UN-REDD

PROGRAMME

Independent Technical Review: MYANMAR

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

Reviewer: Roy Hagen

Date: 25 October 2015

General comments on the submission document of MYANMAR (maximum 200 words):

This is a review of Myanmar's funding proposal titled "Support to the Implementation of Myanmar's REDD+ Readiness Roadmap.

The review is complicated by the fact that the components of the Roadmap, the Funding Proposal and the Template for the review are all structured differently. A table correlating the structure of the review template with the components of the Roadmap and the Funding Proposal is attached.

It seems clear that by far the greatest challenge for the achievement REDD+ goals is the development of transparency and good governance at all levels. The funding proposal includes a separate outcome for capacity development for good governance – an outcome that doesn't find a clear equivalent in the review template. This strong emphasis on capacity development for good governance in the funding proposal is seen as appropriate. The Funding Proposals has been submitted at a most propitious moment in time, coinciding with the government's incredible crackdown on corruption in the Forestry Department. This is exactly the right moment to provide strong support for good governance in the forestry sector.

The analysis of threats to Myanmar's forests and the drivers of each threat is still weak It is critical that for the development of the National REDD+ Strategy that the identification of threats and drivers be as strong and thorough as possible. The Funding Proposal appropriately calls for a new analysis of threats and drivers. Table 3.2 in the Roadmap shows that there has been a precipitous loss of forest having greater than 40% crown cover, but there is no identification and analysis of the causes. Forests that once had closed canopies that now have less than 40% crown cover have probably lost much more than 60% of their carbon.

Assessing the submission document against review criteria
(Please refer to the TORs and supporting documents)

1. Ownership of the Programme (maximum 150 words):

> The review of the Roadmap indicates it is very much a country-owned document– but probably a document prepared with a preponderant role of government. Governments typically find it very difficult to do a critical, objective analysis of their own policies. Section 3.4.1 of the Roadmap starts out with the statement "Myanmar has a very comprehensive and forward-looking policy and legal framework for the forestry sector". This is a surprising statement given that 88% of stakeholders give a poor rating to their satisfaction with enforcement, governance and transparency (see the next section below). The analysis of threats to the forest and the drivers of the threats are relatively weak and do not reflect the open engagement of the full range of stakeholders concerned.
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> One senses a stronger influence of the UN REDD partners and/or non-government stakeholders in the Funding Proposal. For example, whereas the Roadmap did not call for the problems analysis of threats and drivers of deforestation and forest degradation to be redone, this is the first output under the outcome for the development of the national REDD+ strategy in the Funding Proposal. Likewise, Output 2.2 of the Funding proposal calls for a review of the legal framework and the identification of policy and legal reforms within the first nine months.

2. Level of consultation, participation and engagement (maximum 150 words):

> The level of consultation with civil society and community stakeholders in the preparation of the R-PP and of the Roadmap is difficult to judge because the relevant annex to the Roadmap is not attached to the copy I was given.
>
> One does not sense a strong role of the non-government stakeholders in the development of the content of either the Roadmap or the Funding proposal. Under the baseline for indicators for Output 2.2 in the Funding Proposal, stakeholder satisfaction with enforcement, governance and transparency is currently rated as poor by 88% of stakeholders. This may very well be the single greatest challenge faced by those implementing and supporting REDD+, and a challenge that goes well beyond the forest sector. That said, a very positive aspect of both the Roadmap and the Funding Proposal is their clear recognition that a major emphasis needs to be made on improving governance, transparency and stakeholder engagement. A considerable part of the Funding Proposal and its resources is dedicated to this challenge.
>
> The level of consultation proposed is quite good. The mechanism for consultation is there. It remains to be seen how effective they will be – it is relatively easy to go through the motions of stakeholder consultation without truly them involving stakeholders in the actual decision making. Perhaps the most concrete measures to be taken concern transparency. Transparency is relatively easy to monitor and it can create its own dynamic for improved stakeholder engagement.

3. Programme effectiveness and cost efficiency (maximum 100 words):

> If implemented as designed, the project should be quite effective. Much of the success will depend on the whether a) the government lives up to its commitments to good governance, transparency and effective engagement of stakeholders; b) committed, qualified staff are appointed or recruited to the key positions.
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> If all of the outcomes and the objective can be achieved, then one should consider the Roadmap and its Funding Proposal to be quite cost effective.

