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Selection Process for REDD+ Consultation Group Representatives in Cambodia

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

November 2013

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1. Background

Cambodia developed the Readiness Plan Proposal on REDD+ (“the Roadmap”), outlining how the country plans to move ahead with REDD+ readiness in 2010.¹ In the following year, the UN-REDD National Programme in Cambodia (“UN-REDD Programme”) began with implementing partners from the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The UN-REDD Programme in Cambodia was specifically designed to support the implementation of the Roadmap. Stakeholder consultation and participation is one of the key areas in the Roadmap and is guided by the general principle that the development of REDD+ readiness in Cambodia should be “*inclusive and balanced*, both between Government agencies and non-Government stakeholders”.²

The Roadmap outlines the way in which stakeholders will engage in the REDD+ process, namely through the creation of a **Cambodia REDD+ Consultation Group** (“Consultation Group”) along with a set of principles identified for effective consultation.³ Representing civil society, indigenous people, forest dependent communities, NGOs, the private sector, and academic institutions, the Consultation Group will support the REDD+ Taskforce⁴ by providing suggestions and recommendations representing the views of different stakeholder groups. The Consultation Group is also expected to play a pivotal role in planning and conducting awareness-raising activities and training.

The selection of representatives for the Consultation Group is considered an important step in stakeholder coordination, as the Roadmap discusses the current structure of civil society networks and lack of processes to establish representatives and communication lines within and among stakeholder groups.⁵ In order to establish the Consultation Group, the REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat began facilitating the selection process in November 2012. The selection process was built in part upon the lessons from the experience selecting civil society and indigenous peoples’ representatives for the UN-REDD Programme Executive Board, which was initiated in May and completed in September 2012. This document describes the steps that led to the final selection of the Consultation Group representatives as well as the discussions behind the decisions in the selection process.

¹ The Interim REDD+ Taskforce and stakeholder groups developed the Roadmap. The Interim REDD+ Taskforce was formed in January 2010 by an inter-agency decision to develop plans for REDD+ readiness. It was facilitated and coordinated by the Forestry Administration with members from the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, etc.

² Cambodia Readiness Plan Proposal on REDD+ (Cambodia REDD+ Roadmap), version 4.0, 13 March 2011: 23.

³ Ibid: 38.

⁴ The Task Force was established in February 2012, chaired by the Deputy Director General of Forestry Administration, and vice-chaired by the Deputy Director General of General Department of Natural Protection and Conservation of Ministry of Environment - See more at: <http://www.cambodia-redd.org/category/national-redd-framework/redd-taskforce#sthash.Qcppz0Qk.dpuf>

⁵ Cambodia Readiness Plan Proposal on REDD+ (Cambodia REDD+ Roadmap), version 4.0, 13 March 2011: 39.

2. Lessons from the Previous Selection Process

Before the preparation for the Consultation Group selection, stakeholders in Cambodia were engaged in the process of selecting representatives from civil society organizations (“CSOs”) and indigenous peoples (“IPs”) for Cambodia UN-REDD Programme’s Executive Board (“PEB”). CSO and IP representation is required on the PEB, in order to be compliant with UN-REDD guidelines on stakeholder engagement, which recognize that stakeholder engagement is essential for the success of REDD+ initiatives.⁶ Unlike the Taskforce, which is responsible for managing readiness activities at national level, the role and scope of the PEB are limited to the activities under the UN-REDD Programme in Cambodia.

Discussions with CSOs and IP groups began in May 2012. Outreach to key IP and forestry networks was coordinated by NGOs, supported by the UN-REDD Programme. Provincial REDD+ awareness-raising workshops were predominantly conducted for IP selection whereas the forestry networks were invited to nominate suitable network representatives to stand as candidates for the PEB. In both instances, information regarding the CSO and IP engagement of the UN-REDD Programme and representative selection was disseminated at the workshops. As a result of these activities, 80 members from 34 CSOs and 12 IP groups came together to discuss the selection process in early September. A self-selection process was encouraged and supported by the members, and the eligibility and criteria for the candidates were developed based on the tasks and responsibilities of the representatives. After identifying and nominating the candidates, elections were held to select one representative each from CSOs and IP groups during a three-day workshop from 25 to 27 September 2012.

Criticisms and lessons

The workshop was attended by more than 130 participants and marked a milestone in stakeholder engagement in REDD+ activities in the country. At the same time, the selection process spurred debates on the issues of inclusiveness and transparency. For example, some organizations were still not aware of the selection activity, while some candidates were also involved in developing the selection process. The IP candidates were nominated from eight provinces and six indigenous groups, although there are 15 provinces with an IP presence in Cambodia. In addition, some provincial authorities were familiar with the IP members who were selected as candidates. Furthermore, after the selection, a concern was raised as to whether having one representative per group was sufficient.

