



Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

Independent TAP Expert Review of Bhutan's REDD+ Readiness-Package

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Purpose and modalities of TAP review

“Assess whether a due process and approach was followed while performing the self-assessment of REDD+ Readiness”:

- Part A: Review of the self-assessment process of Bhutan’s R-Package
- Part B: Review of the results of the multi-stakeholder R-Package self-assessment
- Part C: Assess what still needs to be done to complete the Readiness Process
- -> TAP Conclusions and Recommendations

Part A: Self-Assessment Process

- The participatory Self-Assessment process in Bhutan followed the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. The R-Package Report provides adequate details on the self-assessment process as well as its results;
- The scope of the self-assessment process was curtailed by COVID-19 related restrictions. Two stakeholder workshops were held in the Thimphu and Bumthang Districts, respectively, mobilizing a total of 104 participants - mainly from government, but also including some conservation CSOs/NGOs active in remote rural areas. The R-Package report did not permit an assessment of whether there were major differences in perception of REDD+ Readiness between the various stakeholder groups;
- The R-Package report provides sufficient information on the actual status of REDD+ Readiness and on the work remaining.

Part B: Summary of progress vis-à-vis FCPF criteria-1

Components	Goals	Evaluation	
		2018	2022
1. Organization and consultations			
1a. National REDD+ management systems	1) Accountability and transparency	Green	Green
	2) Operating mandate and budget	Green	Green
	3) Multisector coordination mechanisms and cross-sectoral collaboration	Green	Green
	4) Technical supervision capacity	Yellow	Green
	5) Fund management capacity	Yellow	Green
	6) Feedback and grievance redress mechanism	Orange	Green
1b. Consultation, Participation and Awareness	7) Participation and engagement of key stakeholders	Green	Green
	8) Consultation process	Yellow	Green
	9) Information sharing and accessibility of information	Yellow	Green
	10) Implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes	Green	Yellow
2. REDD+ Readiness Strategy			
2a. Land Use Assessment, Pilot Land Use Changes, Forest Law, Policy and Governance	11) Assessment and analysis	Green	Green
	12) Prioritization of direct and indirect drivers/barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement	Green	Green
	13) Links between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities	Green	Green
	14) Action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure and governance	Yellow	Yellow
	15) Implications for forest laws and policies	Yellow	Yellow
2b. REDD+ strategic options	16) Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategic options	Orange	Green
	17) Feasibility assessment	Red	Green
	18) Implications of the strategic options for existing sectoral policies	Red	Yellow

Part B: Summary of progress vis-à-vis FCPF criteria-2

Components	Goals	Evaluation	
		2018	2022
2c. Implementation Framework	19) Adoption and implementation of laws and regulations	Orange	Green
	20) Guidelines for implementation	Yellow	Green
	21) Benefit-sharing mechanism	Orange	Yellow
	22) National REDD+ registry, monitoring of REDD+ activities	Red	Yellow
2d. Social and Environmental Impacts	23) Analysis of social and environmental safeguards issues	Yellow	Green
	24) REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts	Red	Yellow
	25) Environmental and social management framework	Orange	Green
3. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Levels			
	26) Demonstration of methodology	Orange	Green
	27) Use of historical data and adjusted for national circumstances or context	Yellow	Green
	28) Technical feasibility of the methodological approach and consistency with the UNFCCC/IPCC guidelines.	Red	Green
4. Forest monitoring systems and safeguard measures			
4a. National Forest Monitoring System	29) Documentation of monitoring approach or methodology	Orange	Green
	30) Demonstration of early system implementation	Orange	Green
	31) Institutional arrangements and capacities	Green	Green
4b. Information system on multiple benefits, governance, safeguards	32) Identification of non-carbon aspects and relevant social and environmental issues	Yellow	Green
	33) Monitoring, reporting and information sharing	Orange	Green
	34) Institutional arrangements and capacities	Yellow	Yellow

Part B: REDD+ Readiness Progress: Component 1

Component 1. Readiness, Organization and Consultation (criteria 1-10)

- The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) created three bodies to work on REDD+ Readiness: the REDD+ Task Force, the REDD+ Technical Working Groups and the National REDD+ Secretariat. The REDD+ Task Force is the official national forum for discussion and coordination of REDD+ related matters. It consists of representatives from key government institutions (including the Ministry of Finance, the National Environment Commission Secretariat, and the Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat) as well as the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation and a CSO, the Tarayana Foundation;
- There are three REDD+ Technical Working Groups (TWG) tasked with providing technical inputs for REDD+ Readiness as well as for the design and implementation of results-based emission reduction programs. All TWG have a diverse, cross-sectoral membership including government institutions and NGOs. The three TWG are: (i) National Forest Monitoring System and Reference Emissions Level; (ii) Safeguards, Governance and Benefit Distribution; and (iii) REDD+ Strategy Options
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Forest is the focal point for REDD+ in Bhutan. It houses the National REDD+ Secretariat in the Watershed Management Division, under the Department of Forests and Parks Services (DoFPS), which ensures the day-to-day management of the REDD+ process and hosts the Project Coordination Unit for the FCPF Readiness funds.
- Between 2015 and 2021, a total of 178 stakeholder consultation and capacity building workshops were organized, enabling 12,528 people to provide inputs to the National REDD+ Strategy and Action Plan and the SESA, among others.

