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Technical Assistance for REDD+ Implementation: Strengthening REDD+ implementation in Africa

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

EXECUTIVE BOARD

INTERSESSIONAL DECISION 3/2023

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Strengthening REDD+ implementation in Africa: capitalizing on lessons learned for an evolving environment - a UN-REDD AFF partnership

Work Plan and Budget/ Switzerland contribution

29 December 2022; amended 16 June 2023

1. Context

Rationale of the project

The world recognizes the climate emergency and nations have agreed to a legally binding commitment in Paris to limit global temperature rise to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C¹. Climate change affects the agriculture sectors (crops, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, and forestry) and their functions and capacity to provide many benefits and services to people, such as the ability of ecosystems to regulate water flows and nutrients cycling². For example, increased frequency and intensity of extreme climate events such as droughts, floods and heat waves lead to losses of agricultural infrastructure and livelihoods. Sea-level rise and coastal flooding can lead to salinization of land and water impacts on fisheries and aquaculture.

Climate change impacts on agricultural production and livelihoods are also expected to intensify over time and vary across countries and regions, especially in Africa where impacts will be greater. The negative effects of climate change will further exacerbate poverty, jeopardize food security, increase unemployment rate, and ignite conflicts and violence among and within rural communities, causing migration and forced displacement. It is estimated that with climate change, the population living in poverty could increase by between 35 and 122 million by 2030 compared to a future without climate change, largely due to negative effects on household incomes in the agriculture sectors³.

African countries, especially in the Congo Basin, are a crucial part of the forest solutions (mitigation, adaptation and resilience), and of the UN-REDD goal of 1 gigaton of CO₂eq emission reductions/enhanced removals, per year, by 2025. Globally, but it is especially true in Africa, countries are not making sufficient progress within their AFOLU sector. Despite recent efforts to curb tropical deforestation – including reducing demand for deforestation-linked commodities and implementing sustainable production practices – deforestation of primary forests increased by 12 percent between 2019 and 2020⁴. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, lost nearly 500,000 hectares of primary forest in 2021, and has exhibited a consistently high rate of deforestation since 2016.

The long-term outcome of this project is to help countries achieve emissions reductions through the REDD+ mechanism to achieve national and global forest emissions reductions targets, including contributing to the UN-REDD Programme's ambition of 1GtCO₂eq per year by 2025. Nature-based solutions, with forest as most mature solution, are crucial to limit global warming and achieve the Paris Agreement goals. Land is both a source and a sink of GHGs, with agriculture, forest, and other land uses (AFOLU) accounting for 23% of anthropogenic emissions of CO₂ equivalent from 2007 to 2016.⁵ To reach the global target of 2°C, or even to keep within 1.5°C, requires an urgent and rapid

¹ Paris Agreement Article 2.1a

² FAO, 2017. FAO Submission to the UNFCCC in the areas of ecosystems, interrelated areas such as water resources and adaptation under the Nairobi work programme. Rome (available at: http://unfccc.int/files/parties_observers/submissions_from_observers/application/pdf/784.pdf).

³ FAO, 2016a. The state of agriculture and food security: Climate change, agriculture and food security. Rome (available at: www.fao.org/3/a-i6030e.pdf)

⁴ Global Forest Watch 2021, <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/blog/data-and-research/global-tree-cover-loss-data-2020/>

⁵ IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land.

transition of the AFOLU sector. It is estimated that forests can provide a mitigation potential of between 4.1 – 6.5 GtCO₂e by 2030.⁶ But financing for forest solutions remains insufficient and needs to be scaled up significantly and urgently to increase action in order to stay on the track of the Paris agreement.

At an operational level, there remains a lack of integration of REDD+ across priority sectors. To be successful, REDD+ policies and actions (PAMs) must be integrated in countries' wider sustainable development strategies, meeting multiple objectives of food security, resilient economic growth and forest and ecosystem protection. This requires the adoption of broader integrated landscape and cross-sectoral approaches. UN-REDD's support to countries and regions is integrated with broader national development priorities, while continuing to build local capacity for a robust REDD+ architecture.