4. <u>Management of risks and likelihood of success</u> (maximum 150 words):

The first risk cited is the risk that government does not live up to its commitments. This is good but it does not specify their key commitments to good governance, transparency and effective stakeholder engagement. These are probably the most important commitments and it would be preferable that be cited directly in the risk analysis.

The executive summary of the funding proposal states that most of the ethnic groups live in the uplands and practice slash-and-burn or swidden agriculture. The Roadmap identified deforestation, especially from conversion to agriculture, as the most important direct cause of carbon emissions from forests. Slash-and-burn practiced by a growing population (doubling time for the country is currently 30 years) leads to shortened fallows, declining soil fertility, declining yields and, therefore, the need to clear even more forest land. Many upland soils may be ill-suited for permanent agriculture, especially if slopes are too steep. Unsustainable slash-and-burn agriculture presents one of the most challenges to forest conservation. The fact that Myanmar is in the middle of a peace process attempting to resolve differences with some of these ethnic groups will make it even more difficult to find a solution to this major threat to their forests and increases the risk that an adequate solution may not be found in the foreseeable future.

Assessing the submission documents by element of the Warsaw Framework
(Please refer to the TORs and supporting documents)

1. National REDD+ Strategy and/or Action Plan (maximum 300 words):

> This is Myanmar's Component 3 in the Roadmap and 5 in the Funding Proposal. The Roadmap has no output that calls for the analysis of drivers to be redone but the first output in the Funding Proposal is for a new assessment of drivers, stating the analysis in the Roadmap is only "general". This reviewer agrees strongly that the present analysis is far too general. The development of an effective national strategy is highly dependent on the quality of the problem analysis. The language used in the Roadmap is very confusing. The direct threats (direct causes) of deforestation and degradation are called drivers and their root causes are called drivers. Drivers are driving drivers. Better to identify, a) direct threats, and; b) the drivers of each direct threat. Conversion to smallholder agriculture should be separated from conversion to commercial agriculture – the drivers of each are very different requiring very different strategies. Conversion to agriculture needs to get much greater attention in the threats analysis because of its huge impact on emissions. Much greater attention should be paid to community forestry, not just for restoration and reforestation, but for SFM of relatively intact forests with major benefits for communities that can provide an alternative to swidden and CF as a strategic option for bringing forests suffering from overcutting for wood fuels under SFM. It is recommended that barriers to potential response measures for each threat be identified as an aid in developing effective strategies for overcoming the key barriers.

2. National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or a Forest Reference Level (maximum 200 words):

> This is Component 5 in the Roadmap and 4 in the Funding Proposal.
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> Myanmar is already benefitting from a diversity of well qualified partners.
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> One needs more emphasis on quantifying trends in emissions from deforestation, especially from conversion to agriculture and also on the conversion of closed forests to non-closed forests.
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> The linkage between reference levels and the analysis of threats and drivers is not well developed and needs to be strongly reinforced. Strong use of forest cover maps and the trend analysis should be made to target those forest areas most threatened by conversion to smallholder agriculture, to economic land concessions and other land uses.

3. Systems for National Forest Monitoring (maximum 300 words):

> This is Component 6 in the Roadmap and 4 in the Funding Proposal. The design of the forest monitoring system should include the mapping of wood fuel supply zones for urban markets as a baseline against which measures to reduce overcutting for wood fuels can be monitored.

4. Safeguard Information System (maximum 300 words):

> This is found in Component 4 of the Roadmap and 3 in the Funding Proposal.

5. Stakeholder engagement and consultation (maximum 300 words):

> This is found in Components 1 & 2 in both the Roadmap and the Funding Proposal. The Funding Proposal is heavily oriented towards stakeholder engagement and consultation. Both Outcomes 1

and 2 are oriented primarily to this end. The indicator for Outcome 2 is especially powerful: "Level of stakeholder satisfaction with law enforcement, governance and transparency" and the baseline has already been established. Stakeholder engagement is especially critical in the selection of strategy options for the national REDD+ strategy. Transparency is relatively easy to monitor. Effective engagement is decision making is more difficult. Stakeholder engagement in the forest sector should make a significant contribution to improved governance overall in the country.