Two ideas have emerged from these concerns and lessons: an independent committee should be formed to conduct outreach to stakeholders and lead the process, and a group of IP representatives should be established from the 15 provinces. The idea of the independent committee, which later became the “Voluntary Facilitation Committee,” played an important role in the Consultation Group selection process. The IP representative selection process was formed in parallel with the preparation for the Consultation Group selection. The 15 representatives were invited to the Consultation Group selection workshop and voted for representatives.

⁶ Joint UN-REDD and FCPF Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ Readiness, with a Focus on the Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest-Dependent Communities, April 20, 2012 (revision of March 25th version).

3. Voluntary Facilitation Committee

Emerging from the experience in the PEB representative selection process, the idea of creating a multi-stakeholder committee to facilitate the process of establishing the Consultation Group was endorsed (see Section 2). The aim was to make the process more transparent and open and avoid any suggestion that any particular group, including the government or a few NGOs, was directing the process. The committee was formed on an iterative process (e.g. the members were three in the beginning, increased to 19, and eventually settled at about nine), and the details of the selection process were developed through many meetings and discussions.

3.1. Establishing the Committee

The REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat (“Secretariat”) prepared an invitation to be part of the committee, titled “**Looking for 5 Volunteers To be Members of Interim Committee to Select the REDD+ Consultation Group.**” This invitation asked interested individuals to submit their CV, a profile of their organization, and a peer endorsement. The suggested criteria for potential members included at least three years of experience in relevant sectors, active representation of their group, and experience working with the government (Annex 9.1). The invitation was announced and advertised widely through newspapers, websites, email mailing lists/networks, and word-of-mouth.

Only three submissions were received after the initial announcement. While all three of them were endorsed as committee members in December, the Secretariat and the new members continued to disseminate the information by re-advertising the announcement and reaching out to others using their networks and holding informational meetings. As a result of these efforts, 31 submissions were received, among which 19 submissions were considered qualified.⁷

Box 1: Timeline of events – Voluntary Facilitation Committee

Nov-12	<i>First announcement asking for volunteers</i>
Dec-12	<i>Three volunteers joined the Committee Second announcement asking for volunteers</i>
Feb-13	<i>Voluntary Facilitation Committee "VFC" was formed with 19 volunteers</i>
Mar-13	<i>VFC developed its own Terms of Reference</i>

In selecting additional members to the committee, it was decided that all 19 individuals should be part of the committee instead of five members as originally advertised by the Secretariat. The following opinions and observations from the members led to this decision:

- The members are volunteers, and this committee is established to foster a more open and inclusive process. If they are willing to contribute to the process, why should any of them be rejected?
- It is unlikely that all of them will be able to attend the meetings regularly. The members have full-time jobs and other commitments. Some of them may lose interest or willingness over time. It is wise to keep a pool of volunteers of this size.

⁷ Disqualified applications were mostly from students, on the basis of not meeting the criterion on length of work experience.

In February 2013, the “Voluntary Facilitation Committee” (“VFC”), representing various organizations including NGOs, indigenous peoples, and the private sector⁸, was established with 19 members and had its first meeting. Subsequently, the active members were reduced to nine as individuals found they could not commit to the level of effort required.

The VFC had a total of 15 meetings between February and the mid of August, with a rotating Chairmanship at each meeting. Who and how many that attended varied at each meeting, posing a challenge for the VFC to ensure the continuity of discussions. In order to continue and build on the work, minutes of the meetings were circulated and heavily relied upon. When participating members were less than five, the VFC meeting still continued, with discussions recorded, but members refrained from making any decisions.⁹

3.2. Defining the Role

The VFC members started their work by defining their roles and objectives. In developing their own Terms of Reference, the members relied on information provided by the Secretariat as well as members who had been involved in the development of the Roadmap. The role of the Consultation Group, the background and intention of establishing the VFC, and the progress and status of REDD+ readiness in Cambodia were discussed. Throughout the entire process, the Secretariat informed VFC members about ongoing development at national level, including the establishment of the REDD+ Taskforce in February, and the schedule of their first meeting, which eventually took place in September. As a result of these discussions, they were able to clarify the objectives, tasks, means of communications, and administrative tasks and procedures (Box 3). Initially, they expected to complete their tasks by May, based on an understanding that the Consultation Group should be formed before the Taskforce’s first meeting in September.

Box 2: The Role of REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat

The Secretariat played an important role in helping the VFC members through providing updates about the developments at the national level, while simultaneously sharing the VFC’s decisions with the government.

The Secretariat played the role of a facilitator and coordinator, choosing to stay behind the scenes throughout the process. They made efforts in gaining trust from the VFC members while communicating with the government.

