UN-REDD Programme 2020 Annual Report

Foreword

Forests are increasingly recognized as the largest, most ready-to-go nature-based solution to the '*quadruple planetary emergency*' – of climate, biodiversity, inequality, and now a global health crisis. Forests' massive mitigation potential is critical to addressing the climate emergency, as they can provide approximately one-third of the carbon reduction needed to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change.

Keeping the world's forests standing also helps protect humans from zoonotic diseases, including coronaviruses. Their destruction has devastating consequences not only for climate change and biodiversity loss, but also for global public health. Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+), provide opportunities to both recover from COVID-19 and prevent future pandemics. The mitigation potential of forests can only be fully realised by urgent and unprecedented multilateral consensus in a decade of needle-shifting action and of drastically elevated ambition, to '*turn the tide on deforestation*'.

While 2020 was meant to be the Super Year for Nature, the COVID-19 pandemic put plans on pause. With many of the global milestones originally scheduled for 2020 now shifted to 2021, this year provides a formidable opportunity to advance the forest agenda. There is greater urgency and understanding of the need for ambition, and there are already signs of progress. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are high on the agenda for the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as the G7 and G20 leaders, with forests front and centre.

"Drastically reducing deforestation and systematically restoring forests and other ecosystems is the single largest nature-based opportunity for climate mitigation" - António Guterres, UN Secretary General

"By conserving and restoring forests, we protect important carbon sinks and provide economic benefits for future generations" - John Kerry, US Special Presidential Envoy on Climate Change
https://twitter.com/ClimateEnvoy/status/1367256234932510721

"When we lose forests, we don't 'just' lose green space or natural habitat. We lose a key ally in our fight against climate change" - Ursula von der Leyen
https://twitter.com/vonderleyen/status/1348647179431399427

The UNFCCC COP-26, rescheduled to November 2021, provides a unique opportunity to make forests an exemplar of climate-mitigation actions, with multiple benefits, at scale. We need to focus efforts to scale up ambition, action and finance to protect and restore forests. With the COP-26 set to take place between conferences of the parties of the other Rio conventions, on biodiversity and desertification, there is also the opportunity to weave a narrative for nature through the series of global milestones to deliver multiple benefits for climate mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity, jobs and beyond.

With more than a decade of experience, the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) is uniquely positioned to support this ambition to unleash the full potential of forest solutions for the climate, biodiversity, and COVID-19 recovery agendas, paving the way for a decade of action during the coming Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, declared by the UN Secretary-General for the period 2021 to 2030. Since 2008, the UN-REDD Programme has supported more than 65 countries in designing national and

sub-national REDD+ policies and on-the-ground interventions, as well as facilitating the identification and establishment of financial arrangements to capture and manage results-based financing. UN-REDD has been instrumental in strengthening national forest monitoring and greenhouse-gas (GHG) accounting systems and structures, as well as in fostering social and environmental resilience, while promoting social inclusion, gender equality, and the realization of human rights for local communities and indigenous peoples. The highly participatory and inclusive REDD+ preparatory processes, supported by the UN-REDD Programme, have led to policies that improve rural livelihoods and foster greener, more resilient, sustainable and productive forests and rural landscapes.

We will succeed by working together: reconnecting people and nature to implement effectively the 2015 Paris Agreement and its commitment to limit global warming, thereby securing a sustainable future for all. The Programme will continue to build on the best-practice approaches, innovations and complementary experience of its three partner entities – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – to deliver as 'One United Nations', providing the team of technical experts, coupled with the convening power of the UN, which has underpinned the success of UN-REDD since its inception.

Executive summary

This annual report presents the results of the UN-REDD Programme up to and including 2020. It builds on and continues a progressive series of technical, policy and knowledge achievements at the nexus between climate and forests since the Programme's launch in 2008. UN-REDD partner countries are making ever-greater progress in preparing for and implementing efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation through the conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. UN-REDD is increasingly focused on responding to country demand for technical assistance to implement REDD+ and access results-based payments (RBPs) for REDD+ and, ultimately, to realize commitments under the Paris Agreement. As of December 2020, UN-REDD had enabled its 65 partner countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean to access knowledge and make significant progress towards adopting and implementing REDD+ actions.

In 2020, a key focus of the Programme remained assisting partner countries in their efforts to complete the four pillars of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, a requirement for RBPs. Adopted in 2013, the Framework outlines four areas of REDD+ readiness: national REDD+ strategies or action plans (NS/AP), national forest monitoring systems (NFMS), forest reference emissions levels/forest reference levels (FREL/FRL), and safeguards information systems (SIS).

With UN-REDD support, Myanmar and Peru made notable advances with their national REDD+ strategies or action plans in 2020, bringing to 32 the number of UN-REDD partner countries that have finalized these strategic policies for nature-based emissions reductions from the forest and land use sector. UN-REDD also supported the integration of such strategies and action plans into the land-use and forest sector components of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for climate change mitigation in 15 countries. To date, UN-REDD has provided support to more than 45 countries in developing NFMS. During 2020 the Programme provided technical support for maintaining and developing forest monitoring information systems in Republic of Congo and Côte d'Ivoire, while Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya, Honduras and Mexico submitted an updated and improved FREL to the

UNFCCC Secretariat. On the safeguards front, Peru and Myanmar finalized their summaries of information and submitted these to the UNFCCC. Moreover, six countries advanced in the design and operation of their SIS at the national level in 2020: For example, Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia developed their SIS platforms, and Myanmar made progress on the operationalization of its SIS.

Despite the disruption and delivery challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many REDD+ countries made significant progress towards REDD+ implementation in 2020 with UN-REDD Programme support. Notably, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Indonesia achieved the milestone of accessing RBPs from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), securing $286.1 million for emissions reductions from the forest sector. These countries join Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Paraguay as the frontrunners in fully applying the four elements of the Warsaw Framework to be rewarded with a cumulative $496.8 million for avoided emissions totalling 102.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO2), completing the first phase of the GCF's pilot programme for RBPs.

Throughout the year, 10 partner countries and one region received customized UN-REDD support through national programmes and technical assistance for REDD+ implementation. In addition to supporting three national programmes in Chile, Myanmar and Peru, UN-REDD continued to deliver its multiannual 2018-2020 technical assistance to REDD+ implementation projects in nine countries,[1] the Lower Mekong region, and six knowledge management areas.

UN-REDD knowledge management support complements its country-level work and is critical to the achievement of the four pillars of the Warsaw Framework and the goal of REDD+ implementation. Below are some highlights of the Programme's knowledge management work from 2020.

UN-REDD continued to be active in raising the profile of issues such as securing land tenure, mainstreaming indigenous rights and promoting social inclusion in REDD+ policy and actions. Highlights from 2020 include: continued collaboration with the UNFCCC Local Communities & Indigenous Peoples Platform; global knowledge work on securing forest tenure rights through the Dgroup on REDD+ and Forest Governance ("Development through dialogue") which has members across more than 100 countries; and a joint initiative with the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact on the interface between indigenous rights, environmental affairs and climate action, aiming at feeding indigenous insights into NDC reviews in 14 countries across the region.

UN-REDD financing and private sector work focused on building business case studies highlighting the conditions necessary to transition to sustainable land use, including incentives that need to be provided to farmers and producers, such as for sustainable coffee production in Viet Nam and for low-carbon livestock in Costa Rica. Moreover, some proof-of-concept transactions to unlock private finance included the &Green Fund making an eight-year $10 million investment into Brazilian Roncador Group, and signing a $30 million and 10-year loan facility with PT Dharma Satya Nusantara Tbk (DSN) in Indonesia.

Furthermore, UN-REDD continued highlighting the importance of landscape approaches and actions by generating and consolidating knowledge and tools to support practitioners on the ground, such as a detailed guidance on using visual tools and spatial information to support decisions for REDD+ implementation.

