collection channels and methods. Focusing on both the supply and demand side of accountability may facilitate that information on the REDD+ progress, based on the agreed indicators, eventually is easily accessible and perceived as credible and relevant. Training of non-state actors will focus on how and where to demand relevant information, but also on how to hold government to account should the information indicate shortcomings in reaching agreed targets. Capacity development of state actors will involve how relevant and updated information best can be shared and communicated.

4: Work plan

4.1: Conducting PGA pilots

Since Policy Board Meeting 6 in Dalat, Vietnam, in March, Nigeria, Indonesia, Ecuador and Vietnam have expressed interest in undertaking PGA pilots. Funding permitting, these pilots will be conducted in accordance to the principles and components put forth in this document.

4.2: Knowledge products

Experiences from pilots will inform a primer for PGAs for REDD+, a Guidance note(s) on the approach, as well as a manual on data collection.

4.3: Facilitate South-South exchange

Again experience from the pilots will inform our work through:

- Exchange between and capacity development of government staff in UN-REDD Partner Countries, but also other stakeholders who have participated in the process including the facilitation of study tours, workshops, networks and also longer term collaboration
- Develop a primer on lessons learned for distribution among UN-REDD Partner countries which have not yet been undertaken

4.4: Monitoring/ evaluation

This involves the following:

- Mid-term review with the possibility for revising the work plan further after getting lessons learned
- Also there should be final review towards the end of this programme period

5. Risk analysis and mitigation

There are a number of challenges and risks associated with the participatory approach to governance assessments that UNDP Oslo Governance Centre has used throughout the last decade, and these are not believed to become fewer when adapting this governance approach to the REDD context in relevant countries.

Firstly, who participates plays an important role in assuring a wide range of stakeholders, interests and experience, but also to secure trust throughout the process, to ensure that transition follows the recommendations for policy reform, as well as to secure the ownership for “answerability” – to demand and provide relevant information on agreed indicators - and “enforceability” to ensure that there are consequences if citizens should try to hold their government accountable for not “delivering the promised goods”, e.g. that a local community has not received its promised share of the REDD funding.

Selecting the “right” participants is also important when it comes to avoid duplicating or strengthening existing power structures and relations, conducting a political economy analysis where appropriate could mitigate these risks. “Because **change** is key to development, there is a need to understand the factors that can promote or block it. By revealing the political, economic and social interests and incentives that promote or block pro-poor change, political economy analysis helps development practitioners understand how positive change can happen, where the obstacles lie, and how to address them. In crisis contexts, where state building is a priority, this understanding is crucial.”⁸ Therefore, addressing questions such as the ones mentioned below will be helpful to ensure not only participation by a wide range of stakeholders, but also their actual influence without replicating or strengthening current power structures or relations.

- *What is the existing legal framework on the issue at hand?*
- *What are the informal rules, mechanisms and cultural factors preventing implementation of relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks?*
- *Who are the relevant stakeholders that have a bearing on the issue at hand?*
- *What are their interests?*⁹

Capacity development, both at the start-up of the governance assessment through workshops - to make sure the participants are both up to speed when it comes to REDD and also how the current governance system works – and workshops throughout the assessment process – to make sure that there is capacity to both demand and provide relevant information, as well as how to hold governments accountable is key to the sustainability of these kinds of governance assessments. For this reason the UN-REDD Programme, will be focusing on training of trainers alongside our own facilitation of these assessments that are based in the region. UNDP Oslo Governance Centre has also facilitated the exchange of government staff to relevant institutions in the country where the assessment has taken place to ensure a deeper exchange of knowledge over time. This could be something worth considering. Then, there is always the risk of staff turnover once capacity is built, through which there is no guarantee.

Through its numerous governance assessments, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre has experienced the importance of having the government fully on board in the assessment process. There is a need to have a national ownership to these processes in order to bring about change for improved governance structures and systems. The UN-REDD Programme will therefore try to ensure from the very preparatory stages, through the assessment and then later stages of follow-up and monitoring, the government needs to be involved through allocating sufficient and relevant human resources.

⁸ From UNDP publication on Political Economy Analysis currently under development

⁹ These questions are from the same source: UNDP Publication under development on Political Economy Analysis