Evaluation Team Responses to Inception Report Questions / Queries

1.   In our view the inception report answers to the Terms of Reference, is well structured and well-written. The emerging Theory of Change with identified drivers and assumptions (section 4.3.3 and Exhibit 4.3) is an important framework for the evaluation to be verified and tested further. Thank you !

2.   *The inception report states that the focus of the evaluation has moved a bit from initially planned, with a stronger focus on international issues. How will the dynamics between the global activities and national programmes/targeted support be handled? We do believe it is important to fully understand what is happening on national and local level, in addition to the international level, in order to assess the impact of international level activities in general. /* The purpose of the evaluation is to *make a broad and representative assessment of the Programme's performance.* It is stated in the inception report that the focus of the evaluation is moved a bit from the initial purpose of the evaluation. Can it be clarified a bit more regarding the level of results in the results chain to be assessed? How the dynamics between the global and national programs will be handled? Norway emphasizes the importance of the assessments of the country programs and to understand what is happening on national and local level. To be more specific, the changes pertain to the methodological approach. The evaluation, as understood by the evaluation team, interpreted by the MG and confirmed by the EMG, is to assess the performance of the UN-REDD Programme. As such, the questions outlined in the ToR, the results to be assessed, and the need to assess the latter's performance at the national and local levels remain the same. What has changed is the fact that the team will no longer produce case studies for each of the countries visited. Time and resources will instead be committed to understanding the relationship between the Programme's performance at the national level and the extent to which global and regional processes are aligned with (i.e., and ultimately support) national interest, priorities and needs. Since so much of the decision-making process for UN-REDD occurs outside of local / national arenas, the team felt it was necessary to understand the reasons for this and the extent to which the approach used helps or detracts countries from achieving their intended results. This we believe is adroitly captured in Section 5.2 of the report.

3.   *The inception report addresses the concept of capacity building in different ways, which we would like the evaluators to clarify. Firstly, the report states that the UN-REDD aims to "build the capacity of developing countries..." Secondly, the evaluation handles capacity building as an underlying safeguard and as a cross-cutting issue. Our question then is: how to evaluate capacity building as an objective of the Programme vs. a cross-cutting issue, both conceptually and methodologically? /* Capacity building is mentioned in several places in the inception report. UN-REDD aims to *build the capacity of developing countries to reduce the emissions generated from deforestation and forest degradation as well as to actively participate in an eventual REDD+ mechanism.* It is also mentioned on p.12 that "*the ultimate aim of UN-REDD technical assistance is to ensure that countries have sufficient capacity to engage in REDD+ mechanisms*". Capacity building is also an underlying safeguard (section 4.3.1, p.13). The evaluation is handling capacity building as a cross-cutting issue (in the evaluation matrix). Can it please be clarified what is seen as capacity building? (e.g. what the differences are between capacity building as the main aim of UN-REDD and as a cross-cutting issue)? And how will capacity building be assessed (methodology to be used)? Capacity building and capacity development are used synonymously in the report. Following the OECD DAC, capacity refers to the ability of individuals, organisations and/or societies to manage their own affairs; and capacity development, as understood by the

United Nations Development Group (UNDG), capacity development is used in the report to imply processes by which individuals, organisations and societies develop, strengthen, create, adapt or sustain capacities over time, so as to further their own goals or priorities.[1] In answer to the points raised above, it appears as though the title of Section 4.3.1 was incorrect and was changed to reflect its proper title, namely "Programming Principles," of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In this particular instance, the meaning and implications of capacity development remain the same as the above definition, with the exception that the latter is specifically viewed as an enabling condition to the achievement of normative principles (i.e., gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability). Finally, the use of capacity building as a cross-cutting issue stems from the ToRs of the evaluation. The effectiveness of capacity building efforts will be assessed through stakeholder interviews, survey questions, and past monitoring and evaluation reports.

4.   Under section 4.2.1 p. 12, there are a number of statements that are phrased as initial findings, for example *"Hence, by increasing capacity at the country-level, the UN-REDD Programme contributes to the creation of an enabling global environment, in line with the achievement of a post-2012 climate change agreement".* These statements seem to be assumptions which the UN-REDD program relies on and these should be tested by the evaluation. Please consider rephrasing if you at this point do not have sufficient evidence for these statements. Noted. The sentences have been amended.