Part B: REDD+ Readiness Progress: Component 2

Component 2. REDD+ Strategy Preparation (Criteria 11-25)

- The 2017 Deforestation and Degradation (D&D) study identified the key drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. The key drivers of deforestation - which affects relatively small areas - were: land allotment in State Reserved Forest (SRF), hydropower projects, roads, agriculture, mines and quarries. The key drivers of degradation, which affects larger areas, were timber and firewood harvesting, forest fires and livestock grazing.
- In addition, a detailed assessment was undertaken to analyze how the policy, regulatory, organizational, programmatic, governance, managerial and technical capacity dimensions of the underlying drivers affected D&D, and what should be done to address these.
- The process for identifying and prioritizing key drivers and related REDD+ strategy options was made more robust by regular stakeholder consultation, on the four REDD+ strategy options and ten “Policies and Measures” (PAM, distinct REDD+ work programs), but also on the SESA process, which helped to refine the strategy options and PAM.
- Bhutan has made considerable progress with the identification of natural resource rights related issues and reforms needed - for example, the country’s revised Forestry and Nature Conservation Bill is currently before Parliament.
- A few key elements of the REDD+ Implementation Framework still need more work, such as the Forest Regulations necessary to implement the Forestry and Nature Conservation Act once adopted and the National REDD+ Registry.

Part B: REDD+ Readiness Progress: Component 3

Component 3. Forest Reference Emissions Levels/Forest Reference levels (criteria 26-28)

- Bhutan has made considerable progress, having submitted its first national Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL) and Forest Reference Level (FRL) to UNFCCC in 2020, based on a mix of IPCC Tier 1 and 2 methods and historical data for the 2005-2014 period. A 0.1% upward adjustment was applied to the FREL for deforestation, to take into account a likely future increase in deforestation (which is currently very low, 0.01%).
- Bhutan decided to use a stepwise approach for the development of its FREL/FRL. Planned future improvements include: (i) developing forest type/land cover maps annually or periodically using satellite imagery with higher resolution; (ii) enhancing the database system; (iii) develop 25 additional species-specific biomass allometric equations; and (iv) conduct periodic forest inventories.
- The soundness of Bhutan's FREL/FRL was confirmed by the independent technical assessment carried out for the UNFCCC in December 2020, which is published on the UNFCCC website.

Part B: REDD+ Readiness Progress: Component 4

Component 4. Monitoring system for forests and safeguards (Criteria 29-34)

- Bhutan's National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS), which is hosted by the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), is fully operational, with the FREL/FRL reviewed by UNFCCC in 2020 providing a "proof of concept". It combines data collected in the field with data from satellite imagery to enable assessment of the state of the country's forests and their evolution nationwide.
- The NFMS web portal (<http://www.Bhutan-nfms.org/>) will facilitate transparent data sharing at the national and international levels. To ensure long-term cost-effective maintenance, the spatial database and web interface are built on open-source software.
- Non-carbon benefits of Bhutan's forests were quantified through a valuation study and also addressed in detail in the SESA. These benefits turn out to be much higher than the traditional GDP figures. Non-carbon benefits are very important to local stakeholders and have been fully integrated in REDD+ Strategy Options, PAM and safeguards instruments.
- Bhutan's Multiple Benefits and Safeguard Information System (SIS) has been fully developed and institutional mandates for the collection, aggregation, analysis and dissemination of safeguards-related information have been clarified.

Part C: What still needs to be done

REDD+ areas in Bhutan where additional work will be needed include:

- The National REDD+ Registry, which has not yet been developed;
- Addressing outstanding legal reforms, including the (ongoing) revision of the Forest and Nature Conservation Act (FNCA) and the Forest Regulations needed for its implementation;
- Completion of the national land use zoning exercise (undertaken separately by the National Land Commission);
- Improvement of the Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL)/Forest Reference Level (FRL), in line with the stepwise approach adopted by Bhutan, by improving the resolution of the data used and reducing other sources of uncertainty;
- Finalizing the National REDD+ Investment Plan to enable mobilization of resources for REDD+ implementation.

TAP Conclusions and recommendations

- The TAP reviewer is of the opinion that the R-Package report provides a comprehensive picture of REDD+ Readiness progress achieved in Bhutan and of the work that remains to be done.
- Bhutan has made considerable progress since the Mid-Term Review, with 100% of criteria now having progressed well or significantly (GREEN/YELLOW scores), compared with 59% of criteria in 2018.
- Stakeholder consultation during the REDD+ Readiness process, including in remote rural areas, has led to significant improvement of the National REDD+ Strategy and the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment;
- The main legal reforms necessary for REDD+ implementation, including the adoption of the revised Forest and Nature Conservation Bill currently before parliament, are well underway. The national land use zoning exercise, carried out separately by the National Lands Commission, will be critical for containing land allotment in State Reserved Forest going forward
- Resource mobilization for REDD+ implementation should now receive the highest priority. The finalization of the National REDD+ Investment Plan will be instrumental in this regard.

TAP presentation on Bhutan R-package

THANK YOU!

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