While their main role appeared to be administrative, their support was essential for the VFC to make decisions and for the government to understand and witness the selection process.

In addition to the tasks related to the selection process, the VFC decided to develop Terms of References (“ToR”) for the Consultation Group. The role of the Secretariat was also clarified into one of arranging and recording meetings for VFC members and to provide necessary information and materials required for members to complete their tasks (Box 2).

⁸ Organizations included PACT, NTFP-EP, Winrock International, USAID Cambodia, Grandis Timer Limited (Commercial Reforestation), Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA), Buddhism for Development, NGO Forum on Cambodia, and the RTS (Fisheries Administration).

⁹ Interviews with VFC members, on September 25 and October 2, 2013.

Box 3: Excerpts from Terms of Reference: Voluntary Facilitation Committee for the REDD+ Consultation Group Selection Process

Objective

To facilitate the establishment of the REDD+ Consultation Group through a multi-stakeholder consultative process

Tasks

The Voluntary Facilitation Committee is expected to:

- Validate and finalize a Terms of Reference (ToR) that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the CG;
- Determine the procedure and criteria to establish the CG which includes;
 - Develop criteria to select CG members based on expected roles and responsibilities;
 - Draft the announcement to invite interested candidates to apply as CG members;
 - Verify/assess candidates against pre-determined criteria;
 - Facilitate the selection process; and
 - Confirm selected candidates for CG.
- Meet at least twice a month
- Certificate for the VFC after the mission

Means of Communications

- Discussion, meeting
- Email or list-serve or mailing list
- Phone call (if required)
- Website (Cambodia REDD+ Programme)
- Minute shall be finalized and shared within one week.
- Secretariat will play role as focal point and coordinate with all members of VFC.
- All members will have to reply to the secretariat their comments, confirmation, etc.

Overall administration:

- Coordination: invitation, meeting , facilities, refreshment, follow up, etc. (By Secretariat)
- Members will take a role in coordinating each meeting (By the VFC)
- Record and disseminate minutes of discussions (By Secretariat and Chair of the meeting)
- Provide relevant documents in English (in Khmer if required) (By Secretariat)
- File relevant documents in the Secretariat office that can be accessed upon request (By Secretariat)
- Agenda shall be shared three days before the meeting.
- Documents will be shared three days before the meeting.

4. REDD+ Consultation Group

The Consultation Group is envisioned to play a pivotal role in REDD+ stakeholder engagement in Cambodia. Representing different groups of stakeholders, the Consultation Group will be informed of the progress and decisions from the Taskforce, and provide comments, suggestions, and recommendations. Therefore, it is important for the Consultation Group members to communicate with wider stakeholder groups and establish mechanisms to receive feedback from their constituencies. The VFC members refined the Terms of References for the REDD+ Consultation Group based on its anticipated role in the REDD+ readiness process as defined in the Roadmap, and taking account of subsequent developments.

4.1. Responsibility

The VFC summarized the responsibilities of the Consultation Group (Annex 9.2). The main role of the Consultation Group is to provide comments, make requests, and/or express concerns to the Taskforce on behalf of their constituencies, particularly on issues related to stakeholder engagement and safeguards. In order to do so, they are expected to communicate and coordinate with their respective constituencies by providing information and informing the Taskforce of any developments relating to REDD+ from the constituencies. If any member of the Consultation Group does not fulfill their responsibilities as a representative, their continued membership in the Consultation Group will be reviewed through a process, which is currently being set up.

Box 4: Some of the key responsibilities of Consultation Group

- Provide comments to the REDD+ Taskforce
- Collect, summarize and collate comments on draft reports and proposed decisions by the REDD+ Taskforce from their respective constituencies. The Taskforce is required to send these documents to the Consultation Group and respond to any comments raised in a timely manner. Representatives must share information with their constituents
- Provide specific comments on key issues such as consultation and participation or social and environmental safeguards
- Coordinate and provide information to their respective constituencies. This might require regular meetings of each group

Source: Terms of Reference for the Consultation Group

4.2. Membership

The Roadmap identified several stakeholder groups to be part of the Consultation Group – civil society, indigenous peoples groups, NGO/REDD project developers, the private sector, and academic institutions. Furthermore, the Consultation Group consists of up to 10 members, amongst which at least four members should represent civil society and indigenous peoples' groups.¹⁰

The VFC members identified other stakeholder groups, namely Community Forestry (CF), Community Fishery (CFi), and Community Protected Area (CPA) groups. Some of the other groups were further defined and re-categorized. For example, NGOs were divided into two groups, international and national NGOs,

¹⁰ Cambodia Readiness Plan Proposal on REDD+ (Cambodia REDD+ Roadmap), version 4.0, 13 March 2011: 27.

while civil society was defined as sub-national NGOs as well as other community groups and organizations that were registered at the provincial level.

