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REDD+ INITIATIVES, EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

I. Introduction

1. REDD+ is a global climate change mitigation mechanism designed (by UNFCCC) to provide positive incentives to developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, to promote the conservation, management and enhancement of forest; and encourages investment in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. The overall vision for REDD+ is that Developing countries have significantly reduced their forest and land-based emissions, as a result of incentives from a performance-based REDD+ mechanism, while achieving national development goals in a sustainable and equitable manner.

2. REDD+ decisions under UNFCCC have been adopted progressively since COP 13; including the “Cancun Agreement” (COP 16) which defined its scope of REDD+ activities to include:

- Reducing emissions from deforestation;
- Reducing emissions from forest degradation;
- Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- Sustainable management of forests;
- Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

3. The Cancun Agreement also set the stage for a nationally driven Three-phased approach to development of the REDD+ mechanism; with an initial preparatory or Readiness phase (phase 1) followed by a pilot demonstration phase (Phase 2), and finally a results-based phase (Phase 3). Most countries are in the preparatory or Readiness phase.

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4. The 19th COP of the UNFCCC in Warsaw, Poland (2013) finalized and adopted the most important decisions collectively referred to as the Warsaw Framework, which constitutes the complete “REDD+ Rulebook” on how REDD+ must be implemented¹.

II. REDD+ Initiatives in Africa

5. REDD+ readiness preparation is mostly supported by multi-lateral and bilateral initiatives through funding and technical support for capacity building to get ready to participate in the REDD+ mechanism. Some of the initiatives are described below:

6. The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The programme supports national readiness efforts in Partner Countries in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America, in their readiness process as described above.

7. FAO’s main role is to provide technical support and capacity building in the design and implementation of a national forest monitoring system (NFMS) for monitoring & reporting on REDD+ activities; and in the establishment of national forest emissions level or forest reference levels. In addition, FAO has been providing support on other key components of REDD+, including legal preparedness, forest governance, safeguards, tenure as well as sustainable management of forests. As of February 2015, there were 64 UN REDD Partner Countries with 28 (about 43.8 percent) from Africa.

8. The Forest carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) is administered by the World Bank and aims to provide support for REDD+ readiness as well as a framework for piloting activities to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. It supports developing countries in their initiatives on REDD+ implementation. The FCPF is implemented through two funds: The Readiness Fund, which supports capacity building and systems setting for REDD+ in developing countries; and the Carbon Fund which funds the testing of a performance-based incentive payments program in some pilot countries (normally once readiness phase has been completed). FCPF 47 developing countries partners of which 18 (about 38.3 percent) are from Africa.

9. The Forest Investment Program (FIP) is a partnership between the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Regional Development Banks and a sub-fund under the Climate Investment Funds (CIF). The FIP supports developing countries’ efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation by providing up-front bridging finance (grants and loans) for readiness reforms and public and private investments identified during the development of the national REDD+ strategy. There are presently 11 (out of 23 FIP countries in the World) in Africa.

10. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a recent addition to climate financing. It was established to act as a central global investment vehicle for climate finance, under which industrialized countries would assist developing countries with new finance for public and private sector projects and programmes.

11. The GCF mission is to expand collective human action to respond to climate change. The fund aims to mobilize unprecedented levels of funding to invest in low-emission and climate-resilient development. The Fund’s first investments approved three projects in Africa are as follows (Malawi, Senegal and KawiSafi, East Africa).

¹ The seven decision areas comprising the “REDD+ Rulebook” include, measurement, reporting and verification (MRV), Forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels (FREL/FRL), Safeguards, drivers of deforestation, Finance and results based payments, and Institutional arrangements.

III. Other REDD+ Related Initiatives in Africa

12. The SADC (Southern African Development Community) project on the Development of an Integrated Monitoring System for REDD+ in the SADC region; whose main objective is to develop a standard MRV system compliant with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for the SADC region as well as enhanced capacities to measure changes to forest areas, and loss of carbon stocks from deforestation and forest degradation. The project is part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI), and is supported by the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). 15 countries are involved in the study

A. The Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) project

13. In the context of United States Government (USG) commitment to support fast-start financing for activities that reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), Tetra Tech ARD implemented the Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) project, for USAID/Washington. FCMC work in Africa has focused mostly on REDD+ MRV in mangrove ecosystems in East Africa, and a workshop in West Africa on Mangroves. FCMC completed operations in May 2015.