As key partners of the UN-REDD Programme since its inception in 2008, African countries have come a long way in their REDD+ readiness process with torchbearers, such as Ghana – now looking to sign emissions reduction purchase agreement with the LEAF Coalition – being a north star for the region. The overall picture of African countries, however, in terms of REDD+, shows three elements:

1. Slow but steady progress;
2. Knowledge and capacities gaps within and between countries;
3. And a general need to scale up forest solutions (including local climate action) and catch up with more advanced jurisdictions in Latin America and Asia.

Critical roadblocks for progress, that have been identified through engagement with countries, are gaps in REDD+ technical knowledge and capacities among governments (REDD+ practitioners and decision-makers) and a lack of opportunities for advanced African stakeholders to share knowledge and experiences.

The partnership

The African Forest Forum (AFF), supported by SDC and Sida, has been operating for over a decade. The purpose of the AFF is to *'provide a platform for information sharing and expertise and create an enabling environment for independent and objective analysis, advocacy, and advice on relevant policy and technical issues pertaining to achieving sustainable management, use and conservation of African's forest and tree resources as part of efforts to reduce poverty, promote economic and social development and protect the environment'*⁷. AFF is looking to continue developing itself as a leading forum for knowledge dissemination, policy advocacy and capacity development, for the region, and build on in-house capacities for knowledge generation, and dissemination. As such, AFF is an obvious partner for UN-REDD, with its unparalleled African ownership and African expertise. Its strategic objectives – notably, *'to increase the knowledge and understanding of how forests and trees can contribute to a better environment in Africa, particularly with regards to adaptation to and mitigation of climate change'* – align with UN-REDD's work around (i) building and strengthening networking and exchanges of expertise, lessons learned and knowledge among stakeholders; and (ii) raising the profile of forests, highlighting threats to forest resources and champion better management of African forests.

AFF is well positioned to continue to serve as a platform for knowledge generation, dissemination, policy advocacy and capacity development across Africa, targeting among others, decision-makers and REDD+ practitioners.

⁶ Page 186 of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land.

⁷ <https://afforum.org/about/why-we-are-here/>

From 2008, UN-REDD's knowledge management has successfully worked with its 65 partner countries on all three phases of REDD+ to meet their climate goals and protect forests. As the leading REDD+ advisory platform, knowledge management and capacity building are priorities for the UN-REDD Programme, which has the proven expertise and infrastructure to partner with AFF to develop and leverage Africa's REDD+ knowledge potential – African knowledge for African constituencies.

The overall objective of the partnership is to strengthen African countries' capacities and knowledge through UN-REDD's REDD+ specific expertise and convening power and AFF's network, regional expertise and local knowledge, thereby increasing political dialogue and policy change, as well as integration of REDD+ across policy sectors and sustainable development strategies. As such, it will primarily contribute to delivering AFF's Programme 3 Goal of its [2021-2025 Strategic Plan](#): *to increase the knowledge and understanding of how forests and trees can contribute to a better environment in Africa, particularly with regard to adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, and to biodiversity and water conservation.*

As a AFF UN-REDD partnership on knowledge management, capacity development and policy analysis and dialogue it will also support the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2032, particularly objectives 2 (Pursuing equitable and transformative low emission, climate-resilient development pathways), 3 (Enhancing Africa's capacity to mobilize resources and improve access to and development of technology for ambitious climate action.) and 4 (Enhancing inclusion, alignment, cooperation, and ownership of climate strategies, policies, programmes and plans across all spheres of government and stakeholder groupings.); and support the [African Union Sustainable Forest Management Framework 2020-2030](#), to which both AFF and UN-REDD partner agency, FAO contributed to.