After a series of discussions, the number of representatives was determined as two per stakeholder group. This is consistent with one of the lessons from the PEB representative selection showing that one representative per group was considered not to be sufficient for the task. As nine stakeholder groups were identified, 18 representatives will be included in the Consultation Group:

- *2 members from national NGOs;*
- *2 members from international NGOs;*
- *2 members from civil society organisations;*
- *2 members from Indigenous Peoples groups;*
- *2 members from the private sector;*
- *2 members from academic institutions; and*
- *6 members representing Community Forestry (CF) (2 representatives), Community Fishery (CFi) (2 representatives) and Community Protected Area (CPA) (2 representatives) networks.*

The initial term is set for three years. The ToR also includes an option to nominate one alternate or proxy provided that they fit the selection criteria. This option is currently being reviewed by the Consultation Group.

4.3. Eligibility

The VFC established a set of standard criteria for the Consultation Group members, and then revised them for each stakeholder group. The existing criteria, such as for the CSO and IP representatives for the PEB were reviewed when developing the criteria for the Consultation Group members.¹¹

As different stakeholder groups have different characteristics and expected inputs, the criteria for representatives were adjusted for each group. For example, university degree requirements were applicable only to NGOs, the private sector, and academia members. English proficiency was an optional attribute for civil society, indigenous peoples, CF, CFi, and CPA members. Furthermore, expectations for the national and international NGOs were understandably higher in terms of their knowledge in REDD+ and their capacity to serve as trainers. On the other hand, one of the absolute requirements across the groups was that they represent an entity that is recognized in Cambodia, in addition to a written endorsement from the entity.

¹¹ VFC minutes of the meeting, on March 11, 2013.

Box 5: Standard Criteria for the Consultation Group

Requirements:

1. Consultation Group members must be a representative of a particular constituency;
2. Consultation Group members must be a representative of legal entities which have been actively engaged in the Cambodian forestry or natural resources sector (for at least...years);
3. Consultation Group members must hold a university degree in the related field, such as forestry, fishery, environment, climate change, agriculture and natural resources;
4. Consultation Group members must be endorsed by his/her organization/constituency (at least...letters);

Attributes:

5. Commitment to participate in the membership's responsibilities;
6. Experience working with Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) or other related REDD+ network and group;
7. Good coordination, facilitation, communication, and interpersonal skills
8. Good understanding of and relevant work experience with local communities and IPs context in Cambodia
9. Khmer and English proficiency

Note:

10. No restriction on ethnic group, religion, gender, and people with disability.

5. Selection of Consultation Group Members

After developing the ToR and eligibility criteria for the Consultation Group, the VFC continued their work by developing the selection process. The selection was designed through the following four steps: 1) Announcement requesting applications; 2) Screening of applications; 3) Identification of eligible voters; and 4) Voting. The VFC members discussed the details of each step and made decisions one-by-one during meetings.

5.1. Announcement Requesting Applications

The announcement “**Call for Experienced Voluntary Stakeholders: 18 Representatives to Form REDD+ Consultation Group**” was developed by VFC with brief background information and a list of stakeholder groups that will form the Consultation Group (Annex 9.2). Interested candidates were requested to complete an application form and submit a profile of their organization, a letter of interest and peer endorsements.

The announcement was made in three different newspapers, on websites and in emails in May 2013. The VFC members were fully aware that the public announcements were not likely to reach the type of potential candidates for the Consultation Group and that the most effective means of communication was targeted emails, either through relevant or personal networks or peer-to-peer information sharing. Nevertheless, it was extremely important to make public announcements in order to demonstrate that the process was open and transparent.

5.2. Screening of the Applications

In spite of the efforts by VFC, a sufficient number of applications were not received initially for most of the stakeholder groups. It was particularly difficult to attract interested individuals from the private sector and academia; it was even more challenging to identify members of the CF, CFi, and CPA groups due to geographical constraints and lack of any official database. As the deadline approached, the VFC members, with help from their peers, had to use their manpower to make contact with stakeholders. They also assisted interested candidates with application forms and other documents.

By late July 2013, at least two candidates for each stakeholder group were identified, with a total of 34 submissions, excluding the IP groups. The IP groups had a separate process to select one representative per province before participating in the Consultation Group selection (see Section 2). As a result, the candidates for the IP groups were not sought because all the IP representatives from the 15 provinces were assumed to be candidates.