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[1] The nine technical assistance countries are: Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Mexico, Myanmar, Peru, Republic of Congo, Viet Nam and Zambia. Since 2020, technical assistance is also implemented in the five Lower Mekong countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The Programme also continued to generate, tailor and provide specialized knowledge on national financing mechanisms, instruments and innovations to underpin the REDD+ agenda, for example providing advice to Indonesia on the creation and operationalization of its national Environmental Fund Management Agency under the Ministry of Finance, and supporting Ecuador in the design and piloting of an innovative mechanism to incentivize municipal governments to create and maintain local protected forest areas.

UN-REDD supported 10 countries in integrating gender equality and women's empowerment principles within REDD+ action. This support has helped many partner countries to take large strides in incorporating gender into their safeguards-related work: In Peru, a gender perspective has been a cross-cutting element to inform safeguards processes and was integrated into the country's first summary of information on REDD+ safeguards, as has also been done in Côte d'Ivoire and Myanmar.

UN-REDD furthered synergies and supported the inclusion and enhancement of forest and land-use action as part of nature-based solutions in NDCs and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a theme that has achieved notable traction following the Climate Action Summit.

The policy and institutional support that UN-REDD provided through its national programmes, technical advice and knowledge dissemination served countries to advance their sustainable development agendas, not only with respect to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), but also across the spectrum of the SDGs.

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

National REDD+ strategies or action plans

Since 2008, UN-REDD has supported 34 countries to prepare and advance national REDD+ strategies or action plans, in line with the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework for REDD+. Of these, 31 have finalized these strategic policies, which cater for nature-based emissions reductions from the forest and land-use sector. During the development of the REDD+ strategy or action plan, UN-REDD supports countries to undertake in-depth analysis of deforestation drivers, applying a socially inclusive approach, centred on stakeholder engagement and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and forest communities, and embedding capacity-building for governments and other key stakeholders for REDD+ actions. National strategies or action plans for REDD+ include measures to integrate social and environmental safeguards: in particular, measures for more transparent governance and gender mainstreaming, and that contribute to the SDGs.

UN-REDD also supports the integration of such strategies and actions plans into the land-use and forest sector components of NDCs for climate change mitigation. As countries are currently revising their original NDCs, the efforts over the years towards comprehensive and participatory REDD+ readiness represent a strategic opportunity for countries to strengthen their NDCs in this key but complex sector. The national REDD+ strategy provides the foundation to revise, update and enhance their NDCs in countries such as Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mexico and Myanmar. In order to ensure the environmental integrity of emissions reductions from the forest sector, Peru and Zambia were supported in the development of a national REDD+ Nesting framework.

As a result of the catalytic support provided by UN-REDD since 2008, many partner countries are actively implementing a wide range of investment plans, policy reforms, economic incentives and institutional measures to reduce emissions from the forest sector. Furthermore, eight countries have

completed the REDD+ cycle, having accessed the GCF's pilot programme on RBPs for REDD+. UN-REDD is supporting countries to access a wide range of financing sources in support of the implementation of their REDD+ strategies or action plans, as well as to rewards results. Additional details are provided in the sections on Progress towards REDD+ Implementation and REDD+ Funding Mechanisms in this report.

In 2020, the following advances with regards to NS/AP were made with UN-REDD support:

· Myanmar's national REDD+ strategy, for which endorsement was delayed due to the difficult COVID context, was further revised by the Forest Department in parallel to the NDC revision process, in order to ensure alignment. The strategy was being processed for approval by the cabinet in the first quarter of 2021, though the current political turmoil may delay this further.

. Peru established a monitoring framework with joint indicators for its national REDD+ strategy and the Joint Declaration of Intent between Norway, Germany and the UK's REDD+ priority actions.

National forest monitoring systems

Over the last 13 years, capacity development supported by UN-REDD has given rise to unprecedented transparency in terms of country-level forest data, providing countries with the ability to meet international reporting requirements for REDD+ under the enhanced transparency framework of the Paris Agreement. Since its inception, UN-REDD has supported more than 45 countries in developing NFMS through national programmes, targeted support or technical assistance strengthening the NFMS pillars of satellite land monitoring systems (SLMS), national forest inventories (NFI), and GHG inventories. Forest monitoring support under UN-REDD is designed to address country-specific needs, enabling national and local forest policymaking with up-to-date, reliable, transparent and easily accessible information.

UN-REDD materials and open-source software were used in 2020 to support the collection of ground and remotely sensed data in a number of countries including Argentina, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Liberia, Mexico, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Panama, Thailand and Zambia. The Programme provided technical support for maintaining and developing forest monitoring information systems during 2020 in Republic of Congo and Côte d'Ivoire (activity data collection including degradation and GHG inventory design), while in Colombia the Programme updated the road map for NFI implementation. For improved dissemination of NFMS information in a transparent way, UN-REDD supported the construction of activity data for the FREL in Zambia. An additional 22 countries have been supported in the development, deployment and launch of operational national web geospatial platforms for transparently disseminating NFMS information.

A total of 18 countries have received direct technical support and have implemented NFIs since UN-REDD began its work, significantly strengthening forest data for national and international needs. UN-REDD provided support to ground and satellite data processing through the Open Foris (OF) suite of free open-source software tools, with more than 28,000 downloads and installations from 2012 to date. Testing of and training in the OF tools has been carried out with UNREDD technical assistance in Myanmar and Zambia. In addition, steady progress has been achieved in the conversion of OF tools into a new cloud-based system, Open Foris Arena, which is scheduled to be launched mid-2021. These efforts, made possible by contributions from UN-REDD, will better serve NFMS and related capacities for measurement, reporting and verification (MRV).

Forest reference emission levels/forest reference levels

Of the 54 countries that had submitted FREL/FRL to the UNFCCC secretariat by January 2021, around 54 per cent (29 countries) had received UN-REDD support. Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Kenya and Mexico submitted updated and improved FREL to the UNFCCC in early 2020. The support of the

Programme, either through direct work in 2020 or building on previously provided assistance, also enabled four countries (Cambodia, Peru, Suriname and Zambia) to finalize their FRELs/FRLs and re-submit them in early 2021.

The Programme built in-country capacity and understanding of FREL/FRL through training on the UNFCCC requirements, and information on the policy and technical implications of FREL/FRL construction. The critical value of FREL/FRL is that they allow countries to publicly demonstrate and be rewarded for REDD+ results. Three countries received support to assess and report REDD+ results to the UNFCCC secretariat (Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador). This support was provided through methodological work and consultations with a range of stakeholders from government ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and the private sector. To date, REDD+ results have been submitted by a total of 14 countries around the world (Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Paraguay, Papua New Guinea and Uganda). About one fifth of these countries did so with the support of UN-REDD, helping them to gain international recognition and mobilize financial rewards.
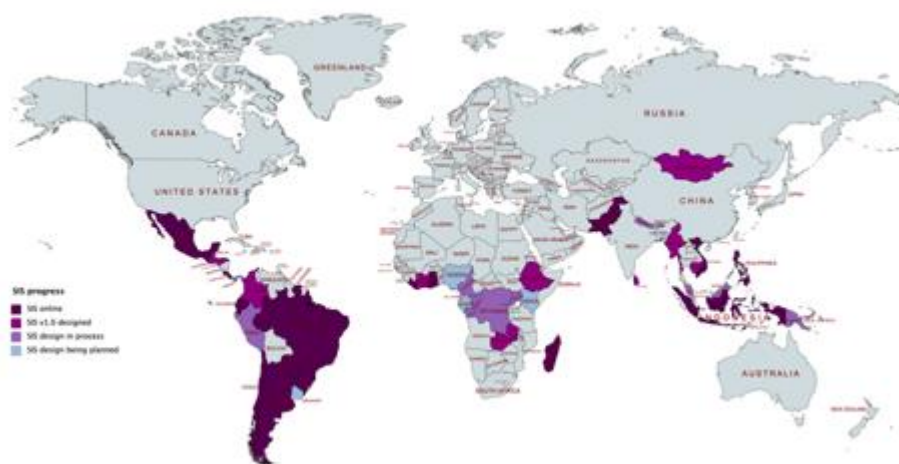
Safeguards and safeguards information systems

To date UN-REDD Programme has supported directly (through technical assistance) or indirectly (through technical feedback and knowledge exchanges) 36 developing countries with their approaches to meeting UNFCCC safeguards requirements. Key achievements in 2020 include:

· Two countries (Peru and Myanmar) finalized their summaries of information and submitted these to the UNFCCC. The global progress with summaries of information by the end of 2020 is presented in the figure 1.

