Workshop Report: Pacific Regional Approach to REDD+ Readiness

SPC/GIZ, JICA and UN-REDD Collaborative Workshop in association with the Pacific Regional Heads of Forestry Technical Meeting

19-20 Sept 2011, Nadi, Fiji

# Key Messages

* As a result of the workshop, forestry officials from smaller PICs feel better equipped to participate effectively in regional and international discussions on REDD+ and climate change. They feel confident enough to articulate their needs and priorities in the context of REDD+ Readiness.
* Larger PICs appreciate their role as regional leaders on the topic of REDD+, understand the needs and interests of their smaller neighbours and the mutual benefits of moving forward as a region, while pursuing national REDD+ Readiness programmes at their own pace.
* All countries in the region recognize the benefits of a knowledge support platform and access to improved tools and skills for monitoring, that a regional approach to REDD+ Readiness can deliver.

# Workshop Process

The workshop progressed through the following stages:

**A common starting point for discussions:** An introduction to the concepts of REDD+ and REDD+ Readiness, accompanied by distribution of the UN-REDD report ‘Regional REDD+ Readiness Support Strategy for the Pacific’.

**Update on national level REDD+ Readiness programmes in the Pacific:** Progress reports from Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and forest cover change detection by SOPAC.

**Perspectives on civil society involvement in REDD+ Readiness programmes:** Provided by CSOs from Fiji, PNG and the Philippines.

**Update on technical and financial assistance for REDD+ Readiness in the Pacific:** Provided by GIZ, JICA and UN-REDD.

**A framework for visualizing the benefits of a regional approach to REDD+ Readiness:** A summary of the UN-REDD report and a briefing on possible regional approaches to MRV from FAO.

**Group discussions and presentations on a regional approach:** Separating larger and smaller PICs into separate groups to analyse the UN-REDD report, regional forestry issues for the region (including regional drivers of forest loss and degradation) and the potential for regional REDD+ Readiness to address these issues for the benefit of all PICs.

# Outcomes of group discussions

## Feedback on UN-REDD report

Participants gave a general endorsement of the report’s structure, approach and framework, with the following provisos:

* The cultural bond between Pacific island people and their land should be reflected more prominently
* The importance of REDD+ to land use planning was not fully addressed
* More practical suggestions would be welcome on ways for smaller countries and local people to access benefits from REDD+ Readiness
* The broad scope of the report is clear and useful, but it lacks detail.

The report has clearly stimulated a desire for more in-depth regional studies and discussions on the benefits of a regional approach to REDD+ Readiness.

## Regional drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

The larger PICs (Melanesian countries with national REDD+ Readiness programmes) discussed common regional drivers of forest loss and degradation and highlighted the following gaps in addressing these drivers:

* A regional response to forest governance issues is required. Forest land tenure systems in the Pacific are unique to the region, and should be discussed at a regional level to encourage sharing of ideas and experiences, although forest governance issues must ultimately be addressed directly at national and local levels only.
* Drivers within and between countries in the Pacific may be addressed at the regional level:
  + Demographic changes such as population growth and population movements have significant impacts on patterns of deforestation and degradation. Migration between countries in the region is now more common and its effects must be addressed at the regional level
  + Demand for resources within the region, including for agricultural land and construction materials, is growing. Displacement of forest emissions (leakage) between countries is therefore an important consideration for REDD+ programmes across the region.
* Drivers which originate outside the Pacific region should be addressed through concerted regional efforts:
  + Market demand for new cash crops, including tree crops such as oil palm, particularly for biofuels, will be an increasingly important driver for deforestation.
  + Demand in key Asian markets for raw materials and natural resources continues to encourage clearance of forest land for mining operations across the region.

## Forest issues of specific concern to smaller countries

Group work among representatives of smaller PICs highlighted the following additional issues:

* Vegetation mapping: To meet the needs of smaller countries in monitoring coconut areas and small forest blocks, more accurate remote sensing technology is required
* Management skills of local people: Sustainable use of forest resources is hampered by lack of skills and training for local landowners
* Coastal zone protection: Mangroves have traditionally been managed and maintained as a means of disaster risk reduction; an important approach for effective adaptation to climate change
* Invasive species control: Loss of local biodiversity and some local subsistence products through the spread of invasive species is a key problem for small island states. PICs need access to financial resources to address this problem.
* Protection strategies: Protection of forest areas for watershed management and biodiversity conservation requires continuous negotiation with local rights-holders.

## How can a Regional REDD+ Readiness approach help?

At the regional level, PICs all demonstrate strong support for the following:

### Regional training facility

* With an emphasis on forest monitoring and inventory, including remote sensing technology
* To build up a pool of skilled forest technicians, to enhance and share capacities throughout the Pacific region
* To generate information and expertise which is specifically relevant to the Pacific

### Regional REDD+ knowledge platform

* An open access service which will benefit all Pacific Island Countries and Territories
* Managed and governed by PICs (through regional agencies), not by donors
* To include actual, as well as virtual, interaction

### Regional forest assessment information centre

* To facilitate access to, and sharing of, satellite imagery

A Regional REDD+ Readiness approach that focuses on knowledge and skills development benefits the whole region. Larger countries benefit by directly applying the lessons to their national REDD+ Readiness programmes. Morevoer, the more that smaller countries are aware of ongoing REDD+ activities, the better they will be able to decide whether and how to get involved.

### Engagement of smaller countries in regional REDD+ discussions

Broader involvement of PICs in REDD+ debate is desirable for all, including for larger countries looking for regional support for their political stance on REDD+ at international negotiations. In order to achieve this inclusiveness, a regional REDD+ Readiness approach should address the following:

* Raise global awareness of coconuts as a forestry issue. This is the dominant vegetation type in many smaller PICs. Specific issues that need to be addressed for coconuts include:
  + Classification of coconuts as forests is not universally accepted. It is a matter for individual countries whether to define coconut areas as forests in Forest Resource Assessments to FAO. However, a consistent regional position, defining coconut as a forest type, would benefit the interests of smaller countries.
  + Allometric equations for coconut areas
  + Finer satellite imagery is required to distinguish coconuts from other forest areas and thus to monitor changes within these areas. This finer imagery would have a wide range of other uses, particularly in land use planning.
* Bring foresters to the forefront of REDD+ discussions in the region. The lack of discussion of REDD+ at regional fora, for example at pre-COP climate change briefings facilitated by SPREP, is partly due to the lack of forestry knowledge among negotiators, particularly those from smaller countries.
* Promote REDD+ as a climate change adaptation strategy. Usually described as a mitigation strategy, REDD+ is more accurately an example of a dual strategy – both mitigation and adaptation. In the Pacific, the application of REDD+ strategic discussions to mangrove areas, in particular, would address the adaptation-focused priorities of smaller countries in the region.

A regional approach should provide guidance for smaller PICs on the opportunities for forest sector support through REDD+ Readiness. It is understood that this support needs to be sought, initially through active involvement in design of the regional REDD+ platform and roadmap under the SPC/GIZ project Climate Protection through Forest Conservation in Pacific Island Countries. The Pacific Regional Heads of Forestry Technical meeting, held immediately after this workshop on 21-23 September 2011, reflected the priorities stated above in the planning of a regional REDD+ roadmap.