When the VFC screened the applications, seven applicants did not meet the criteria due to inadequate experience. The final number of candidates for each group was as follows:

Table 1: Final number of applications/candidates per stakeholder group

Group	No.	Comments
Academia	3	
International NGO	4	
National NGO	3	
Indigenous People	15	Separate candidate identification process
CSO	5	
Private Sector	2	Elected by acclamation
Community Forests	2	Elected by acclamation
Community Fisheries	2	Elected by acclamation
Community Protected Areas	2	Elected by acclamation

The candidates for the private sector, CF, CFi, and CPA groups were elected by acclamation, because each of these groups only fielded two candidates for the two designated positions.

5.3. Identification of Eligible Voters

In electing the Consultation Group members, it was decided that eligible voters would be organizations based in Cambodia and not individuals. This is consistent with the requirements that the Consultation Group members must represent an organization or entity. Each organization was entitled to vote: 1) once; 2) for up to two candidates; and 3) only for the stakeholder group they belonged to. For example, a national NGO can only vote for candidates from the national NGO group, and only one person from the organization can cast a vote – but may vote for two candidates.

The VFC prepared a list of voters for each stakeholder group with support from the Secretariat. For some groups, such as the community management groups, the eligibility of voters was self-evident, since there were pre-existing lists of these groups. In other cases, especially academia, the private sector, NGOs and CSOs, their eligibility was not self-evident. For this reason, the VFC member considered most knowledgeable about each of these groups was asked to make a judgment call in identifying which of the potential voters were truly eligible, based on the level of their engagement in REDD+ in the country.

5.4. Voting

Three voting options were proposed by the VFC, of which two were used:

- **In-person Voting** (vote by secret ballot): the main voting option that was offered on the second day of a two-day workshop in Phnom Penh. If eligible voters had already voted using the other voting options, they were not allowed to vote in-person. However, they were invited and encouraged to attend the workshop.
- **Online Voting**: offered to voters who were not able to come to the workshop for in-person voting. In order to maintain confidentiality of voters, it was administered by two UN-REDD Programme staff members in Bangkok, Thailand; thus, while the choices of individual voters were known to regional UN-REDD staff, this information was not conveyed to anyone in Cambodia – only the numbers of votes cast for each candidate was communicated. While this option was unlikely to be used by stakeholders from the CF, CFi, CPA, and IP groups due to lack of Internet access, it was offered as an option to all other stakeholder groups.
- **Postal Voting**: planned to be offered to voters who did not have access to Internet and were not able to come to the workshop for in-person voting. However, the stakeholder groups that were likely to have used this option had selected their representatives by acclamation (they only had two candidates). Therefore, this voting option was not used. All the IP candidates/ voters attended the workshop for in-person voting.

The Secretariat prepared information about the roles and responsibilities of the Consultation Group as well as the candidates' biographies. This information was sent to eligible voters by email, made available on the REDD+ Cambodia website, and presented during the workshop.



Voters looking at the lists of candidates (left); introducing candidates with their biographies at the workshop (two on the right)

Secret Ballot

In preparing for in-person and online voting, the VFC paid particular attention to ensuring that the secret ballot was enforced in both options. In addition, confirmation was obtained that voters represented an organization that was eligible to vote and that only one person from the organization had voted.

During on-line voting, the secrecy and legitimacy of votes were maintained by the administrators. They verified the voters by contacting their organizations.¹² The administrators were not allowed to disclose any information regarding individual votes, such as who voted for whom. Online voting started on 9 August and closed on 23 August 2013, whereas in-person voting took place during the selection workshop, held from 29 to 30 August 2013.

¹² The administrators found that one organization had cast more than one vote. Before the selection workshop, they resolved the situation by contacting the organization, who, after identifying its legitimate voter, withdrew other multiple votes.

During the workshop, in-person voting began by displaying a list of all eligible voters for each group with corresponding information on those who had voted online. Eligible voters who had not voted online were then invited to do so. They were provided with a voting slip that was color-coded by stakeholder group. Voters dropped their voting slips into the respective ballot box for their stakeholder group. The VFC members opened the box, read the votes one-by-one, and demonstrated that the box was empty after opening all the votes.



Calling the eligible voters (left), voting (middle), and demonstrating that the ballot box is empty after opening the votes (right)

Selection Workshop

Combining awareness-raising activities with elections has become a popular approach in REDD+ stakeholder engagement in Cambodia. The initial PEB representative selection and provincial IP representative selections have also combined these two objectives. One of the benefits of this approach is that it provides an opportunity to gain general knowledge on REDD+, and at the same time, understand what the selected representatives are expected to do before they cast their votes. While the VFC members were fully aware that it would be ideal to conduct awareness-raising activities earlier in the process, which would have also helped attract more candidates, the time and budget constraints limited such options.

The two-day workshop was held in Phnom Penh on 29 and 30 August, and it was attended by more than 180 participants. Several presentations and group activities were conducted, which led up to the selection on the second day (Annex 9.4).