· Six countries advanced in the design and operation of their safeguards information systems (SIS) at the national level. Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia made significant progress in the development of their SIS platforms, and Myanmar made progress on the operationalization of its SIS, including the development of an interim SIS webpage. Also, Peru advanced in the development of content for the SIS and the associated online platform, and Mexico worked on updating its SIS to improve information gathering and sharing for different scales and stakeholders. In addition, some countries, namely Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mexico, Myanmar, and Zambia, strengthened their efforts to collect safeguards information by developing and using templates to gather information from diverse institutions. Chile developed and launched a co-benefits system of the national strategy; this system is separated from the country's SIS, but contributes to share safeguards-related information. Figure 2 presents the global progress with SIS by the end of 2020.

· Knowledge and experience were shared on the design and implementation of SIS in a regional exchange in Latin America. Representatives from five countries (Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Paraguay) gathered to discuss progress in the region related to SIS, as well as challenges and lessons learned in relation to the collection, processing, analysis and reporting of information on safeguards.

· Two technical briefs on REDD+ safeguards were developed and shared. The first brief addresses the topic of SIS, and provides recommendations on moving from design to operation; the second brief is on summaries of information, particularly on initial experiences and recommendations of international REDD+ safeguards reporting.

Figure 1. Global progress on summaries of safeguards information at the end of 2020

Figure 2. Global progress on safeguards information systems at the end of 2020

Highlights of safeguards achievements through UN-REDD Programme support in 2020 include the following:

·   **Côte d'Ivoire** advanced in the development of its SIS platform, including the development and use of a template to gather safeguards information from diverse institutions. The information was being compiled and reviewed at the time of writing.

·   **Myanmar** made progress on the operationalization of its SIS, including the development of an interim SIS webpage.

·   **Peru** finalized and submitted its first summary of information.

Progress towards REDD+ implementation

Despite the disruption that the COVID-19 crisis caused to national governance and international co-operation and technical assistance, including to UN-REDD, many UN-REDD partner countries made significant progress towards implementing REDD+ actions and mobilizing funding for them. The foundation established by UN-REDD technical assistance in preceding years was resistant to the COVID-19 crisis, and adapted to it, allowing a number of countries to complete their fulfilment of the

UNFCCC REDD+ requirements (Warsaw Framework), account for REDD+ results in past years, and even access REDD+ RBPs, notably through the GCF pilot programme for REDD+ RBPs.

In particular, during 2020, **Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica and Indonesia** built on their compliance with the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ and their reported forest-based emission reductions to successfully access RBPs from the GCF, together securing $286 million. These national achievements demonstrate the viability of the REDD+ concept as well as the political commitment of many countries (both tropical forest nations and climate-finance donors) towards turning the tide on deforestation. UN-REDD contributed to this milestone of global climate action, through capacity-building, seed funding through national programmes, technical assistance and policy advice to countries. These measures tangibly advanced the fulfilment of Article 5 of the Paris Agreement, which sanctions REDD+ as a primary avenue for addressing the climate and deforestation crises. These countries join **Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Paraguay** as frontrunners in fully applying the four components of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ and be rewarded a cumulative $496 million for 102 MtCO2 of forest-based avoided emissions, to the point of exhausting the pilot phase of the GCF's REDD+ RBP programme.

To ensure these REDD+ proceeds feed a virtuous cycle of inclusive and enduring REDD+ action, the beneficiary countries used their national REDD+ strategies, REDD+ safeguards and REDD+ multi-stakeholder mechanisms – many of which were built with UN-REDD support over years – to frame RBP programmes. Details of these approaches, and the related UN-REDD support, can be found in the section on REDD+ funding mechanisms of this report.

In addition, UN-REDD knowledge and advisory support during 2020 served many other countries to undertake a wide range of actions to implement their REDD+ policies and measures. Such support included advice on pilot initiatives, national REDD+ financing strategies, investment programmes, jurisdictional approaches, and scoping deforestation-free commodity supply chains. A few examples of country implementation with UN-REDD engagement are described below:

- **Chile** completed the implementation of four forest management models and five pilot projects of payments for ecosystem services (PES) projects, while extracting lessons to scale these models up to the regional and eventually national levels, under its +Bosques project.

- **Colombia** advanced community forestry management (CFM) through stakeholder dialogues as well as a CFM pilot programme covering 11,626 hectares across eight departments. Colombia also progressed on designing forest investment models that integrate ethnic, gender and generational parameters. Successful production chain supplies were achieved in collaboration with the FAO's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) programme, boosting fair trade, legal timber and social benefits.

- **Congo** undertook a set of analyses of the forest, fuelwood, and agricultural value chains, as well as rural finance sectors with a REDD+ vision, which then served to inform several investment programmes with various international funding mechanisms, notably the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) and the GCF.

- **Côte d'Ivoire** advanced more than 10 draft decrees aiming to enforce the forest code under the Ministry of Water and Forests, covering issues such as benefit sharing, NFI, forest products, and community forestry. In addition, economic models for sustainable cocoa production were consolidated and disseminated, with field testing started. The country also completed the multi-stakeholder design of two jurisdictional strategies for forest-based development, working through a project of the Governor's Climate and Forests Task Force, and aiming to help deploy zero-deforestation cocoa production and trade, as well as partnerships with international cocoa companies.

- **Indonesia** developed policy, legal and operational documents to inform REDD+ fund distribution that reflect best international practices. The Plan for Peat Ecosystem Protection and Management received technical and policy inputs from all administrative levels and is currently being implemented

- **Myanmar's** initiative titled Integrating Mangroves into REDD+ Implementation was approved and launched, with initial efforts focused on reviewing and revising existing institutional processes and guidelines for sub-national planning and implementation of forestry and land use interventions as they relate to mangroves and to mangrove-dependent communities
- In **Peru** five bankable initiatives aligned to Peru's REDD+ objectives were identified in the Amazon region, with ongoing discussions with potential funders. The country also progressed on community-based forest monitoring, with capacities of 45 indigenous and *campesinos* (smallholder farmers) communities in eight Departments of the Amazon region enhanced.
- In line with its national action plan for REDD+, **Viet Nam** developed and secured EU funding (EUR5 million, or around US$6 million) for its project titled Integrated sustainable landscape management through deforestation-free jurisdiction approach in Lam Dong and Dak Nong provinces.
- To support implementation of its national REDD+ strategy, **Zambia** advanced its proposal to the GCF on reducing GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in Zambia's North-Western Province in support to NDC implementation and for RBPs.
- The flagship initiative Sustainable Forest Trade in the **Lower Mekong Region** was launched, aiming at enhancing verified legal and sustainably sourced intra-regional forest trade.

In summary, UN-REDD partner countries harnessed their REDD+ commitments, as well as their fulfilment of the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework for REDD+, to undertake pilot initiatives, design and launch investment programmes, scope jurisdictional approaches and mobilize11 international climate finance, among other valuable endeavours for implementing REDD+. In addition, some of them took further steps and successfully pursued performance-based finance for their demonstrated REDD+ progress and results, thus closing the circle of REDD+. As finance is recognized as a key factor for REDD+ action, UN-REDD was instrumental to several countries in accessing a wider range of financing sources in support of the implementation of their NSs and NAPs, including through the GCF (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Republic of the Congo and Zambia, in addition to the countries mentioned above with regards the GCF RBP pilot scheme), the EU (Viet Nam) and the Government of Norway (Myanmar).

Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

UN-REDD contributes widely to achieving the SDGs, not only the more obvious goals on climate action (SDG 13) and sustainable forest management (SDG 15), but also more broadly across the whole spectrum of the SDGs.

The different national strategies and action plans, investment plans, NFMSs, deforestation-free commodity-chain partnerships and financial arrangements for the sustainable governance of lands and forests that countries develop, adopt and implement, with technical assistance and policy advice from UN-REDD, are allowing countries to address issues pertaining to the following topics: rural livelihoods (SDG 1); sustainable agriculture (SDG 2);sustainable energy (SDG 7); responsible production and trade (SDG 12); and inclusive governance (SDG 16). In addition, the robust social inclusion approaches that are integrated into UN-REDD support, from stakeholder engagement, to gender mainstreaming, to considering the rights of indigenous peoples, enhance progress at the national level on gender equality (SDG 5) and political inclusion (SDG 10). Lastly, UN-REDD, recognized as the United Nations platform for forest solutions to the climate emergency, is a convener, nurturing innovative and multi-stakeholder partnerships for the sustainable governance of forests (SDG 17).

In 2020, UN-REDD continues to be active across diverse fronts that contribute widely to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while fostering inner synergies, including to the following targets within the SDG framework:

- Supporting measures towards decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation (target 8.4)

- Empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all (target 10.2) by promoting multi-stakeholder dialogues, engagement and partnerships

- Encouraging official development assistance and financial flows, in particular to least developed countries (target 10.B)

- Encouraging the private sector to adopt sustainable practices (target 12.6)

- Broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance (target 16.8)

- Mobilizing additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources (target 17.3)

- Offering international support for implementing capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all SDGs, including through South-South cooperation (target 17.9)

Country-specific examples of how UN-REDD support is advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are found throughout the report, with notable cases from 2020 highlighted below:

- **Côte d'Ivoire**'s ensemble of work on the cocoa-forest nexus, including deforestation-free farming, economically-sound agroforestry models and forest-ecosystem restoration plans, is helping the country advance several SDGs in a substantial and integrated manner, including: SDG 12 (through sustainable farming); SDG 13 (climate mitigation through forest solutions and REDD+); SDG 15 (conserving and restoring forests); and SDG 17 (public-private partnerships for deforestation-free cocoa production).

- **Indonesia**'s Environmental Fund Management Agency (*Badan Layanan Umum Badan Pengelola Dana Lingkungan Hidup*, or BLU BPDLH) has adopted MRV improvements and application of international best practice to REDD+ fund distribution, which are advancing, in addition to SDG 13: SDG 1 on eliminating poverty, through improved livelihood options; SDG 3 on good health and well-being, through less fires and smoke and improvements to food security; SDG 17 on partnerships, through joint training and strengthening the International Tropical Peatland Center.

Country results

The following section outlines results across the 10 countries and Lower Mekong region that were actively supported by UN-REDD in 2020 through technical assistance and national programmes. A traffic-light colour code is used to give a snapshot of progress in each country against the two delivery-support mechanisms that the Programme used in 2020, namely technical assistance (TA, comprising technical assistance provided to ongoing national programmes and technical assistance for REDD+ implementation) and national programmes (NP).

Each country has identified the type of support received from UN-REDD and the status of implementation. In the case of multiple types of support, each is listed separately. Under the traffic-light system, the implementation status of each type of support is identified as follows:

Completed: All activities have been completed in 2020; the programme is pending closure or closed.

On track: All activities are under way in accordance with the 2020 annual workplan.

Delayed: Activities have been delayed. The cause of the delay and solutions to ensure the programme's successful completion are briefly outlined in the Challenges and Solutions section.

In order to simplify country updates, the following abbreviations for the pillars of the Warsaw Framework will be used when discussing progress against it:

NS/AP: National REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan

FREL/FRL: forest reference emission level/forest reference level

NFMS: national forest monitoring system

SIS: safeguards information system

Chile

NP	*On track*
TA to ongoing NPs	*On track*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NS/AP: National Strategy on Climate Change and Vegetation Resources (*Estrategia Nacional de Cambio Climático y Recursos Vegetacionales*, or ENCCRV): Evaluation, implementation, and collection of lessons learned from ENCCRV´s measures (including PES) was completed in 2020, allowing Chile to establish new models of sustainable forest management that can be replicated and scaled up.

FREL/FRL: Progress was achieved in the expansion of the FREL/FRL to the southern ecoregion (Aysén, Magallanes), including development of density diagrams for certain forest types. Chile also advanced construction of its carbon map, allowing the country to estimate the carbon content and flow for specific analysis periods.

NFMS: Chile advanced the development of computer applications to estimate land use change map accuracy and the uncertainty of its FREL/FRL and REDD+ Technical Annex. Design and development of ENCCRV´s Environmental and Social Co-benefits System was also undertaken in 2020.

SIS: Chile advanced the development of the social and environmental safeguards reporting format for implementation of REDD+ projects and made progress in the system´s semi-automated reports format. Chile also initiated the review and development of the safeguards management module.

REDD+ implementation

Progress was achieved on determining the log-frame and budget of the +Bosques project (GCF REDD+ RBP project).   Work started to specify annual goals and measures to be executed in conjunction with regions (Maule, Biobío, Ñuble, Araucanía, Los Ríos and Los Lagos).

ENCCRV measures, including four forest-management models (Coquimbo, the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, Araucanía, and Magallanes) and five PES projects (Coquimbo, the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, Araucanía, and Los Rios) continued implementation in 2020. Analysis of lessons learned will be conducted in 2021 to scale up at the regional and eventually national levels. Three of the forest-management projects are in the process of finalizing activities and closing, pending only the execution of restoration actions in the Araucanía region. In line with the priorities of Chile's UN-REDD National Programme, PES projects are all currently under implementation.

Challenges and solutions

Chile has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, with a total of 608,937 cases registered as of December 2020 and 16,608 deaths associated with the virus. Social distancing was adopted as a preventive measure, which affected all the face-to-face activities planned with the beneficiaries, strategic partners, consultants, and workers in general.

The outbreak of community transmission of COVID-19 in Chile began in October 2020 and triggered massive social protests, movement restrictions and significant economic losses. The mobility restrictions (curfews, quarantines, sanitary belts, among others), affected field work given the access limitations to the territories and impediments to the provision of technical assistance. Carrying out

monitoring and evaluation in the field was also a challenge. Supply chains have been interrupted, which made it difficult to acquire goods and services. As a result of these disruptions, a no-cost extension up to September 2021 was requested for Chile's National Programme and was approved by the UN-REDD Programme Executive Board.

Gender and social inclusion

The gender perspective was included in the development of the reporting format for social and environmental safeguards and has also been considered during the process of designing the benefits sharing system (still in the process of adjustment).

Chile's National Forest Corporation (*Corporación Nacional Forestal*, or CONAF) actively participated in the Gender and Climate Change Roundtable led by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Women. During this roundtable discussion, the participatory process of the ENCCRV was presented and a retrospective review analysis of the Strategy was carried out based on the criteria of the Gender and Climate Change Checklist. CONAF´s Wild Areas Management Unit also developed the Decalogue of Good Practices to incorporate the gender approach in the planning, management, and participation process of the State's wild protected areas. In addition, a workshop was undertaken in 2020 with CONAF, which was focused on analysing the formulation of two gender indicators to be included in the institutional management for 2021.

In order to support women beneficiaries of Law No. 20.283 on forestry conservation and recovery of native forests, a proposal was developed calling for the formulation of a strategy for promoting productive chains, with a focus on non-wood forest products and environmental services. A proposal of gender indicators for PES projects was also developed.

Efforts aimed at safeguarding and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples continued. A series of workshops were developed within the framework of the benefit sharing system, which incorporated, through a participatory process, focus groups of Indigenous Peoples to gather opinions to improve the system, which allowed their holistic worldview of the territory to be incorporated.

In 2020, Chile also initiated implementation of a cultural payment for ecosystem services project in conjunction with the indigenous community of Quinquén.

