

\$35 million partnership aims to build strategies for the sustainable management of tropical forests

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The UN-Collaborative Partnership for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) is a joint effort between FAO, UNDP and UNEP to combat climate change through the creation of a technical and financial mechanism to reverse unsustainable practices of natural resource management. The UN-REDD program encourages coordinated and collaborative UN support to countries, thus maximizing efficiencies and effectiveness of the organizations' collective input, consistent with the 'One UN' approach advocated by UN members.

The UN-REDD program has two components: (i) assisting developing countries to prepare and implement national REDD strategies and mechanisms; and (ii) supporting the development of standardized solutions and approaches based on sound science for a REDD instrument linked with the UNFCCC. The program helps empower countries to manage their REDD processes and facilitate access to financial and technical assistance tailored to their specific needs. The application of UNDP, UNEP and FAO rights-based and participatory approaches will also help ensure and protect the rights of indigenous and forest-dwelling people. This program will seek and promote the active involvement of local communities, relevant stakeholders and institutions in the design and implementation of REDD plans.

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Nine pilot countries have been identified for the implementation of UN-REDD: Bolivia, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia.

Features of UN-REDD

UN-REDD will have an impact at the international and national levels. The program will provide and improve guidance on monitoring, assessment, reporting and verification approaches, with specific actions on remote sensing applications at the country level and training including assessment of forest cover change and forest degradation. It will also increase international mechanisms for engagement of stakeholders on the elaboration of a REDD agenda, and promote successful implementation practices by increasing communication mechanisms including web pages. The program will also improve communication between representatives of indigenous people, civil society and the private sector on the preparation of national REDD strategies and in monitoring and verification of REDD-related information.

The collaborative program will also improve the analytical and technical framework for the assessment, monitoring and verification of REDD co-benefits and implications for decision making processes. Tools for the collection of information related to ecosystems services will be developed and used. Information on socio-economic and cultural variables

identified as drivers for deforestation and forest degradation will also be collected.

Challenges and key considerations

One of the fundamental challenges for the implementation of UN-REDD is the need to ensure full national ownership of the process. National programs will take account of information needs, capacity building requirements, infrastructure and impact(s) on national laws and policies. Local practices for sustainable forest and natural resources management will be promoted.

The active participation of stakeholders (e.g. governments, private sector, NGO's, research and academics) during the establishment of implementation parameters, assessments of emissions, adoption of technologies for the appropriate management of natural resources, and continuous monitoring requires a permanent facilitation process which will be supported by the partner agencies in countries.

UN-REDD will face challenges of estimating CO₂ emissions and sinks, as well as in monitoring and verifying these at the national level. UN-REDD will also deal with other forest/climate change parameters that have not been well covered in scientific literature, including forest degradation, biodiversity estimations, food security, poverty alleviation and co-benefits. These parameters should also be regularly evaluated, monitored, reported on and verified at the national level.

Transparency in reporting systems will be fundamental, as buyers of reduced emissions will request accurate information, accountability, and verification of their investments, including the level of uncertainties inherent in the reporting process.

Countries will request support to enhance technical and institutional capacities for REDD monitoring, assessment, reporting and verification. International, regional and south-south collaboration is essential to enhance and develop a critical mass of competence. National capacity building will be undertaken according to individual country size, economic and socio-cultural situations, environmental conditions, development priorities, and coordination between existing development processes.

Political commitment and motivation at the highest level for the implementation of REDD in countries is critical to guarantee sustainability. This implies financing mechanisms, provision of human resources, official recognition in accountability systems, legislative mandate, adequate institutional arrangements, public awareness of the process, as well as good communication and information mechanisms.

The following key considerations need to be addressed by UN-REDD:

- Basic accounting parameters for REDD are not known, e.g. how forest degradation is to be incorporated;



Targeted: Degraded forest and eroded slopes in Leuwiling, Java, Indonesia. *Photo: E. Muller*

- The economic potential for REDD credits is not known. Nor are possible premiums arising from higher quality/accuracy in accounting, which in turn will determine appropriate levels of investments in monitoring systems;
- Technological and methodological options should be kept open with respect to accuracy, precision, periodicity and other aspects that will determine the level of investment required;
- Within-country implementation of REDD may lead to still unknown requirements for monitoring and reporting at local levels; and
- The role of co-benefits within the REDD mechanism, and the monitoring needs that may be associated with them, is not known.

Representatives from the UN-REDD collaborative partnership, UN agencies in countries, donor agencies, national authorities and local REDD actors will jointly evaluate the status of the country in relation to forest management; information services and needs; legal parameters; and capacity building and training requests.

Current status and prospects

Norway has committed \$35 million to UN-REDD and it is anticipated that other donors will also become involved. Country missions were being planned or taking place in each of the nine selected countries in the last quarter of 2008.

Representatives from the UN-REDD collaborative partnership, UN agencies in countries, donor agencies, national authorities and local REDD actors will jointly evaluate the status of the country in relation to forest management; information services and needs; legal parameters; and capacity building and training requests. These missions will prepare reports incorporating national UN-REDD objectives and expectations. The missions will also increase international development partners' knowledge of the forest situation in countries and possible REDD approaches. This will build the foundation for a national UN-REDD program, including mutually agreed areas where support is to be directed.

With the participation of all stakeholders and the requisite political will, UN-REDD may play a significant role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, capable of yielding significant sustainable development benefits and of generating new financing streams for sustainable forest management in developing countries.