Three presenters conducted their sessions in English. Simultaneous interpretation was provided on only the second day because an interpreter was not available on the first day. To remedy this, the Secretariat staff translated the presentations by speaking in turn with the presenter on the first day.

Selection

After introducing candidates and showing their brief biographies on the screen, VFC members announced the names of eligible organizations for each stakeholder group and handed out voting slips one at a time. In all, 99 organizations/institutions were called, amongst which 30 were present to vote. The 15 IP representatives were all present to vote for their two representatives; thus, the voter turnout was 100% for the IP group. The voting ratios for other stakeholder groups were low (from 21% for academia to 34% for CSOs) (See Table 2). This is partly due to a conscious decision by the VFC to be liberal in identification of “eligible voters”. In order to be as inclusive as possible and not to be accused on omitting organizations that may have an interest in REDD+, the VFC included in the eligible voter lists organizations that may have had only a tenuous link to REDD+. However, there were logistical constraints on the number of people who are able to attend the election workshop. Therefore, for the organizations to be invited to the workshop, the VFC focused on those with a clear link to REDD+.

Table 2: Breakdown of voters by voting options and stakeholder groups

Group	Eligible voters	On-line voters	In person voters	Participants invited to Workshop	% of eligible voters who voted
Academia	33	2	5	29	21%
Private sector	46	n/a	n/a	6	n/a
I-NGOs	44	5	5	23	23%
N-NGOs	59	7	10	22	29%
CSOs	74	16	9	32	34%
Indigenous People	15*	0	15	15	100%
CF	457	n/a	n/a	17	n/a
CFi	516	n/a	n/a	15	n/a
CPA	120	n/a	n/a	19	n/a

* Not the total number of IPs or IP organizations, but the IP selection system identified 15 provincial candidates/electors

The results from the online voting were disclosed and the votes from the ballot boxes were added to the count. A total of 31 organizations had voted online: 3 academia, 16 CSOs, 5 International NGOs, and 7 National NGOs.

The VFC members opened the box and read each vote out loud. These votes were recorded manually on a flipchart and in a projected Excel spreadsheet by two different individuals in order to avoid miscounting and to verify the total number of votes later (see the photos below). While the voters were allowed to vote for either one or two candidates, most of them had voted for two candidates.¹³



Color-coded ballot boxes (left), counting the votes (two on the right)

The top two candidates with the largest number of votes were selected as representatives. The CSO group had two candidates with a tie for the second-largest votes. After a private discussion between themselves, one of the candidates stepped down. They explained the reasons: the level of commitment that may be required as a representative, their availability, in front of the participants at the workshop, who welcomed

¹³ Interviews with VFC members on 25 September and 2 October 2013.

their decision by applause. A total of 10 representatives were elected by vote, adding to the eight representatives who were elected by acclamation.

After the selection

Immediately after forming the REDD+ Consultation Group, the first meeting was held in the afternoon of 30 August 2013. The VFC members and some other stakeholders stayed behind to observe the meeting. Among other things, the newly elected members discussed rules and procedures to govern the Consultation Group. The anticipated tasks and challenges included scheduling meetings, establishing mechanisms to communicate with their constituencies and not just the respective organizations, and clarifying ways in which the Consultation Group can contribute to the Taskforce meetings.

6. Analysis against Principles for Effective Stakeholder Engagement

The UN-REDD Programme and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility developed common guiding principles for effective stakeholder engagement. The Cambodia's Consultation Group selection process can be examined against the principles:

a. The consultation process should include a broad range of relevant stakeholders at the national and local levels.

The Consultation Group includes nine different stakeholder groups, which is more than what was suggested in the Roadmap. The VFC and Secretariat paid particular attention to expanding the stakeholder contact list based on lessons learned from the previous PEB CSO and IP representatives selection.

At the national level, outreach to the stakeholders was conducted using existing NGO and CSO networks. While it was challenging to do so at the local level due to lack of such structures and geographical distance from the city, the VFC and Secretariat utilized all the opportunities to obtain relevant stakeholders' contacts at the local level during the process. The birth of the Consultation Group, which includes CF, CFi, and CPA groups, is the beginning of their efforts to establish an exhaustive list of relevant stakeholders at the local level.

b. Consultations should be premised on transparency and timely access to information.

All the announcements calling for VFC members and Consultation Group members were made public. When there were not a sufficient number of interested individuals, the announcements were repeated and targeted efforts were made.

The Secretariat had a major role in providing relevant information and updates to the VFC, and the information was passed down from the VFC to stakeholders. The relevant materials were made available online and sent to stakeholders via email before the elections. However, some of the stakeholders did not have access to the Internet. Some stakeholders, especially those in remote areas, reviewed the materials (e.g., candidates' biographies) for the first time at a two-day workshop where in-person voting took place. Some candidates argued that voters should have

been given more time to review the materials in order to understand REDD+, the role of the Consultation Group, and the candidates' backgrounds.