2. Outcome, outputs, and activities

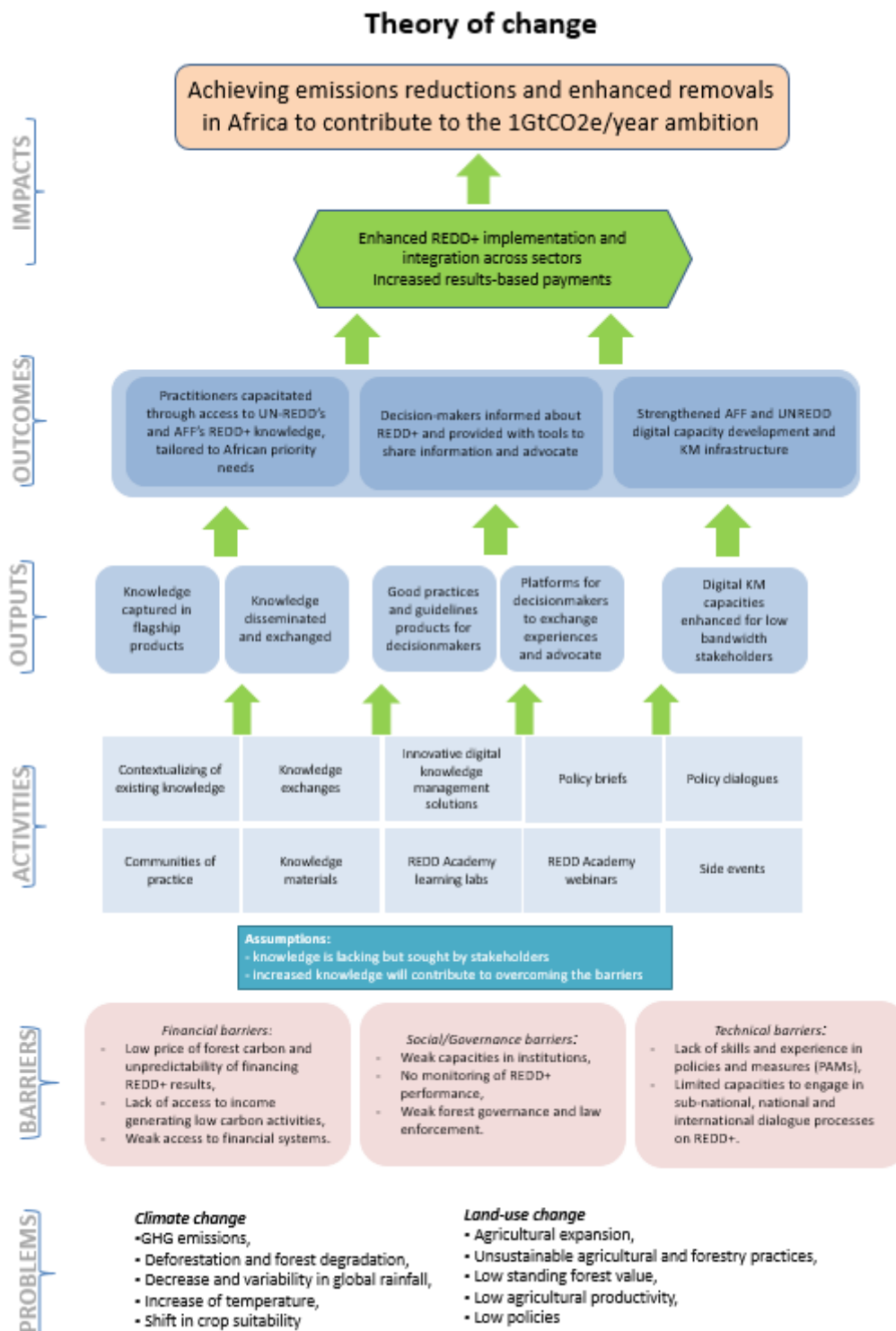


Figure 1 Theory of Change

To contribute to improved REDD+ implementation and increased results-based payments in the Africa region, the overall goals of the project are to:

