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Submitted by Fabien Monteils
Title: Regional Technical Advisor
Date submitted 08/06/2015

1. Practice area : UN-REDD

2. Mission period (incl. of travel days)
From 03/06/2015 to 05/06/2015

3. Type of mission :
Follow up

4. Clients
UNDP Country Office; MEFDD

5. Purpose of mission
Taking stock of past developments and exploring the way forward in terms of cooperation between UN-REDD/UNDP and Brazzaville

6. Documents, materials, resources
PTBA (AWPB); Aide-Mémoire Mission FAO/PNUE Mai 2015; Stratégie Nationale REDD+ draft and report of UN-REDD comments

7. Mission members
M. Fabien Monteils, UN-REDD RTA Africa

8. Costs
UNDP/REDD+ Global Budget

9. Brief summary of the mission

The CTA traveled between Nairobi and Brazzaville on June 3rd 2015, and back on the 5th. The mission consisted in meetings with the Country office (UN-REDD Chief Technical Advisor, Deputy Resident Representative, Resident Representative) and the Coordination Nationale REDD+ (National Coordinator and technical team). Meetings allowed to:

- Review the Aide-Mémoire of the FAO/UNEP mission in May 2015
- Review progress against the annual work plan and budget, and secure the work plan for the second semester
- Take stock of NP implementation and discuss coordination beyond the end of UNDP NP budget
- Share views on issues and concerns

Context : The UN-REDD National Programme to support readiness process in Congo will be extended at no cost for 9 extra-months, from October 2015 to June 2016, as UNEP and FAO need more time to fully deliver their support and budget. The UNDP budget will be fully disbursed by the end of the year. UNDP has shown concerns about the technical robustness and credibility of the Congolese vision and strategy for REDD+ at this stage. The country has expressed concerns about UNDP/UN-REDD stopping support and leaving the country, and also has questioned the skepticism of UNDP/UN-REDD.

Mission objective :

- Follow up on NP activities and progress
- Explore the cooperation forward beyond the end of UNDP component of NP
- Clarify points of concerns

Schedule :

- Wednesday 3rd: (i) meeting with UNDP CTA and DRR; (ii) meeting with National Coordinator, CTA and team; (iii) meeting with the CTA
- Thursday 4th: (i) meeting with CTA; (ii) meeting with CTA and DRR; (iii) meeting with National Coordinator, DRR, CTA, UNEP advisor and team; (iv) meeting with UNRR, DRR and CTA; (v) meeting with National Coordinator, CTA and team
- Friday 5th: meeting with CTA and travel

Key information/positions/concerns/clarifications :

- GoC is unhappy of UNDP withdrawing from the process during the implementation of the NP by the other agencies; and believes that UNDP could just allocate more fundings to remain along with other agencies as “the programme has funding until 2020”
 - o RTA strongly disagreed, stating that the GoC should be commending UNDP for delivering the programme on time rather than seeing this as a deliberate push back. RTA also explained that as we speak, the programme has no money beyond the end of 2015 apart from money already committed through NPs. RTA suggested that we should take stock of the good collaboration and achievements before exploring further support, and UNDP/UN-REDD will keep listening to country’s needs