Finally, a section on management on Indigenous Peoples' matters and social affairs was integrated into CONAF's institutional website. This initiative, led by the Unit for Indigenous and Social Affairs, materialized in the first half of January 2021.

Partnerships

Chile made steps towards the third phase of REDD+ through the launch of the project +Bosques in August 2020. Additionally, it is expected that during 2023 funds from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) emissions reduction purchase agreement (ERPA) will be incorporated.

The land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector is now included in the integration pillar of the updated NDC, which considers sectors relevant for adaptation and mitigation. The forestry sector stands out, where ambition regarding sectoral commitments has increased. Additionally, two new commitments are included, regarding REDD+ and the National Landscape Restoration Plan.

Work has been carried out in conjunction with the Ministry of the Environment for the review and adjustment of Global Environment Facility Project Preparation Grant stage (Cycle 7) Economic Instruments for Biodiversity, including activities that would allow continuation of PES projects in Los Rios.

The National Landscape Restoration Plan 2021-2030 was formulated by the Ministries of the Environment and of Agriculture. This plan will provide the basis for the development of a bi-ministerial agenda in favour of landscape restoration with emphasis on forests in the country.

As a result of the implementation of the ENCCRV, progress is being made to contribute directly to SDGs 13 and 15, and indirectly to SDGs 5, 6, 8 and 12.

During the first half of 2020, Chile submitted its updated NDC to the UNFCCC, highlighting the need to maximize synergies with the SDGs. These synergies are identified taking a transversal approach of the NDCs, establishing how each commitment of the NDC contributes to the fulfilment of the SDGs.

Colombia

TA	*On track*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NS/AP: Colombia strengthened the implementation of its REDD+ Strategy through the approval of the GCF RBP REDD+ proposal for $28.2 million, its inputs on deforestation to the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) and the increased mitigation ambition from reducing deforestation in the updated NDC, with technical inputs and support from UN-REDD.

FREL/FRL: Colombia was in the assessment process of an enhanced FREL during 2020, technically supported by UN-REDD (FREL Convention), moving forward from subnational to national level. The assessment process will conclude in the first quarter of 2021. A South-South exchange between Colombia and Peru was organized under the title Forests Reference Emission Level (FREL): from subnational to national approaches".

NFMS: Colombia continued to improve its NFMS, including the development of a proposal for monitoring restoration at the national level supported by UN-REDD, South-South exchange on restoration monitoring between Guatemala, and the strengthening of the institutional community monitoring board led by the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (*Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales*, or IDEAM).

SIS: Colombia has strengthened the safeguards information currently available at its RENARE platform (*Registro Nacional de Reducción de Emisiones de Gases Efecto Invernadero*, or National Registry for the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions) by developing a draft template for collecting safeguard information and a list of potential safeguards requirements for REDD+ projects and programmes, supported by UN-REDD.

REDD+ implementation

Colombia is progressing in the implementation of the REDD+ Strategy through several initiatives supported by UN-REDD:

- The CFM programme was initiated with a pilot phase in eight departments.

- Field actions in 35,964 hectares were identified and are being implemented in 11,626 of those. This process involved 349 families (including 354 women, 434 men and 191 children). Publications, reports and guides were generated.

- The national institutional roundtable on community forestry management, led by the Environment Ministry, was consolidated as a space for discussion and feedback with other institutions.

- The forest economy was strengthened by the establishment of supply chains of legal timber into a local community, in collaboration with the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme.

- The Environment Ministry updated its consultation and participation processes, especially with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, through virtual meetings.

- The country made progress in the [Social and Institutional Characteristics of Deforestation Hotspots](#) in Colombia.
- The Ministry's Financing Fund for the Agriculture Sector (*Fondo para el Financiamiento del Sector Agropecuario*, or FINAGRO) strengthened its knowledge by [exchanging experiences on land-use finance](#) with other national development banks in the region.
- FINAGRO strengthened its capacities by reviewing and updating its [environmental and social sustainability](#) policy.

Challenges and solutions

The COVID-19 health emergency has caused delays in participatory processes and related activities. The programme faced this challenge by restructuring its delivery to virtual modalities. As a consequence, the number of face-to-face meetings and consultations was drastically reduced and the Programme adopted a methodology to support communities through virtual meetings, phone calls, chats, and other online follow-ups.

More than 30 virtual dialogues between indigenous authorities and government personnel were organized, and a protocol of remote assistance for field actions was established. Also several online trainings and webinars were held.[2]

Another important challenge was the lack of sufficient funds to increase the scope or scale up the planned activities in the field. To address this issue, the programme reviewed and prioritized the activities and the use of financial resources to maximize the impact (e.g. improvements in NFMS, key issues in the social participation process, and linking SIS with RENARE). Many virtual meetings took place too and allowed the actor dialogues supported by UN-REDD.

Gender and social inclusion

Applying [UN-REDD developed gender tools](#), the Environment Ministry integrated gender-responsive approaches throughout its work on REDD+ in 2020 and recognized its key role in achieving [community forest management](#).

In this work, the country incorporated and systematized the different elements of [ethnicity](#), [gender](#) and [generational](#) approaches in the implementation of community forest management actions, such as those related to capacity building, tool development and stakeholder engagement activities. These efforts, among others, have resulted in: 1) increasing women's participation in community forestry from 15 percent in 2018 to 40 percent in 2020; 2) addressing gender gaps at the community level; and 3) the integration of a gender perspective in the national guidance for [community forestry management](#).

Based on the main actions implemented with a gender perspective in community forestry, the following results were achieved:

- Creation of spaces for women to congregate, to support one another and enhance each other's leadership and management capacities on community affairs, and identification of women's future actions, contributing to their sustainability.
- Representation of women in community decision-making bodies.
- Use of gender-differential training in forest harvesting tasks to encourage both women's and men's involvement.

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[2] See the following links to online trainings and webinars: [Intercambio de experiencias de Manejo Forestal Comunitario en Latino América](#); [Bosques, selvas y género](#); [La realidad económica del manejo forestal comunitario](#).

- In addition, women were encouraged to participate in the [process of construction](#) and agreement of the normative instrument that created the [National Indigenous Environmental Commission (NIEC)](#).

In 2020, Colombia renegotiated the Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) (2015), to incorporate a new scope for the period 2021-2025 and the adaptation of milestones associated with ethnic groups. Colombia also made progress in the implementation of the JDI, restructuring the line of financing for ethnic groups ($4.8 million), and strengthening local technical capacities.

The Environment Ministry created a space for sharing experiences and best practices (more than 20 virtual meetings) on the implementation of the commitments of the [National Development Plan](#), especially those associated with the management of forests and deforestation. In parallel, the Environment Ministry and indigenous organizations strengthened their capacities and developed the [decree that stipulated the NIEC](#) to discuss measures and actions associated with reducing deforestation and managing forests in indigenous peoples' territories.

Partnerships

Colombia's capacities to implement community forest management were strengthened and articulation was promoted between actors in the process (FCPF, Global Green Growth Institute, Probosques, the Andes and Central American office of French conservation organization *Office National des Forêts* ONF Andina, and others) and with the approval of the GCF RBPs REDD+ proposal for the Amazon Region. Furthermore, the technical capacities of indigenous leaders and authorities were strengthened by the formulation of three projects to be implemented with the third grant from the FCPF in 2021 (around $950,000).

Linkages to SDGs

The activities developed contribute indirectly to achieve some advances of SDGs 5, 8, 12, 13 and 15.

Congo

TA	*Delayed*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NFMS: In 2020, the UN-REDD Programme supported the Republic of the Congo with the consolidation of its NFMS and the revision of the activity data at national level. With UN-REDD technical support, the country finalized its 2016-2018 change map including data on deforestation and forest degradation. The validation of this change map has been delayed for few months but, thanks to the high-resolution data acquired by Norway's International Forest and Climate Initiative (NICFI) at the end of 2020, the exercise will be completed in 2021.