- 1) Strengthen African countries' REDD+ capacities and knowledge

- 2) Enhance sectoral policy coordination to guide appropriate REDD+ strategies and decision-making

Outcome I: REDD+ practitioners capacitated through access to UN-REDD's and AFF's substantive REDD+ expertise, tailored to specific African needs and priorities

Output 1 Key knowledge captured in flagship products

Activity 1.1. Mapping the needs of African countries and identification of topics and knowledge products gaps

A list of key topics needs to be agreed by AFF and UN-REDD on an annual basis, bearing in mind topics also provide the knowledge basis for advocacy (Outcome II). Tentative topics are listed in the annex. Consultations will support the process. Once topics have been established knowledge products gaps need to be identified.

Activity 1.2. Contextualising the existing UN-REDD knowledge

Activity can be considered as the second level of consultation. Once the general topics have been agreed in activity 1.1. contextualisation, facilitated by a series of workshops where needed, will happen to adapt existing global knowledge products to specific African or sub-regional contexts. Consultations will support the process. The result of the activities will be a series of knowledge products tailored to the African context, for example Africa-specific REDD+ Academy products. The initial step toward contextualisation is the good understanding of the social, cultural, institutional, legal, economic, security and environmental (including a changing climate - droughts, forest fires, floods) factors governing implementation of REDD+ in Africa.

Activity 1.3. New knowledge products to fill gaps in UN-REDD material

The activity will produce new knowledge products on key topics where currently no product exists within the framework of the current UN-REDD programme of work e.g. due to emerging opportunities or policies.

Output 2 Knowledge disseminated and exchanged

Activity 2.1. Knowledge exchanges

Regional and sub-regional exchanges are a proven and efficient tool through which to share knowledge and good practices among countries. They can also encourage international partnerships and strengthen local ownership. Knowledge exchanges meet operational knowledge gaps by fostering the peer-to-peer sharing of countries' experiences and by doing so demonstrate their added value.

Activity 2.2. Africa-specific REDD+ Academy webinar series

The UN-REDD's REDD+ Academy, in collaboration with UNITAR, provides online self-paced courses on 'Fundamentals on REDD+' and 'Advancing on REDD+' in English, Spanish and French. This activity will tailor the Academy's curriculum for the region's specific needs, to be delivered via a series of interactive webinars (linking to 2.4. Communities of practice).

Activity 2.3. Africa-specific REDD+ Academy learning labs

In addition to Academy webinars, the learning labs will bring together diverse stakeholders from different countries to meet face-to-face to allow for an impactful and trust-based knowledge sharing

and learning experience. The labs will also have an action-based learning component, such as on-site visits. (this activity links to Korea funded Academy learning labs in other regions)

Activity 2.4. Communities of practice

Activity will expand the current AFF communities of practice, building on existing UN-REDD communities of practice such as on REDD+ and Forest Governance as well as emerging ones on REDD+ financing. D-Groups provide an email-based message exchange and low bandwidth friendly technical platform with which to enhance online collaboration and interaction. Moderated and facilitated network building activities will be supported among those participating in other activities under the partnership. In order to improve participation, expand the scope and enhance interactions amongst actors' categories, the approach for the community of Practices will be diversified to include more active platforms like zoom /teams for specific issues.

Outcome II: Decision-makers informed about REDD+ and provided with tools to share information to boost REDD+ policy integration across sectors

Output 3 REDD+ good practices and guidelines products for decision-makers

Activity 3.1. Policy briefs

Leveraging networks and expertise AFF and UN-REDD will identify and collate catalytic REDD+ good practices and successful approaches in policy briefs.