B. The Congo Basin MRV regional project - Phase I

14. The overall goal of this project was to support the design and implementation of national monitoring and MRV (M & MRV) systems in line with international decisions on REDD+ (Decisions 4/CP.15 and 1/CP.16), including coordination and capacity building at regional level through a general “quick-start” programme. Phase I of the project helped to develop national programmes and a regional programme backed by technical assistance. The project was implemented in ten countries of the COMIFAC zone. FAO worked with COMIFAC, the CBFF (Congo Basin Forest Fund), and the African Development Bank to initiate and implement this MRV project.

C. PREREDD+ Project

15. PREDREDD+ Project: Enhancing Institutional Capacities on REDD Issues for Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin. This GEF-World Bank Project with the objective to strengthen the capacities of the Congo Basin countries on REDD+ issues and on forest carbon stocks measurements, in particular. The project components included, improving Knowledge and Coordination on REDD+ in the Congo Basin, building technical capacities for Measurement and Monitoring of Carbon Stocks in the Congo Basin Forests, and mainstreaming REDD Concept in SFM Projects. The main output of the project is the development of allometric equations for the COMIFAC countries.

D. GCCA Partnership with CILSS

16. The CILSS collaboration with the GCCA Intra-ACP was launched in March 2012 with the general objective to support CILSS and ECOWAS countries to tackle climate change while achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The specific objective is to strengthen capacities of West African countries and regional actors to create and implement policies and strategies that incorporate climate change into development plans and programmes.

E. GCCA Partnership with COMESA-EAC-SADC

17. The Programme on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the COMESA-EAC-SADC region seeks to build successful adaptation and mitigation actions across Eastern and Southern Africa. The specific objective is to enable the COMESA-EAC-SADC Member States to increase the investments in climate resilient and carbon efficient agriculture and in the related areas of forestry, land use and energy practices.

IV. Challenges, experiences/lessons learned

18. A number of African countries have been involved in REDD+ activities, and have faced some challenges, acquired some experience and some lessons can be learned from this. Some of the experiences/lessons learned and challenges have been summarized below.

A. Experiences/Lessons Learned

19. The widespread understanding of REDD+ through early engagement and inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders in awareness raising and capacity building is important.

20. Coordination and streamlining international support (multiple funding sources) and projects implementation is crucial in order to avoid overlaps and duplication of efforts; and harness synergies. For example, the UN-REDD Programme and FCPF have harmonized their implementation approaches.

21. REDD+ Readiness strategy is more effective and efficient if harmonized with, and mainstreamed into existing laws, policies and programs, rather than designing new policies and institutions.

22. Experience shows that the cost of community carbon monitoring is much less than that from professionals/consultants, hence there is need to strengthen community-based monitoring to ensure sustainability of REDD+.

B. Some challenges

23. Bringing all relevant stakeholders together in many countries, to understand their roles and responsibilities is a challenging undertaking.

24. One major challenge is to build institutional platforms for REDD+ coordination. While inter-sectoral and national committees might have been set up legally – even by decree- sometimes they only exist on paper with little real connection with reality. Early lessons have also shown that even though REDD+ structures have been set up to reach out of various ministries, it has been hard to obtain consistent and meaningful participation from outside the traditional forest and environmental sectors.

25. Full government engagement/commitment is a problem. Some countries are yet to institutionalize REDD+ processes, some still lack institutional capacities to undertake basic REDD+ readiness tasks, while others are “interested” in REDD+, but few have secured high level of political will and engagement.

26. There is a risk that while efforts are made to make African countries REDD ready, the investments required for implementation will be limited, misdirected or disproportionately distributed. So far some countries have had enormous funding while others have not benefited from any. International negotiation for funding will help to drive the process.

V. Points for Consideration

27. The Commission may wish to consider:

- Encouraging its members to undertake continuous stakeholder engagement, knowledge sharing and communications to ensure that information about REDD+ is accurate, informative and reaches the full range of stakeholders.
- Enhancing collaboration between bilateral and multi-lateral initiatives on REDD+ issues within countries.

- Supporting technical capacity building and providing political leadership and legal backing for REDD+
- Adopting a multi-sectoral landscape approach to addressing the drivers of deforestation.