FRL/FREL: The preparation of the activity data and the publication of the NFI, both supported by the Programme, has positioned Congo to be ready to rapidly update its FREL, including forest degradation information, once the GCF publishes the new scorecard and guidelines.

Congo also showed increased technical autonomy by designing an ambitious data-collection project for the GHG inventory (for the Third National Communication). The methodology will be decisive for a swift integration of the activity data validation in 2021.

REDD+ implementation

The Programme supported content-related work (analysis of the forest, fuelwood, main agricultural value chains and rural finance sectors) to support securing additional finance for the REDD+ Investment Plan and focusing on reducing pressure on forests from small-scale agriculture and

fuelwood collection. The results were used to develop a proposal to the GCF (fuelwood energy supply) along with a project submitted to CAFI (fuelwood energy demand). Both proposals are fully aligned with the national REDD+ Investment Plan and the CAFI Theory of Change, and look at supporting the country to achieve economic diversification alongside low-emission, climate-resilient development.

Challenges and solutions

The main challenge in 2020 was the impossibility of travelling internationally or organizing in-person events (e.g. validation workshops or capacity building sessions). The Programme has adapted to the circumstances by translating all technical backstopping into online modalities (output 3.26), including the collection of activity data for degradation monitoring.

However, the conditions of internet access from personal connections during the lockdown were difficult and produced delays in the collection of activity data (deforestation and forest degradation mapping in SEPAL[3]) (output 2.4).

Gender and social inclusion

The involvement of female experts and participants at all stages of REDD+ readiness and implementation, including stakeholder engagement, was actively encouraged in 2020. To illustrate, within a GHG inventory training, 36 percent of participants were women.

All the work supported remotely by UN-REDD in 2020 was at technical level, in collaboration with the central administration. The Programme did not engage directly with indigenous peoples, who are mostly located in one remote region of the country.

Partnerships

REDD+ partners in the Republic of the Congo are well coordinated, thanks to the long-established coordination between the UN-REDD Programme, the FCPF, the French Development Agency AFD (*Agence Française de Développement*), CAFI and the European Forest Institute REDD Facility. The UN-REDD programme has provided key elements in the development of the Letter of Intent of Congo with CAFI.

The challenges associated with in-person meetings also reduced the opportunities to strengthen partnerships. However, technical coordination with the United States Forest Service USFS, the Silvacarbon programme and the Coalition for Rainforest Nations was maintained, in particular with the common development of the GHG inventory methodology and data collection plan.

Linkages to SDGs

The UN-REDD Programme supports the Republic of the Congo in achieving SDG 13 on climate action. In 2020, the programme improved the country's capacities for forest-emission monitoring, especially related to forest degradation (national scale mapping of degradation) and inventory data analysis (publication of the NFI in November), and greatly improved its reporting data set. This data will ensure that the country submits its first Biennial Update Report (BUR) by 2021, which will include a technical annex of REDD+ results.

Côte d'Ivoire

TA	*On Track*

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[3] System for Earth Observation Data Access, Processing, and Analysis for Land Monitoring http://sepal.io

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

Côte d'Ivoire has already fulfilled the four pillars of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ during the past years, with support from UN-REDD projects and UN-REDD technical assistance.

NS/AP: In 2020, the national REDD+ strategy (2017) and the subsequent REDD+ investment plan (2019) informed the ongoing NDC review process, in which UN agencies play key advisory roles. Two pioneering jurisdictional strategies focusing on the cocoa-forest nexus were designed in a multi-stakeholder way (in the regions of Cavally and Bélier).

FREL/FRL: Mapping of activity data for 2000-2020, including forest degradation, has been completed. The submission of the FREL has been postponed, in agreement with the national coordination, to a later date when the GCF scorecard for RBP becomes available (June 2021).

NFMS: UN-REDD also provided capacity building on the activity data processing chain, which has served to integrate forest degradation in the NFMS (including dense time series analyses of historical satellite imagery archives to map all disturbances and distinguish deforestation from degradation for the period 2000-2020). The workflow allowed the technicians of the REDD Permanent Executive Secretariat to work in parallel through online solutions (SEPAL platform).

SIS: Finally, UN-REDD and the World Bank helped operationalize the national SIS by developing a beta version of the SIS online platform. In addition, a mechanism for gathering safeguards information from different institutions and stakeholders across the country was designed, including capacity building for safeguards information providers. These innovations will feed the second summary of information on safeguards to the UNFCCC (scheduled for 2021).

REDD+ implementation

UN-REDD supported legal reviews for REDD+, including input to more than 10 draft decrees aiming to enforce the forest code, under the Ministry of Water and Forests, and covering diverse issues, such as benefit sharing, NFIs, forest products, and community forestry.

UN-REDD also supported financial models and private-sector engagement on the forest-cocoa nexus. Economic models for sustainable cocoa production were produced and disseminated, with field testing started. They included an economic model for agroforestry, a model for cocoa swollen shoot disease, and financial solutions to support restoration at scale.

In addition, two jurisdictional strategies were designed in a participatory way, with financial support from the Governors' Climate & Forests Task Force (GCFTF) initiative, to conciliate forest conservation and restoration with cocoa production. These represent pilots to guide country stakeholders and engage the private sector. Financial partnerships on the forest-cocoa nexus were advanced too, with UN-REDD support. For instance, the Partnership 1for20 has started to mobilize private finance to support the implementation of sustainable commodity production, reforestation and access to smallholder farmers. The briefing Making Agroforestry Work at Scale, which brings together many of the mentioned economic models that reconcile forests and cocoa, was presented to the World Cocoa Foundation and its partners, to stimulate the engagement of companies.

Challenges and solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic, plus the 2020 presidential elections, disrupted national and field processes, as well as the ability of the UN-REDD Programme to provide timely and qualitative technical assistance to the country. Nevertheless, the country remained active in its endeavours, and UN-REDD used digital means and in-country experts to keep the mentioned streams active.

Gender and social inclusion

The safeguards information parameters include a criterion on gender equitable decision making (B5) as well as an indicator to track how the REDD+ framework integrates procedures on effective

participation into decision making and equitable benefits sharing for men and women. In addition, the mechanism to gather safeguards information includes gender-disaggregated information where available.

The development of integrated forest-cocoa jurisdictional strategies in the Cavally and Bélier regions, which is supported by a GCFTF project, included gender mainstreaming efforts that built on UN-REDD gender knowledge and methods. Rural women and women's organizations were among the key stakeholders who contributed to such jurisdictional strategies. The socially inclusive model was praised by the regional governments and the civic and community stakeholders alike, and knowledge products to disseminate the approach are under elaboration.

Partnerships

UN-REDD works in partnership with different organizations and country partners, including the EU-REDD Facility, the GCFTF initiative, the World Bank, the GCF, and the Cocoa & Forest Initiative, among others. UN-REDD provides tailored technical assistance to help the country in their policy commitments (e.g. NDCs), mobilize partners and finance, and test innovations and pilot initiatives.

Linkages to SDGs

The ensemble of work on the cocoa-forest nexus, including deforestation-free farming, economically sound agroforestry models and forest-ecosystem restoration plans, help the country advance substantially in several SDGs in an integrated manner, including SDG 12 (through sustainable farming), SDG 13 (climate mitigation through forest solutions and REDD+), SDG 15 (conserving and restoring forests) and SDG 17 (public-private partnerships for deforestation-free cocoa production).

Indonesia

TA	Delayed

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NS/AP: Indonesia's National REDD+ Strategy was released in 2012.

FREL/FRL: Technical assistance was provided to more than 100 Indonesian participants on capacity building on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2013 Wetlands Supplement, FREL Diagnostic and Uncertainty Analysis with Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and FAO inputs. Three other workshops were run jointly between FAO, CIFOR and other partners with hundreds of participants on peatland issues including fires in events in September, October, November and December.

NFMS: Indonesia continued to improve its NFMS with capacity development supported by FAO and UN-REDD including three workshops on using the latest high-resolution daily satellite imagery from Planet Labs funded by Norway for detecting and reporting on deforestation, degradation, and forest fires.