Output 4 Platforms for decision-makers to exchange experiences and advocate

Activity 4.1. Policy dialogues for sharing of good practices

Similar to knowledge exchanges but targeted at decision-makers (instead of REDD practitioners) policy dialogues provide a platform for countries to share their good practices. The workshop also allows for an exchange about REDD+ experiences and lessons learned. Unlike regular knowledge exchanges, policy dialogues should incorporate decision-makers from outside the forest area, such as from ministries of finance. This provides opportunities to national policy makers to undertake self-assessment of existing instruments, discuss specific challenges, identify workable solutions and laydown pathways to their implementation

Activity 4.2. Side events for knowledge-based advocacy

Side events at UNFCCC COP, AMCEN and Africa Climate Week provide opportunities for knowledge-based advocacy and enhance ability of African decision-makers to participate in and influence global forest and climate discourse

Outcome III: Strengthened AFF's and UNREDD's digital capacity development and KM infrastructure in low bandwidth regions

Output 5 UNREDD and AFF digital KM capacities enhanced for low bandwidth regions

Activity 5.1. Introducing innovative technical solutions to share knowledge in low-bandwidth scenarios

Activity draws on the expertise of the UNEP digital transformation sub-programme to ensure that all stakeholders can profit from enhanced knowledge sharing and that uptake of shared knowledge is not limited to technologically advanced sub-regions.

3. Budget and timeline

Justification for the budget amendment request to the UN-REDD Executive Board (16 July 2023):

The Executive Board approved the budget allocation for the Strengthening REDD+ implementation in Africa on 27 January 2023, Intersessional Decision 5/2022. The current amendment refers to an adjustment of the internal inter-agency budget distribution for implementation purposes.

In this regard, UNDP will not implement activities under the AFF initiative; although may support on selected strategic matters (through the UNDP Africa team for climate & forests, based in Nairobi). As such, the original UNDP budget is reallocated mainly to FAO, to deliver a new knowledge product on the emerging topic of sustainable agriculture and agrifood systems transformation identifying innovative solutions towards halting forest conversion from production of agricultural commodities (called "deforestation-free agriculture"). The product will consist of an e-learning course on government actions to decouple agriculture from deforestation. The budget reflected in the revised table ensures piloting in one country and translation of the e-learning course in French.

Table 1 Total budget (in USD)

UN-REDD Results Framework 2021-2025 Outcome 4 (Connecting actors and knowledge for forest solutions)										
UNDG Harmonised Categories	2023			2024			2025			Grand Total
	FAO	UNEP	2023 Total	FAO	UNEP	2024 Total	FAO	UNEP	2025 Total	
Staff and other personnel costs	51,499	244,982	296,481	106,160	219,000	325,160	138,705	219,000	357,705	979,346
Travel	-	30,000	30,000	14,200	50,000	64,200	60,613	50,000	110,613	204,813
Equipment, Vehicles and Furniture	-		0	-		0	-		0	-
Transfers & Grants Counterparts	-	190,000	190,000	-	190,000	190,000	-	190,000	190,000	570,000
Supplies, Commodities, Materials	-		0	-		0	-		0	-
Gen Operating & Other direct costs	-	35,000	35,000	-	40,000	40,000	-	40,000	40,000	115,000
Subtotal Direct Costs	51,499	499,982	551,481	120,360	499,000	619,360	199,318	499,000	698,318	1,869,159
Indirect Support Costs	3,605	34,999	38,604	8,425	34,930	43,355	13,952	34,930	48,882	130,841
Grand Total	55,104	534,981	590,085	128,785	533,930	662,715	213,270	533,930	747,200	2,000,000

Annex 1. Tentative topics – integrating UN-REDD expertise into the AFF knowledge network

Topics will be identified through an annual programming process aligned with UN-REDD's country-driven inception process and the annual AFF consultative process. Topics will need to reflect the UN-REDD Programme Results Framework. Indicative topics include:

- Forest carbon markets/climate finance and associated standards
- Benefit sharing
- Gender equality and social inclusion
- Biodiversity co-benefits
- Safeguards
- Community-based forestry and forest-based value chains' contribution to the livelihoods of forest-dependent people
- Improved livelihoods and evolving welfare of forest dependent communities
- Sustainable agriculture & food systems transformation towards removal of forest conversion from commodities:
- Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)
- Land tenure