

Supporting REDD+ Readiness in New UN-REDD Partner Countries

Tim Boyle and Josep A. Garí *

June 2010

Supporting REDD+ readiness in UN-REDD partner countries

UN-REDD Programme Regional Coordinator in Asia-Pacific, Tim Boyle, and West-Central Africa Regional Technical Advisor, Josep Garí, explain how the UN-REDD Programme is developing effective support to new partner countries, building on the activities underway in the Programme's nine initial pilot countries across Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

The UN-REDD Programme was launched with international finance to support REDD readiness in nine *pilot* countries. In view of the high interest expressed by a number of REDD countries, an option was created to welcome new countries as *partners*. Since October 2009, 13 new partner countries have joined the UN-REDD Programme –and more have formally expressed interest - . These new partner countries enjoy observer status on the UN-REDD Policy Board, receive technical assistance, and have access to various activities, information and networks under the UN-REDD Programme. Even if they are not receiving large-scale funding support from the UN-REDD Programme (or other multilateral or bilateral initiatives) these new partner countries are truly interested in, and ready for the UN-REDD Programme 's support to advance in their REDD+ readiness. To respond to this interest and support these new partner countries, the UN-REDD Programme is taking alternative and concrete steps. . These include sharing practical knowledge and lessons learned in UN-REDD *pilot* countries in UN-REDD *partner* countries, identifying existing national activities that can serve to advance their REDD+ readiness, as well as helping to identify sources of funding, and are described next.

Options for technical and operational support

In essence, the UN-REDD Programme is exploring and implementing various options to provide technical and operational support to REDD+ readiness when lack of finance impeded a full REDD+ readiness processes at the national level. Some of these options build on existing development activities, while others are rather low-cost. They all allow countries to start working on REDD+, even if partially, so when full REDD+ readiness financing becomes available, a REDD+ readiness process can speed up as some foundations will have been developed.

A number of missions from the UN-REDD Programme have been conducted in new partner countries that requested them, including Cambodia, the Solomon Islands, the Philippines and Bhutan. These missions have served to share practical knowledge about REDD+ readiness, to identify opportunities to support low-cost interventions that allow some progress towards REDD+ readiness (while awaiting full financing), to advise on basic institutional, coordination and participatory mechanisms for REDD+, or to fuel multi-stakeholder dialogue.

In addition, new partner countries can benefit from activities already undertaken (and thus experimented) in pilot countries, thanks to their easy access to knowledge and their inclusion in UN-REDD activities and networks. For example, Viet Nam, a pilot country, conducted a detailed analysis of the requirements for a REDD+ compliant benefit distribution system, identifying 17 policy issues. While the proposed solutions are country-specific, the inventory of these issues is very useful to most other countries: they may not need to repeat the exercise, but perhaps just validate and adapt it. Similarly, the lessons learned in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a pilot country, on REDD+ coordination and multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms have been already shared fruitfully with initial REDD readiness work in Nigeria, a new partner country. Similarly REDD+ stakeholders from the DRC and the Republic of Congo (another new partner country) have met, thanks in part to their geographic proximity, to share lessons and issues, and build a cross-border community of practice on REDD+.

Even in countries with few explicit REDD+ readiness activities, a careful assessment usually allows them to identify a number of programmes, projects and initiatives that, if duly refocused or simply conducted under a REDD+ premise, can already contribute to REDD+ readiness needs. For example, many countries have projects aimed at strengthening the forest inventory process; although they were originally designed without considering REDD+, they can easily be modified to ensure they generate vital information on biomass and carbon, to be later used in REDD+ readiness. The UN-REDD Programme is exploring these opportunities in a number of partner countries.

Although some interventions described above are low-cost, few are no-cost ! However seed funding can help launch initial REDD+ readiness work. Nigeria for example has started an original two-fold REDD+ readiness process, focusing at the national level and in Cross River State. Catalytic funding from UNDP, coupled with UN-REDD expert advice, are enabling REDD+ in Nigeria , which includes initial stakeholder awareness, training and dialogue activities; setting up technical task forces on REDD+ at the national level and in states interested in REDD+; conducting a preliminary assessment on the REDD+ context in Nigeria to guide future action; UN-REDD support missions; and elaborating and realizing a REDD+ roadmap to move REDD+ readiness forward and establish the basis for a full-fledged REDD+ readiness process once financing is available.

In Cambodia also, where the UNDP and FAO country offices have committed to providing over \$ 1 million for REDD+ readiness activities under the UN-REDD Programme over the next couple of years, the REDD+ process has started with the establishment of a broad-based, multi-stakeholder national REDD+ Working Group, whose major task is to prepare a REDD+ readiness roadmap. This initial strategy, based on building coordination and guidance mechanisms, offers many benefits and synergies: the national REDD+ Working Group builds broad ownership of the REDD+ readiness process, whereas the roadmap clarifies the interventions required and serves to make the process seem less daunting.

Finally, each UN-REDD agency possesses a number of areas of expertise that are available to the partner countries. FAO's expertise in the area of Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) is useful to support initial discussions on the development of national or regional MRV systems. UNDP's experience in governance and its multifaceted dimensions (e.g. democracy, State reform, participation, transparency, consensus-building, rights-based approaches to development) is valuable in delicate REDD+ readiness matters such as multi-stakeholder dialogue, establishing systems to secure free prior informed consent, and the design of benefits distribution mechanisms for carbon. UNEP's competencies can help countries with issues related to environmental risk management and environmental standards, REDD co-benefits, and environmental policy and awareness raising.

In addition to joining a UN-REDD community of practice, new partner countries therefore benefit from the strategic policy advice provided by regional teams, as well as key inputs on the initial steps they can make to catalyse national readiness processes, even if they are not receiving large-scale funding support from a multilateral or bilateral initiative.



Tim Boyle is the REDD Regional Coordinator for the UN-REDD Programme in Asia and the Pacific and is based in the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, Thailand