SIS: The SIS was legally enshrined in 2017.

REDD+ implementation

In 2020, Indonesia demonstrated reductions in deforestation and achieved access to RBPs under the UNFCCC. After 10 years of hard work, in July 2020 Norway confirmed its first payment of $56 million to Indonesia for reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation that were lower in 2016-17 than in the preceding decade. In August 2020, the GCF also agreed to pay $103 million to Indonesia for REDD+ results achieved from 2014-2016 with UNDP as the accredited entity.

The BLU BPDLH, with technical inputs from UN-REDD, developed policy, legal and operational documents commencing with REDD+ fund distribution that reflect best international practices. BLU BPDLH has approached UN-REDD to provide technical assistance to initiate blended financing.

The drafting of the Plan for Peat Ecosystem Protection and Management is receiving technical and policy inputs from all administrative levels and coordinated with support from the UN-REDD and is currently being implemented.

Challenges and solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in travel and meeting restrictions that caused delays or cancellations of some activities or adaptation to online meetings and training. This slowed project implementation and reduced some achievements. The shift to online platforms for meetings and certain capacity building worked well, though with some restrictions in remote areas, while in-person trainings on more practical matters, such as integrated fire management, were delayed.

Gender and social inclusion

Support was provided to the Tropical Landscape Finance Facility (TLFF) to develop a gender strategy that centres around addressing barriers identified by a TLFF gender study on the access of female-led enterprises and smallholder households. This strategy has been implemented in the recently established TLFF grant fund.

Discussions with BPDLH to support gender mainstreaming in their land-use blended finance programme is under development. Safeguards considerations, including on gender and social inclusion, have also been incorporated in the development of BLU BPDLH's legal, technical and operational documents related to REDD+.

Engagement with indigenous land-use associations in Kapuas Peat Management Unit, Kalimantan, on social forestry and improved water management is also ongoing.

Partnerships

UN-REDD, through UNEP, is coordinating with FCPF Bio-carbon Fund on green investment in the palm oil sector in Jambi and with & Green Fund in East Kalimantan. The high-resolution satellite data training in Rome was done jointly with World Bank FCPF.

UNDP continues to partner with the Embassy of Norway and World Bank to coordinate support for BLU BPDLH to meet international fiduciary and operational standards.

Linkages to SDGs

Linkages to the various SDGs are as follows: SDG 13 (climate action) through BLU BPDLH for REDD+ results-based finance and MRV improvements; SDG 1 (no poverty) through improved livelihood options; SDG 3 (good health and well-being) through less fires and smoke and improvements to food security; and SDG 17 (partnerships) through joint training and strengthening the International Tropical Peatland Center.

Mexico

TA	*Delayed*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NS/AP: UN-REDD provided technical inputs, in line with Mexico's National REDD+ Strategy, to the new strategy for financing the forestry sector developed by the National Forest Commission (*Comisión Nacional Forestal*, or CONAFOR).

NFMS and MRV: Mexico continued to improve its NFMS, including the use of sample-based estimates of deforestation and exploring alternative algorithms.

FREL: Mexico submitted a revised and enhanced FREL in early 2020, technically supported by UN-REDD, improving the calculation of activity data and uncertainties. The review has not been concluded and Mexico expects to submit a modified FREL in early 2021.

SIS: Mexico has progressed updating its SIS and has published a series of safeguards tools in plain, accessible language to improve access and understanding by local communities. Furthermore, it has advanced updating the contents needed for state safeguards plans, including defining approaches to collect safeguards information at state and national levels to feed into an updated SIS. This was discussed and reviewed with key stakeholders during a workshop titled 'Strengthening the REDD+ SIS' in June 2020.

The Programme has informed Mexican authorities about finance mobilization plans such as the GCF REDD+ RBP window, providing inputs on safeguards requirements and sharing other countries' experiences.

REDD+ implementation

Mexico submitted its revised NDC in late 2020, reinforcing the role of the NS to meet its zero net deforestation target by 2030 and contribute to its unconditional (-22%) and conditional (-36%) mitigation targets, relative to estimated business-as-usual emissions levels.

Access to RBP schemes has been limited by the lack of sufficient clarity on carbon rights and benefit sharing arrangements, which also led Mexico to withdraw from the FCPF's Carbon Fund. In response, a legal reform bill is under review in Congress. UN-REDD support has been requested to advance the legal reform and its implementation, but approval is still pending and expected in 2021.

Interest by states continues to expand, including from states covered by the BioCarbon Fund's Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes proposal. The proposals for the Window B (innovation funding window) under the GCFTF initiative supported by UNDP were reviewed by UN-REDD including recommendations for alignment between the REDD+ efforts at state level and the national REDD+ framework.

Mexico has also adjusted its timeline to prepare and submit its BUR and REDD+ Technical Annex, to which UN-REDD will provide technical assistance. Both will be presented in 2021.

An assessment of the barriers to financing REDD+ compatible activities from the perspective of financial intermediaries was shared and presented to CONAFOR on 18 December 2020, identifying actions to address both real and perceived risks.

The Programme facilitated South-South collaboration on sustainable deforestation-free cattle ranching between Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador and Paraguay. Mexico has advanced in restructuring the Virtual Centre of Excellence for National Forest Monitoring to other topics related to the monitoring and implementation of forest actions. On MRV, UN-REDD co-organized and participated in specific webinars to share best practices related to deforestation estimates, FRELs and REDD+ Technical Annexes.

Challenges and solutions

Despite COVID-19 restrictions on meetings, UN-REDD maintained progress by providing support via online platforms, including virtual missions.

CONAFOR has continued to experience budget reductions, which, added to 2019 reductions, have further limited its operational capacity.

Partly as a result of COVID disruptions, a number of products have been rescheduled for 2021 (FREL, BUR and REDD+ Technical Annex). The approval of legal reforms that are critical to unlocking carbon rights issues is also pending. In line with this, such activities will be supported in 2021.

Gender and social inclusion

Efforts to ensure gender-equitable participation were undertaken. For example, the FREL/Technical Annex workshop achieved 40-percent female participation.

UN-REDD has participated in selected national- and state-level REDD+ technical groups and Forestry Advisory Committee meetings to share technical perspectives.

Partnerships

Mexico withdrew from the FCPF's Carbon Fund but is proceeding with the Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes, coordinated through CONAFOR. The Programme will consider this work to ensure synergies.

UNDP's direct support for the Governor's Climate and Forest Task Force activities in Mexico has facilitated coordination and alignment with UN-REDD support.

Linkages to SDGs

The activities developed contribute indirectly to achieve some advances of SDGs 5, 8, 12, 13 and 15.

Myanmar

NP	*Completed*
TA for REDD+ Implementation	*On track*
Myanmar mangroves TA	*On track*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NS/AP: The National REDD+ Strategy has been developed, with the support of the UN-REDD Programme, through a driver analysis, comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultation process, including with ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and development of a strong cross-sectoral set of policies and measures. The document is currently pending formal approval from the government. In addition, a first draft of the REDD+ Investment Plan has been prepared, based on criteria to prioritize policies and measures for implementation and geographic areas. These have been compared with existing planned investments relevant to REDD+ that are in the pipeline, with gaps identified. Indicative proposals to fill the gaps have been prepared.

FREL/FRL: After completion of the technical assessment and uploading of the revised FRL document to the UNFCCC website in January 2019, the technical assistance continues to support the Government on development of information and capacity for subsequent FRLs including changes in forest remaining forest, and in sub-national jurisdictions and strata, including mangroves.

NFMS: The NFI design has been finalized and piloted in several forest types. Field methodology and data analysis methods have been developed, ready for full-scale implementation. The Satellite Land Monitoring System (SLMS) has been fully developed and is ready for public launch. Through the technical assistance, data on mangrove forests and national capacity to measure changes in this forest type have been improved.

