



[Nigeria's REDD+ readiness programme draft get stakeholders nod, for submission soon](#)

Tuesday, 01 March 2011 00:00 Kayode Aboyeji

Efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria to tap into the new environmental finance instrument under negotiation in the climate change convention that seeks to reward financially developing countries for demonstrated efforts in forest conservation received a boost, last week, as stakeholders in the nation's reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) endorsed the draft proposal on the programme.

Nigeria's representatives at the convention in Washington DC, United States of America (USA), had in November last year made a presentation about the progress to date to the United Nation REDD+ policy board, to which it has been a member since 2009. Consequently, the UN-REDD policy board invited Nigeria to submit a full National Programme for consideration by the Policy Board at its sixth meeting coming up later this month in Vietnam.

The validation exercise came after several months of preliminary work that involved scoping mission by the UN-REDD+ programme team to Calabar, Cross River State, that is being used as the pilot scheme, workshops, courtesy meetings, field trips and interaction with the forest communities aimed at assessing the country's potential for the REDD+ programme pursuant to being elevated from the Observer status to full participants.

If the final copy of the document scales through an independent technical review and the examination by the UN-REDD+ Policy Board composed of partner countries, donors, UN agencies and civil society representatives, Nigeria will start to earn \$4 million, when its implementation kicks-off between May and July this year.

Participants at the UN climate change summit held in Cancun last December had allowed sub-national approaches on the interim basis. Observers noted that the two-track approach of the Federal Government and Cross River State of Nigeria will allow an integrated, cross-level process for REDD+, from Federal Governance to forest communities.

There is concern that over 90 per cent of Nigeria's forests have already gone, and more than half of what remains is found in Cross River State. The forest there is considered to be one of the richest biodiversity reserves in Africa.

In December 2009 in Copenhagen, the state's officials unveiled efforts towards a REDD programme for Nigeria. They said that their main goal in Denmark was to look for donor commitment for a REDD readiness programme for the country.

If was therefore not entirely unexpected, when a UN-REDD+ Programme's Scoping Mission to the country in October last year headed for Cross River State. The week long mission was aimed at assessing the nation's REDD potential, in the light of its desire to be elevated from its current observers status to a full participant.

The mission entailed a series of workshops, courtesy visits, as well as field trips to assess designated REDD pilot sites in the state.

The UN-REDD Programme is being coordinated by officials of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), whose officials – Josep Gari (UNDP Dakar), Julie Greenwalt (UNEP Nairobi), and Edward Kilawe (FAO Harare) – formed the core scoping team.

Other members of the team were Salisu Dahiru (Coordinator, National REDD+ Programme), Mr. Ochuko Odibo (Special Assistant, Technical), Odigha Odigha (Chairman, Cross River State Forestry Commission), and Tunde Murakinyo (Consultant to the Cross River State Forestry Commission).

At a one-day national validation workshop held in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, on 21st of last month, participants comprising members of non governmental organisations, civil society, forest community leaders, academic experts, researchers, senior officials from various government structures, representatives from a number of states, members of the business community, media practitioners, members of international development partners, and the UN-REDD mission, among others were presented with, and examined the key elements of the draft proposal, including the two-track approach to REDD+ in Nigeria to be employed by this programme (consisting of a combination of federal and state actions, with a focus on activities at community level), the deforestation context, the Results Framework, the proposed forest monitoring and MRV system, and the framework for social and environmental safeguards.

After exhaustive deliberations, the programme's outcomes and outputs as proposed in the draft were endorsed. Several amendments were suggested at activity level, and the drafting team agreed to include them in the final draft to be submitted to the UN-REDD Policy Board.

Other aspects emphasised as priority issues concerning REDD+ readiness in Nigeria include: broad capacity-building and knowledge sharing that are necessary since REDD+ is a new concept; active community participation and engagement in programme's activities (e.g. capacity building and forest monitoring) should be maximised;

- The U.N. rights conventions should inform the REDD+ readiness process;
- Gender equality and social inclusion should be mainstreamed;
- Due clarification and definition of carbon rights and land-tenure matters as they affect REDD+ are required;
- REDD+ activities and benefits should reach communities equitably;
- Issues of displacement of deforestation are to be considered;

- Detailed work on the definition of forests is needed; and
- Private sector engagement and investment in REDD+ should be encouraged.