- GoC is afraid of UNDP leaving the national REDD+ process and messing things up “as it did in DRC and Zambia”
 - o RTA strongly disagreed with this statement, provided counter-arguments, and reassured that UNDP/UN-REDD is committed to maintain the relationship and will keep listening to country’s needs after the end of the NP
- GoC is afraid of UNDP/UN-REDD taking messages from outside and not looking at the reality of the situation
 - o RTA disagreeing, saying that all concerns from UNDP/UN-REDD are factual and rooted on national documents (specifically the draft national strategy)
- GoC is afraid of UNDP causing defiance from donors like Norway and the EU
 - o RTA strongly disagreed, reminding that these donors have their own independence and assessment, that they have been defiant to Congo long before he arrived, and that reversely he tried to interest them to the process across 2014
- GoC is afraid of UNDP trying to push for a strict conservation approach to forests, and Norway’s focus in it, while the GoC wants to ensure that REDD+ is fully embedded in broader national development strategy
 - o RTA strongly disagreed, giving illustrations of possible options for REDD+ that reconcile emission reductions objective and keep in line with sustainable development objectives, and Norway’s realistic approach to this (Guyana)
 - o RTA commended GoC for embedding REDD+ in broader development strategy
- GoC wants UNDP to facilitate negotiations with donors whatever the national vision and strategy for REDD+
 - o RTA strongly disagreed, recalling that the country is sovereign, the national strategy is a strict national document, based on national trade off. UNDP/UN-REDD is there as an advisor, and can not commit to convince partner countries if it is not convinced itself.
- GoC is afraid of making commitments for REDD+ while not receiving any support from donors
 - o RTA explained the role of policy dialogue, to ensure co-building of options, policy and financial commitments
- UNDP CO is willing to expand its environment portfolio, and is willing to take advantage of REDD+ in this regard
 - o RTA reassured that UNDP/UN-REDD is committed to keep supporting the country on REDD+ after the NP, based on needs, even though such support will necessarily be much targetted and reduced (global support vs. NP)
 - o RTA explained that the upcoming policy dialogue and strategy design will be key to assess the credibility of the country and potential risks for UNDP related to further moves in REDD+.
 - o With or without REDD+ label, GCF can be a serious window of opportunity to explore, and UNDP/UN-REDD can assist the country in designing forest-related requests and provide quality assurance/backstopping during implementation on a cost-recovery basis
- UNDP CO is requesting to keep a technical assistance for REDD+ at least until the end of the joint NP (July 2016); GoC is requesting to maintain a technical coordination (CTA) for the UN-REDD programme between the end of the current CTA contract (September 2015-July 2016)
 - o RTA explained that UNDP/UN-REDD couldn’t mobilise additional funding for this year (due to unclear transition toward the second UN-REDD framework strategy), but things could be explored for next year. On the other hand, FAO has expressed ability to fund such an interim position.
- UNDP/UN-REDD has expressed concerns about the lack of credibility and robustness of the national vision and strategy as it is drafted at this stage. It provided illustrations of key contradictions (no solutions in front of major drivers of deforestation, incoherence between the “need” to deforest and reforestation plan, unwillingness to address planned and legal deforestation...) or discrepancies (quality and transparency of data) and possible solutions to be explored. The joint UN-REDD comments to the draft strategy were provided the same morning to the CN-REDD.
 - o GoC agreed to strengthen these points, through consultation process, policy dialogue, parallel work on the reference level (draft FREL/FRL expected by August), and on the investment plan...
- GoC, UNDP CO and UNDP/UN-REDD have shown confidence on the work plan forward until the closing of the UNDP budget under the National Programme (expected December 2015, with end of CTA contract by end of September).

Analysis:

1. UNDP country office is willing to expand its environment portfolio. With the WB investing in REDD+ (FIP, Carbon Fund) and aggressively taking over leadership on environmental support to the government (all GEF6 is now being pledged to the WB), the country office was looking at REDD+ as a major opportunity to build on. The discussion allowed to agree on the following:
 - At this stage, a substantive policy dialogue is necessary to increase the robustness of the Congolese REDD+ “offer”
 - The country office, with support from the UN-REDD (CTA, RTA), leads the support to the country in terms of policy dialogue
 - Without such policy-level commitment and related improvements, it is unlikely that the country delivers in terms of REDD+ under UNFCCC, and we should be cautious about the notoriety risks in the future. UNDP CO has taken good note of such risks, and will take into consideration UN-REDD advices on how to move ahead in terms of REDD+ in the country (readiness,

investment...)

