

DRAFT

**Enhancing reporting on REDD+ finance to the Voluntary
REDD+ Database (VRD) by Congo Basin recipient
Countries and institutions**

CONCEPT NOTE

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1. Introduction

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD+)

At the Eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11), organised by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2005, the Coalition for Rainforest Nations came up with a proposal for a new mechanism called REDD. This was to ensure that more attention be put on addressing deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; processes that contribute significantly to climate change. At the thirteenth Conference of Parties (COP 13) in 2007 the concept of REDD was widened in scope to include conservation, sustainable management and improving the wellbeing of forest dwellers, hence the acronym *REDD+*.

The REDD+ Partnership

The REDD+ Partnership (henceforth referred to as the Partnership) was officially formed at the Oslo Climate and Forest Conference on May 27, 2010., to serve as a forum for open and constructive dialogue for Partners and other stakeholders on technical and financing issues related to REDD+. The core objective of the Partnership is to act as an interim platform for the Partners to scale up REDD+ actions and finance.. The intention is to support effort to take immediate action on REDD+, including improving the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and coordination of REDD+ initiatives and financial instruments; to facilitate knowledge transfer; capacity enhancement; mitigation actions; and technology development and transfer. In order to capture this information centrally, the Voluntary REDD+ Database (VRD) was created.

The Voluntary REDD+ Database (VRD)

The Voluntary REDD+ Database (VRD) is a key provider of information to the global community on REDD+ financing, actions and results. The objectives of the VRD are to serve as a tool that supports the Partnership in its bid to improve transparency around REDD+ financing, identify and analyse gaps and overlaps in REDD+ financing, and help share experiences on REDD+ between Partners and with other stakeholders.

The need for a VRD was initially voiced at the preparations for the *Paris International Conference on the Major Forest Basins* in March 2010, followed by a first data collection effort and a report for the *Oslo Climate and Forest Conference* in May 2010. As part of the Partnership Secretariat Services, and under the guidance of the Partnership co-Chairs and Partners, development and management of the VRD is carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

In order to meet the needs of the Partnership, the VRD has been in continuous development since May 2010 leading to a significant number of milestones, some of which are :

- **Oslo, May 2010.** Publication of initial Survey (conducted by Australia, France and Papua New Guinea);
- **Tianjin, October 2010.** Presentation of VRD Concept Note to Partnership;
- **Nagoya, November 2010.** Launch of VRD;
- **March, 2011.** Launch of VRD 2011 Questionnaire;
- **Bangkok, April 2011.** Presentation of first VRD Progress Report to Partnership;
- **July 2011.** Launch of New web interface;
- **Durban, November 2011.** Reported on REDD+ Fast Start Finance;
- **July 2012.** Launch of VRD 2012 Questionnaire.

REDD+ Funding reported in the VRD

As of May 2012, the VRD has recorded funding reported by 40 of the 72 countries that make up the Partnership, as well as 17 institutions. The VRD shows that Donor countries have committed USD5.19 billion of which USD3.11 billion bilateral funding committed directly to countries, while USD2.08 billion is multilateral funding to institutions. Recipient countries, on the other hand, have reported receiving less than a combined total of USD1.0 billion from donor countries and institutions.

This large discrepancy in reporting can largely be attributed to under-reporting by recipient countries. The VRD Team has identified several reasons for this:

- A total of 13 out of 15 donor countries within the Partnership have sent in reports to the VRD while only about 25 of the 58 recipient country members have sent in theirs.
- For the recipient countries that have reported, insufficient reporting can sometimes be attributed to fragmented accounting systems within their countries making it difficult to identify REDD+ activities within their country. This is especially true in situations whereby donor countries signed agreements with government entities other than the one from which the focal point belongs.
- There are also several instances whereby funding goes directly from donor countries to civil society partners within a given country making its traceability difficult by the national focal points.
- Several recipient country focal points do not fully understand certain aspects of the questionnaire and have therefore found it difficult to report with accuracy.
- Several countries have different understandings of what constitutes a REDD+ financial agreement and what timeframe to use for reporting. Some countries have decided to report on financial commitments within the Fast start period (2010-2012) while others use 2006 (the year when the REDD concept was first mentioned) as their starting point.