Part of the communique issued at the end of the workshop reads: “The assessment of deforestation drivers highlighted agriculture as a major issue and the need to invest in sustainable intensification of agriculture to protect forests and enhance community livelihoods. The plenary highlighted the importance of facilitating the participation of other states in REDD+ readiness, in view of their growing interest. It was noted that this would be enabled through outcomes one and two of the programme.

“The activities planned for Cross River State will in fact serve as a model for other states with respect to REDD+. In addition, the plenary also indicated the need to strengthen the national policy and legal framework for climate change to ensure that it incorporates REDD+.

“The proposed work on safeguards as an integral part of Nigeria’s REDD+ system was welcomed and deemed very important to address human rights issues, inequality, exclusion of communities and other potential risks.”

Regional team leader and advisor for environmental finance and the UN-REDD+ programme, UNDP, Josep Gari, told the Nigerian Compass that the country has a very interesting articulation of the federal and at the state level to advance REDD+ which is needed because REDD+ is a mechanism that needs to advance in a number of federal government capacities and at the same time it is a process that can be realised at the local, state and community levels.

He said: “The arrangement that Nigeria has done to have a joint forum that includes a capacity at federal level, and much more intense activity at Cross River State level will allow a very rich set of experiences, learning and lessons that will allow Nigeria to better advance on this REDD processes. However, this interesting articulation will allow the government to really advance and analyse REDD+ readiness, and to extract specifically from the field through the model case of Cross River State.”

Gari explained that the REDD+ programme is going to allow a better governance for private sector, better conservation for forest resources, which is the basis of many ecological service to the country, starting from water to rainfall and to many lives that depends on the forest.

“On top of that with the REDD+ process, Nigeria will be better to fulfill the process of international negotiation, will better abide with international policies, and will better influence the international policy on climate change. So there are many prospects, better governance locally, national and internationally for Nigeria and it is an excellent means for the Nigerian society and private individuals to have a means of advancing local society in climate resilient plan,” he added.

Julie Greenwalt, UNDP Nairobi, said hopefully if the programme is approved, the inception will happen in May to June and then the funding will start with the provision of \$4 million.

Nigeria National REDD+ coordinator, Mr. Salisu Dahiru, who was excited about the validation of the draft said he was fulfilled judging by the interest that the stakeholders have shown and the high volume of contributions which means that they have understood and

identified with the project, and that they are willing to partner with the government in ensuring that the REDD+ programme is implemented in Nigeria as a key climate change mitigation effort, as well as a development initiative.

He said: “Our expectation is to propel Nigeria into putting in place the various infrastructures, institutions as well as the capacity needed to develop a REDD+ programme for implementation in the next two to three years, that is our vision and with support of stakeholders and from the good climate we are having from the UN-REDD+ programme, there are strong indication that Nigeria is going to excel not only in implementing this programme in Nigeria but to be a champion in the West African sub-region.

Asked if the programme would be extended to other states, he said there was a big section in the document that is devoted for strategies for bringing additional states on-board.

His words: “We have to develop a set of criteria that we will use to compare strength and weakness of every state in terms of REDD+ to succeed in that particular state at that particular time, so based on that, we will see how best this states can be invited to be on-board and on most occasions as far as REDD is concerned, you have to have the interest, zeal and the political commitment that you want to pursue REDD+.”

Cross River State governor, Senator Liyel Imoke, said that the resolve in 2008 to manage Cross River forest for carbon concession was informed by the fact that it is the last with significant size. Besides that, it would improve Nigeria’s status as forest and biodiversity nation and a major hotspot in the world with concentration of wide variety of plant and animal species.

The governor said the use of forest resources was the mainstay of economy of about 70 per cent of the population of forest community, adding: “So managing it sustainably will help to alleviate poverty while ensuring that future generations have forest.”