5.   According to the evaluation schedule, the visits to the selected countries are starting before the Inception Report is finalized and approved. Is this the case? If so, it is preferred if the inception report is approved before the country visits starts. This evaluation has been challenged by delays beyond the control of the Evaluation Team. From the inception mission to the distribution of the inception report, the holding of field missions and the launch of the e-Survey, each of the major steps associated with this evaluation have been subjected to various delays. However, since the inception report respects the ToR in nearly every aspect, and that suggested amendments were pre-approved by the MG and EMG prior to submitting the report itself, the Evaluation Team sees no inconvenience or contradiction in its approach. In fact, had the team waited for such an approval, none of the activities conducted between October 2013 and January 2014 would have been possible. Moreover, in spite of the many hurdles encountered, the team maintained its committment to its original timeline in terms of deliverables.

6.   Regarding the independence of the evaluation: it is stated on page 19 that the chosen inclusive approach will not affect the independence. At the same time it will mainly be the UN-REDD Secretariat and country focal points that will help setting up country visits. How does the evaluation team plan to mitigate any risk of a narrow selection of interviewees? The team cannot but rely on the UN-REDD Secretariat and country focal points for a preliminary list of interviewees at the country level. Beyond the proposed sample, the team has consistently sought the advise of interviewees (snowball sampling) for other people that the team should meet or interview and team members have used their personal contacts to seek the advice of expert informants beyond the pool of recommended individuals.

7.   As specified in the ToR, the list of information gathered to date and how to fill the gaps

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[1] This definition that borrows from UNDG and other UN agency definitions.

could be specified better in the inception report – Noted. The information is meant to capture only those documents and people met during the inception phase.

8.   At the 10th Policy Board meeting in Indonesia last July, the PB made three specific comments to the Terms of Reference, according to the official meeting minutes: (i) to complement the evaluation process with the UN-REDD result-based framework; (ii) To consider similar evaluations being undertaken by FCPF and FIP, with the aim of ensuring that broader debates regarding sustainable forest management are considered during the evaluation process; and (iii) the need to evaluate the status of REDD+ readiness in Partner Countries. It is not clear how the evaluation team have addressed these comments. Norway would therefore like to invite the evaluation team to elaborate. – Noted, please see detailed explanations in the end paragraphs of section 5.2.

10. *We would like to flag out strong support to investigate the underlying cross-cutting issues and safeguards in the evaluation. It will be a critical element of the findings, not least in terms of shedding light on how safeguards are operationalized on the ground. UN-REDD's Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria currently include 6 principles and 24 criteria. It would be an exhaustive exercise to analyze the application of all principles and critera thoroughly. Nevertheless, anti-corruption is reflected through several of the criteria. We would therefore suggest for the evaluators to pay specific attention to anti-corruption under the issue of safeguards and under the umbrella of cross-cutting issues.* Noted. To this end, the Evaluation team will work closely with the UN-REDD Programme team that deals with corruption to draw out all relevant issues and sources of evidence, and likewise strive to understand how anti-corruption efforts are helping to address related issues at the country level – whilst not forgetting that the effects of corruption and anti-corruption efforts are exceedingly difficult to measure with any degree of confidence.

11. Investigating the underlying cross-cutting issues and safeguards is a critical element of the evaluation, as described under section 4.3.1 on page 13 in the report, not least in terms of shedding light on how they are operationalized on the ground. Norway would encourage the evaluators to elaborate more on the level and depth of analysis on both safeguards and cross-cutting issues. Following the ToR, the evaluation team will seek to seek to identify the Programme's norms, guidelines and safeguards; assess whether these are effective and how they are used; and what effect (if any) they have on the achievement of results. Norway's concerns on the importance of safeguards and cross-cutting issues has been duly noted and the evaluation team will pay special attention to these issues in its analysis, drawing on evidence from documents, stakeholders and relevant sources of scholarship. Given the broad range of guidelines (SEPC, FPIC, Cancun, etc.) and methodologies used to achieve such ends, the Team will focus analytical attention on the usability and complementarity of the different instruments and the extent to which they are considered useful and easy to navigate through at the country level. Wherever relevant, the team will endeavor to clarify / distinguish associated concepts so as to avoid duplication and/or redundancy.

Other issues raised during the Policy Board:
Annex update – Warsaw, Forest CoPs, others: Noted, this will be done for the final evaluation report.

Important to look at efficiency / cost-effectiveness: Noted, the team has been investigating these factors

Bolivia deserves to be addressed more closely: Noted, the evaluation team has conducted a detailed desk study and key stakeholder interviews through skype and phone calls.

Review of past and ongoing evaluations of similar initiatives: Noted, the team will pay particular attention to the lessons, findings and recommendations drawn from the World Bank and the recent work of the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG-WB) in particular.

Need to revise the Theory of Change: Noted. This is an integral part of the proposed evaluation process.