6. Schedule and Budget (maximum 300 words):

7. Anticipated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (maximum 300 words):

Mid-term evaluations are often the most useful because they provide opportunities for mid-term corrections. For the size of the budget, one should have two external evaluations. If one can only afford one external evaluation, one might consider doing it at the mid-term.

Suggestions for improving the technical design of the submission of MYANMAR (maximum 400 words):

The table on Page 51 (which does not agree with the graph on page 52) of the Roadmap indicates that the rate of forest degradation and carbon emission is much more severe than is presented in the text. Forests classified as "closed" (defined as less than 40% canopy cover) are declining much faster the rate of decline of forest cover (defined as having 10% canopy cover or more). In 2010, nearly 40% of forests had less than 40% crown cover – a quite severe state of forest degradation in a country where most non-degraded forests would have nearly 100% crown cover. This severe loss of closed forests is not identified as a problem and no analysis is presented of the causes and drivers of this precipitous loss of closed forests.

The definition of "closed forest" used in the Roadmap (a forest with greater than 40% crown cover) is very poorly suited for REDD+ purposes. A closed forest is just that – a forest with a closed canopy. Any forest with less that 70% crown cover will normally have a continuous herbaceous cover and will usually be highly susceptible to dry season wildfires. The semi-arid wooded savannahs of West Africa typically have 40 to 70% crown cover and many of them burn every year. Most people don't consider them forests. A humid forest that has been reduced to less than 40% has probably lost much more than 60% of its carbon.

The term "driver" is used with a double meaning and this is highly confusing. There are threats to the forest that are the direct causes of deforestation or forest degradation. Threats include conversion to agriculture or other land uses, overcutting of wood products, fire, overgrazing and climate change. Each threat has its own set of drivers. Using the term "drivers" for both threats and drivers is very confusing.

Much greater attention should be paid to the impacts of each threat on emissions and this should be used in prioritizing them.

Expansion of agriculture is the greatest direct cause of deforestation. In the Roadmap, subsistence agriculture is grouped with commercial agriculture but they need to be analysed separately because conversion to smallholder agriculture has a very different set of drivers from conversion to commercial agriculture. The strategies to be developed for dealing with the two will be very different. It is recommended that these two direct causes be separated, that the drivers of each be analysed separately and that appropriate strategies be developed separately for dealing with each.

Greater attention needs to be paid to the sustainability of agriculture as a driver of conversion. Low agricultural yields are listed as a driver of conversion to agriculture. When forests are converted to agriculture, yields are typically high to begin with. If yields are declining, this indicates that agricultural systems are unsustainable – is this the case? If it is, then the development and extension of productive sustainable agricultural systems would be a potential strategy, but the development of sustainable agricultural systems is a very difficult challenge and not all landscapes are suitable for sustainable agriculture.

One of the studies cited by the Roadmap gives a much more thorough analysis of the constraints to community forestry (CF) than given in the Roadmap. It argues that Forest User Groups (FUGs) desperately need Forest Department (FD) support to prevent outsiders from cutting illegally or clearing for agriculture in community forests. CF cannot work if the state will not intervene to protect the community's forest management rights when they are threatened by outsiders. This is not identified in the Roadmap and should be added.

The same article says that most forest lands allotted to communities for CF are deforested or severely degraded lands that require major investments in restoration/reforestation before they be productive. Furthermore, communities are steered to plant low value species for firewood and are not allowed to plant high value species like teak. CF can have great strategic value as an incentive for communities to abandon slash-and-burn or to bring forests overexploited for wood fuels under SFM, but this would require a major rethink of present policies. Community benefits for CF needs to be substantially greater than their costs and the procedures for empowering FUGs need to be substantially streamlined if the potential of CF in the national REDD+ strategy is to be realized.

All parties concerned should pay special attention to capacity development. A large part of capacity development needs can only be defined after the national REDD+ strategy has been developed. Once the strategy has defined how deforestation and forest degradation will be reduced or reversed, then one can identify the specific capacities that need to be developed to implement the strategy. In a similar fashion, capacity needs for implementing the forest monitoring system can only be properly assessed once the system has been designed. Some of the capacity development needs can be clearly identified at this point. This is especially true for the development of forest emission reference levels and forest reference level.