- c. Consultations should facilitate dialogue and exchange of information, and consensus building reflecting broad community support should emerge from consultation.**

The formation of the VFC was the beginning of an effort to gain community support. The VFC's outreach facilitated dialogue and exchange of information, which increased the level of interest from stakeholders. The Consultation Group is expected to play the main role in reflecting the views of different stakeholders and building consensus before making suggestions and recommendations to the Taskforce.

- d. Consultations with indigenous peoples must be carried out through their own existing processes, organizations and institutions, e.g., councils of elders, headmen and tribal leaders.**

The collective organization of indigenous peoples in Cambodia is relatively weak. The separate selection process initiated under REDD+ represents one of the few initiatives to encourage broader inclusion and eventual institutionalization of indigenous peoples into decision-making processes at the national level. Nonetheless, the team that facilitated this process for the 15 provinces consulted with key representatives and organizations to ensure it respected existing indigenous processes where they exist.

- e. Special emphasis should be given to the issues of land tenure, resource-use rights and property rights because in many tropical forest countries these are unclear as indigenous peoples' customary/ancestral rights may not necessarily be codified in, or consistent with, national laws.**

No discussion or emphasis was given to these issues. However, these issues may be discussed through the Technical Teams, which will include some Consultation Group members.

- f. Impartial, accessible and fair mechanisms for grievance, conflict resolution and redress must be established and accessible during the consultation process and throughout the implementation of REDD+ policies, measures and activities**

No such mechanisms were established for the selection process. However, the Consultation Group is expected to establish rules and procedures to govern the group, which may include a grievance mechanism to be used internally.

7. Lessons and concluding remarks

The process to establish the Consultation Group began with three volunteers in December 2012 and culminated in a workshop attended by approximately 180 participants who selected 18 representatives from nine different stakeholder groups in August 2013. Numerous meetings and continuous outreach efforts were expanded to build a critical mass for stakeholder engagement in REDD+ in Cambodia. While

the process was generally perceived to be fair and transparent, several comments and suggestions were made by the participants for further improvement in the future:¹⁴

- **Online-voting should be administered by an independent organization.** Some stakeholders felt that the online voting was not as transparent as it can be. Independent organizations that are not related to any organizations involved in the selection would be more ideal.
- **Participants had difficulty understanding the presentations in English,** even with simultaneous translation. Given that most of the participants are Khmer speakers, the presentations should be in Khmer in order to explain something as complex as REDD+.
- **More time and information should be given to the voters to assess the candidates' backgrounds during the workshop.** Although the candidates' biographies were distributed in advance and shown at the workshop on the voting day, some candidates felt that the biographies should have been shown on the first day of the workshop. Other comments noted that the candidates did not have an opportunity to speak.
- **Gender imbalance was evident,** not only from the selected representatives consisting of 17 men and 1 woman but also from the candidates (4 female candidates out of 38), and workshop participants (approximately 14%). The stakeholder groups had a very limited female presence.

7.1. Lessons learned

Awareness to be raised before the selection

The idea of establishing the Consultation Group came from the understanding that REDD+ concerned different stakeholders. However, if the stakeholders were not aware of REDD+, what it was and how it affected them, their interest in being part of the Consultation Group would be low, which would make a self-selection process unfeasible. While it would be ideal to conduct more awareness-raising activities before the selection took place, the effectiveness of such activities would be limited without knowing who the stakeholders are and what their current level of awareness is. The Consultation Group is expected to fill that gap by establishing a group of relevant stakeholders and becoming both a driver and vehicle in disseminating information, building knowledge and capacity, and making impacts in the REDD+ process through voicing their concerns.

Therefore, the first attempt in conducting a self-selection process for the Consultation Group members would unavoidably face a dilemma between the two: the need to raise awareness and the need to establish a mechanism to raise awareness. Eventually, the selection process was made possible by a few active VFC members and their peers, who went above and beyond in reaching out and explaining the importance of being part of the Consultation Group.

Outreach to stakeholders is still a challenge

While NGO networks exist in Cambodia that can be used to distribute information, reaching out to stakeholders at provincial and community levels remains a significant challenge. Some stakeholders such as CF, CFi, and CPA groups do not yet have a forum to find their collective voice, which made it difficult to find a sizable number of stakeholders from these groups. The geographical distance between these

¹⁴ All the interviewees are listed in Section 8.

communities and the capital city, and problems with Internet access were amongst added challenges for the VFC.

