

Reporting back to the PB11 on the Information session on Sharing National Experiences in Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Integrity for REDD+

This report back captures the key findings and messages from yesterday's first UN-REDD Information and knowledge session on "Sharing National Experiences in Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Integrity for REDD+", which was chaired by Mr. Tim Clairs of UNDP/UN-REDD.

Before recapping the key messages that came through yesterday, I would like us to take a moment and commemorate the fact that today, 9 December is International Anti-corruption Day. Millions of people around the world are marking the day with a number of campaign activities under the banner "Zero Corruption, 100% Development". And I believe that our conversation and the on-going national efforts highlighted during the session yesterday to curb corruption risks in REDD+ processes make us part of these movements.

From the country work undertaken throughout 2012 and 2013 on anti-corruption in REDD+, we had the opportunity to hear from three country experiences that showed us how anti corruption work informs three key elements of a national REDD+ strategy , namely 1) a better understanding of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation 2) safeguards and 3) benefit sharing. These three experiences came from Nepal, presented by Mr. Resham Dangi, DRC, presented by Mr. Victor Kabengele, and Kenya, which I presented myself. We also had the honor to hear a Civil Society perspective from Mr. Victor Illescas, from Guatemala and Latin America's CSO representative to the Policy Board. Although each country has taken different approaches to anti-corruption work – which reflects national dynamics and realities, I will now present some common lessons and key messages.

1. National legal and institutional instruments to deal with corruption are in place in many of the UN-REDD partner countries; yet, often their effective and consistent application remains a challenge. For example, Nepal has a number of institutions and a powerful constitutional body to fight corruption. But more investment is needed to enhance capacities to detect, report, and thus prevent and control corruption risks. In my country,

this is exemplified by the encouraging example of the coming together of two national institutions (the Kenya National REDD+ coordination office and the Kenya Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission) to reinforce their mutual capacities to anticipate and address potential integrity risks.

2. Because this work is driven by state and non-state actors rather than following a set template, the scope and form of the assessments are different. However, all three countries who presented yesterday chose to follow participatory approaches involving relevant state and non-state actors. In here we acknowledge that the methodology and technical guidance provided by the UN-REDD Programme was flexible enough to fit our respective country needs.
3. A well-tailored analysis of corruption risks related to REDD+ leads to a greater and nuanced understanding of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. In Nepal, we heard how different manifestation of corruption contributes differently to deforestation and degradation. While undue influence in policy decisions is believed to have facilitated deforestation of forests, it is administrative-level corruption (manipulative behaviors and complacency) that appears to drive forest degradation.
4. It is important to note that these anti-corruption interventions in REDD+ are already informing and feeding into the preparation of National REDD+ Strategies. For instance, DRC's REDD+ strategy has a governance pillar, and the country has integrated anti-corruption measures into the design of its National REDD+ Fund. Similarly, Kenya and Nepal are linking the findings of the corruption risk assessment to their SESA and soon their safeguard information system.
5. An additional point that was highlighted was that guaranteeing the availability (producing information, building public platforms and offices) and accessibility (in terms of language, pertinent dissemination channels, steady dissemination procedures, campaigns, etc.) of

REDD+ related information to the public serves as a powerful tool to reduce the room for rent seeking and corruption. Besides, timely access to information; two way information channels providing ways back from grassroot consensus and proposals; permanent dialogue and operational participation mechanisms could all contribute to making sure that decision-making is inclusive and effective.

6. REDD+ processes open up new opportunities for strengthening decentralization regarding territorial-land use planning and forest management as well as devolution of rights to local actors. Through the Kenya and latin American experiences, it was however highlighted that decentralization, if not properly managed and effectively implemented, could create gaps in oversight and further disperse corrupt practices.
7. We also reflected on the need to re-think and to adapt the concept of “REDD+ benefits” to national context. In practical terms, promoting REDD+ at local level based on the promise of mere “profit or cash benefits” could be problematic in some countries. Hence, clarifying how these benefits are conceived under REDD+ in the various country contexts will be critical to avoid wrong impression, unrealistic expectation, and misinformation and corruption.
8. Finally, we were encouraged to witness some innovative solutions to address corruption risks in REDD+ processes. Some of the innovations highlighted include designing of transparent REDD+ registries (in Kenya and DRC); de-linking the responsibilities of forest harvest management and sale (Nepal); introducing ‘codes of conducts for REDD+ activities’ and ‘independent and participatory monitoring and oversight’ (in Kenya); etc.

In closing, the UN-REDD colleagues who are working in anti-corruption have asked me to kindly encourage partner countries to reach out to them to discuss how support may be provided, and access the various knowledge products, tools and lessons learned materials they have produced. Thank you.