In a bid to improve reporting by recipient countries, the Partnership decided to finance a series of training workshops targeting VRD reporting officials from developing countries and their partners. This shall be the first of such workshops.

The Congo Basin and the Central Africa Forest Commission

Located in Central Africa and around the equator, the Congo Basin is home to a wide diversity of plant and animal species some of which are endemic to the region. This region is home equally home to several ethnic groups distributed within several African countries. It is the second largest river basin worldwide and together with the Amazon constitutes the two largest uninterrupted tropical forests still existing worldwide. The result is a cohabitation of plants, animals, water resources, and humans of different ethnic groups within such a unique forest landscape. The resulting alarming rate of deforestation coupled with the high number of people living below poverty poses a constant challenge to policy makers of the different countries within the sub-region.

Faced with the threat of climate change, the need to preserve forests while promoting sustainable development suddenly gained attention. It is in this light that several countries in Central Africa came together and issued the Yaounde declaration¹ in 1999 paving the way for the subsequent creation of the Central Africa Forest Commission (COMIFAC). In order to ensure support for the vision expressed by Central African governments in the creation of COMIFAC, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) was born in 2002. The CBFP consists of members of COMIFAC and their partners who have resolved to work together, coordinating their technical and financial resources in order to translate into field actions, the objectives of the Yaoundé Declaration of 1999 on the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems of Central Africa, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) and COMIFAC's Convergence Plan.

The Durban Declaration and the VRD

In Durban, November 2010, COMIFAC members and donor countries issued a *Joint Declaration of Intent on REDD+ in the Congo Basin*. The objective of this Joint Declaration of Intent was to stimulate progress on REDD+ activities in

the Congo Basin by drawing upon existing institutions and initiatives to support the development and implementation of national REDD+ strategies, aiming specifically at:

- Accelerating the implementation of REDD+ in the Congo Basin with the ultimate objective of sustainably managing forest ecosystems in order to stabilize forest cover and reduce carbon emissions taking into account the development needs of the region; and
- Strengthening the promotion and implementation of REDD+ in the Congo Basin by means of ambitious, pragmatic and close cooperation through political support and increased mobilization of financial and technical resources.

Central African countries resolved to *use existing mechanisms such as the Voluntary REDD+ Database, and National Programs, to estimate the resources needed to achieve these objectives based on the unique circumstances of each country.*

On the other hand, donor countries agreed to *gradually increase and scale up the total overall level of technical and financial support available for the development and implementation of the REDD+ strategies of Central African countries in a way that is transparent, sustainable, predictable, and results-oriented and consistent with domestic budget and appropriation processes.*

2. Workshop Rationale and Objectives

The Partnership agreed, at the Durban meeting in November 2011, that the capacity of REDD+ countries to report to the VRD should be strengthened in a bid to address the issue of under reporting thereby improving the quality of the data in the VRD. The Joint Declaration of Intent on REDD+ in the Congo Basin was also issued at Durban. This declaration contained, amongst other objectives, the desire to use the VRD to identify gaps and improve transparency in funding. In light of this, the Congo Basin countries have been selected for this pilot workshop on “Enhancing reporting on REDD+ finance to the Voluntary REDD+ Database (VRD) by Congo Basin recipient Countries and institutions”

The United Nations Collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (UN-REDD), in collaboration with the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) and the CBFP Facilitation are organizing this workshop on behalf of the REDD+ Partnership.

The workshop supports and builds linkages to on-going country and sub-regional level processes supported by the UN-REDD, COMIFAC, CBFP and the CBFP Facilitation. The specific objectives of the workshop are:

- To increase the capacities of Congo Basin countries to identify and report on financial agreements under climate change financing mechanisms.
- To build the capacities of a core team of experts in order to strengthen national capacities to compile and submit data on REDD+ finance initiatives.
- To serve as a platform for information sharing and exchange for donors and recipients on existing, new and emerging arrangements and how these could be used to enhance REDD+ finance reporting to the VRD.

3. Program of Activities

To be inserted