However, a significant achievement was made for IP groups who underwent a parallel process to select their representatives from 15 provinces prior to the Consultation Group selection. Through these representatives, the communication line to the IP groups was established.

Despite the low level of awareness on REDD+, a demonstration of transparency and the concept of self-selection in the form of election can increase the level of interest and participation from stakeholders

The two-day workshop was the only direct opportunity to raise awareness during the selection process. Some of the questions that were raised during the workshop revealed a varying degree of understanding about REDD+ and confirmed the need to continue with awareness raising activities. However, the concept of selecting their own representatives with their vote in a transparent and fair manner attracted more stakeholders than it would have otherwise. For example, during the election, participants demanded that the empty ballot box be shown after counting the votes. While that indicates a strong interest and concern in conducting elections in a transparent manner, it did not correspond with a uniform understanding of the tasks of selected representatives and REDD+ in all the stakeholder groups. Nevertheless, the demonstration of transparency played a role in engaging more stakeholders and conveyed the importance of the anticipated role of the representatives.

Gender

Female stakeholders were limited to one Consultation Group representative for international NGOs, three IP voters/representatives, two active VFC members and a Communications Officer from the Secretariat who has consistently provided support to the VFC. The difficulty in identifying and attracting female candidates for the Consultation Group members was expected by the VFC members because of the current social norms in Cambodian society, where leaders are usually men, even for organizations with a high proportion of women. However, considerations for female participation were limited to lowering the level of education required for the candidates from certain stakeholder groups.

Further considerations can be made by setting quotas (in the candidate pool or the representative positions) and/or conducting workshops targeting female stakeholders.

Importance of a small group of active stakeholders

The impact of efforts by a few active VFC members and their peers cannot be overstated. They did not only share the level of understanding and concerns but also saw an opportunity to strengthen their network and have their voices heard. Behind the formal selection process of announcements and deadlines, they talked to stakeholders from different groups, motivated them to be representatives, and helped them fill out the applications.

Intermediaries behind the scenes

The success of the self-selection process requires support and buy-in from all sides. The Secretariat was extremely cautious about their role and tried their best to be impartial. They were able to provide crucial support and guidance to the VFC, while demonstrating respect for their decisions as a multi-stakeholder committee. At the same time, the Secretariat also made sure that the government was informed of the VFC's decisions by communicating the discussions and explaining the reasons behind the decisions, which

helped government officials understand the process of self-selection. As such, the Secretariat played a very important role in building trust behind the scenes.

7.2. Concluding remarks

While the process was carefully managed to be as open and transparent as possible by a group of volunteers supported by the Secretariat, key challenges lay in the reality where the level of awareness of REDD+ was low amongst many stakeholders. As a result, the process often depended on the commitment and manpower of a small group of concerned individuals. However, their persistence in demonstrating the fairness and transparency of the selection process attracted the attention of stakeholders-at-large. With many tasks outstanding for the Consultation Group, Cambodia took a major step in implementing the Roadmap for stakeholder consultation and participation in REDD+ readiness.



Participants at the selection workshop, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 29-30 August 2013

8. List of interviewees

Stakeholder Category	Organization/group/province (IP)	Name
Academia	Royal University of Phnom Penh	Pheakkdey Nguon
	Royal University of Phnom Penh	Seak Sophat
CSO	Children Development Association	Smeun Boreyroth
Indigenous People	Battambang	Chheurt Chhorn
	Kg. Speu	Ven Samin
	Kg. Thom	Ruon Rean
	Mondulkiri	Nok Ven
	Odor Meanchey	Song Sith
	Preah Vihear	Men Pak
	Pursat	Hem Horn
	Ratanakiri	Klem Yem
	Siem Reap	Loeurng Srey Mom
Stoeng Treng	Nath Fat	
International NGO	Fauna & Flora International-Cambodia Programme	Yeang Donal
	Non-Timber Forest Products - EP	Femy Pinto
	RECOFTC	Hou Kalyan
	Winrock International	Hour Limchhun
National NGO	Mlup Baitong	Va Moeurn
	NGO Forum on Cambodia	Teng Rithiny
	Save the Earth Cambodia	Akhteruzzaman Sano
Private Sector	Cambodia Timber Industry Association	Lu Chu-chang
	Cambodia Timber Industry Association	Shravan Rao
	Lighting Engineering & Solutions	Sokun Sum
Other	Forestry Administration - JICA	Naomi Matsue
	REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat	Heang Thy
	REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat	Kimhy Lun
	REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat	Peter Iversen

9. Annex

9.1. Looking for 5 Volunteers to be Members of Interim Committee to Select the REDD+ Consultation Group

9.2. Call for Experienced Voluntary Stakeholders “18 Representatives to Form REDD+ Consultation Group”

9.3. Application Form

9.4. Workshop Agenda