- The UN-REDD Programme will remain at the disposal of the country to discuss its needs and explore ways to continue supporting the national process in the future
 - The UN-REDD Programme remains at the disposal of the UNDP CO for assessing the situation as it progresses, and for assisting with whatever future interest and support related to REDD+ in the country (readiness, investment...) in case any opportunity arises
 - The GCF offers a serious opportunity for UNDP to expand its environment portfolio in Congo, and proposals could be formulated that could contribute to REDD+ objectives without necessarily being labeled strictly "REDD+". GCF seeks projects with balanced and mix benefits in terms of adaptation and mitigation
 - The Country Office has asked for continued assistance/support from the UN-REDD Programme to ensure smooth transition after the national programme, and whether or not strictly focusing on REDD+, to assist with accessing GCF funding
2. The Government of Congo (MEFDD/CN-REDD) is willing to push its vision for REDD+ to be accepted by the international community. It sees past success with WB as a confirmation that he's on good tracks (FCPF readiness tranche 2, Carbon Fund, FIP), and considers that UNDP/UN-REDD is the only one not supportive and having negative impacts on other donors. In clear, it's UNDP fault if Norway and the EU in particular keep their distance with the REDD+ process in the country. The RTA has reaffirmed that:
- Norway, the EU and other donors are making their own assessments of the situation
 - The Congolese vision and strategy as they stand raise technical concerns in terms of feasibility and credibility under UNFCCC
 - The UN-REDD Programme, and UNDP as a fully-coordinated part of it, are committed to keep supporting the country beyond the NP according to the needs expressed

After frank discussions, Congo has shown good signals that he will take UNDP/UN-REDD advices seriously and keep improving the strategy, including by building on a substantive policy dialogue. UNDP/UN-REDD will support this endeavor.

3. The UN-REDD Programme, and in particular UNDP as leading agency on coordination and strategy, will enter a bumpy time in Congo. At stake: (i) support the country entering the UNFCCC system for REDD+; (ii) ensure the credibility of the UNFCCC system and trust from donors; (iii) limit notoriety exposure in a context where Congo is keen on confusing "showing the challenges" and "causing the challenges", and is prone to hold UN-REDD/UNDP responsible for future problems... The three stakes are hard to manage together.

An open, cautious, step-by-step approach should be promoted, as the environment will probably change quickly in the future, and the theatre of risks/opportunities/challenges will keep moving. For instance, we can anticipate that:

- FAO will start facing similar problems as they move forward with the substantive parts of reference level calculation
- Government of Congo will start facing problems as they move forward with substantive parts of the ER-Programme formulation
- To a lighter extent, UNEP could also face similar challenges as it gets to the formulation of the investment programme

9.b Results achieved (key outputs)

- UNDP/UN-REDD activities keep being deployed in line with time frame. Some expenses have been planned for COP21, so that the full budget is expected to be spent by December 2015
- The RTA has made it clear to UNDP CO and the Government of Congo that UNDP/UN-REDD will remain ready to support the country after the closing of the NP, based on the needs expressed
- Frank discussions have enable to listen and take stock of each other's concerns. Positive moves have been made on each sides, so that a joint and credible work plan will be deployed in the coming months

9.c Expected outcomes and impacts

The UNDP and overall UN-REDD programme maintain constructive relationship with the GoC across and beyond the National Programme implementation

10. Key counterparts
CN-REDD, UNDP CO

11. Follow up action matrix

Action to be taken	By whom	Expected completion date
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Compile and complete proposals of REDD+ options to feed the policy dialogue and strategy formulation	Mino	June 27 th
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Prepare a note to the UNRC with information, ideas and REDD+ specific guidance to facilitate the lead over the policy dialogue	Mino/Fabien	June 12 th
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Plan a joint UN-REDD mission by July/early August and set the date	UNRR/Mino/Fabien	June 12 th
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Transfer the information about the PAM subregional workshop to the National Coordinator to explore possible participation from Congo	Fabien	June 10 th
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12. Distribution list

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