SIS: REDD+ safeguards have been defined in the context of Myanmar, with strong participation from both government institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs). Guidelines for adherence to the principle of free, prior and informed consent are being finalized. An SIS has been designed and is in the process of being operationalized, with an interim webpage developed and progress made on information-collection templates and institutional arrangements. A summary of information on safeguards has been submitted to UNFCCC.

REDD+ implementation

The initiative titled Integrating Mangroves into REDD+ Implementation in Myanmar was developed and approved by the UN-REDD Programme Executive Board. Please refer to the specific section.

Challenges and solutions

In a complex political and social situation like Myanmar's, characterized by a low historical level of trust between communities and Government and great diversity of indigenous groups, more resources would have been needed for stakeholder engagement. The stakeholder engagement budget should not have been based on norms from other national programmes. The quality and quantity of communications, information flow and capacity building are critical in a low-trust environment. A specialist EAO advisor to support the Stakeholder Engagement Advisor under the national programme would have been useful. More investment and design of appropriate stakeholder engagement approaches will be explored for the subsequent phases of REDD+ implementation in Myanmar, and this lesson can be incorporated into relevant ongoing and pipeline initiatives including the mangroves initiative.

Challenges were encountered related to shifting to more remote support and online or remote consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic; experience was gained in adjusting approaches for restrictions in Myanmar, such as the virtual launch of the mangroves initiative and individual interviews and calls on SIS development, but delays in implementation of this initiative were unavoidable.

Gender-mainstreaming capacity gaps remain, as well as a need for support staff working on gender, sufficient budget allocated to addressing gender-related issues, and additional political will from government to further support gender mainstreaming in REDD+ efforts.

With regards to the uncertain circumstances in the country after the events of February 2021, the UN and UN-REDD partners are analysing the situation and security is being closely monitored. A conflict sensitivity analysis will be prepared when and if circumstances allow. For the time being, trainings and workshops are on hold.

Gender and social inclusion

Women's participation in consultations and events has increased from about 20 percent in 2016 to more than 40 percent in 2020.

In addition, the indicators proposed for the SIS have included gender-disaggregated data, and the policies and measures note the establishment of gender-responsive forestry, agricultural and Agroforestry extension services in rural and hill areas.

Capacity of national institutions to implement effective and participatory governance arrangements for REDD+ has increased, but further progress on inter-sectoral coordination is necessary. Institutional measures for REDD+ awareness raising and information flow are defined, and the quality of available information, some of which have been translated into several ethnic minority languages, is sufficient. But the diversity of stakeholder groups and associated logistical complexity means that the national programme was not able to ensure that information flows are able to reach all groups throughout the country. Policy, legal and regulatory (PLR) analysis was conducted and the target of filling 75 percent of PLR gaps was mostly achieved.

Indigenous peoples' representative organization POINT (Promotion of Indigenous and Nature Together), and national CSO MERN Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network) continued to represent their constituencies in the Programme Executive Board of the national programme until its conclusion in November 2020, and continue to be active through the technical assistance mangroves initiative. Through the mailing list of the Technical Working Group on

Stakeholder Engagement and Safeguards, the draft version of the SIS interim webpage has been shared for feedback with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Partnerships

The improvement of the SLMS has been supported together with the SERVIR Mekong Initiative, and the web-based geoportal for the NFMS will be hosted on the OneMap platform.

Linkages to SDGs

The focus of UN-REDD on engagement with ethnic minorities is contributing to progress in Myanmar on SDG 16 (Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies). The National Ceasefire Agreement calls for cooperation between the national government and EAOs on environmental conservation, but there have been no examples of such cooperation as yet. REDD+ in Myanmar will operate at the national level, so endorsement of specific REDD+ actions by the Union government and EAOs is essential. REDD+ in Myanmar will also contribute to SDG 15, target 15.2: "By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally."

Myanmar mangroves Technical Assistance

The initiative titled Integrating Mangroves into REDD+ Implementation in Myanmar was approved by the UN-REDD Executive Board in August 2020. A virtual national inception event was held in December and work was initiated on reviewing and revising existing institutional processes and guidelines for sub-national planning and implementation of forestry and land use interventions, with a focus on implementation of policies and measures in mangroves and with mangrove-dependent communities.

The overall goal of the UN-REDD Mangroves technical assistance to Myanmar is the sustainable management, restoration and conservation of mangroves ecosystems to contribute to the achievement of the overall goals of the National REDD+ Strategy, in terms of emissions reductions and enhanced livelihoods of local communities. The key outputs are: (1) enhanced regulatory frameworks, capacity development and coordination of stakeholders; (2) data generated and monitoring system for enhanced decision making; and (3) demonstration of integrated land use planning and inclusive forest planning.

Activities to date include: inception workshop (report to be shared online); recruitment of activity manager and national assistant; established interagency coordination team and working mechanism; and revision and update of Results Framework. Additionally, Output 1 consisted of initial guidance on safeguards criteria, and consultations with CSOs and local communities for guidelines on free, prior and informed consent. Output 2 was preliminary data analysis of field plots in the Delta and Tanintharyi regions, and preliminary work to support activity data for a sub-national FREL. Output 3 consisted of technical meetings on methodologies for ecosystem-based district forest management plans, scoping report, and identification of a service provider.

In response to the current political situation, the coordination team is in dialogue with the UN-REDD Management Group and has developed a criticality analysis report identifying activities which can continue and which cannot, as well as proposing alternative activities.

Challenges and solutions

The challenges highlighted in the [country report](#) are applicable also to this Initiative. In particular, travel limitations caused by the COVID 19 pandemic meant that missions to and within the country had to be suspended. This also forced a restructuring of the delivery modalities: Discussions and outreach were shifted to web-based tools, with their associated difficulties. These challenges add to

an already complex political and social context in the country, characterized by a low historical level of trust between communities and Government, and a great diversity of indigenous groups.

The country's uncertain circumstances will be included as a risk in the revised result framework of the Initiative.

Gender and social inclusion

Women's participation in initial consultations and online workshops ranged from 20 to 30 percent. Efforts to strengthen women's engagement and further mainstream gender in implementation are foreseen in all elements of the initiative.

The Initiative was designed in consultation with a wide range of indigenous peoples' and civil society organizations based on stakeholders' engagement activities carried out during the UN-REDD National Programme (which ended in November 2020). Community involvement is particularly important in this initiative and will remain a priority in all project target areas during implementation.

Partnerships

Key partnerships have been established with existing related projects in the country. Consultations have been held with the major mangrove-related initiatives, such as those being undertaken by the Danish International Development Agency Danida, and FAO (with funding by the Global Environment Facility and Government of Finland's project on NFI and National Forest Monitoring Information System). The International Union for the Conservation of Nation (IUCN) and RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests are among the identified key partners. Under the national programme, during 2020, field data was collected on 102 clusters (306 plots) in the Delta region (FAO target areas for community forestry and district forest management plans). This is in the context of a collaborative coordination between Output 2 of the technical assistance mangroves and the NFI project. In addition, the initiative is closely linked to the Mekong Mangrove Forum in collaboration with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Mangroves initiatives was featured and presented during an on-line event held in October 2020 in celebration of the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem.

Linkages to SDGs

The activities of the Mangroves Initiative, through the conservation and sustainable management of mangroves ecosystems, provide a key pathway to achieve progress across several SDGs. Among the goals most relevant to mangrove conservation are: SDG 14 on Life Below Water; SDG 15: Life on Land, SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 9: Reduced Inequalities, and SDG 5: Gender Equality. Through novel systems of monitoring and sustainable forest management in mangroves areas, advances in supporting sustainable livelihoods, reducing social inequalities, and supporting gender equity can be achieved.

Peru

TA	*Delayed*
NP	*Delayed*
TA to ongoing NPs	*On track*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NS/AP: A monitoring framework with joint indicators was developed for Peru's National REDD+ Strategy (*Estrategia Nacional de Bosques y Cambio Climático,* 2016) and the Joint Declaration of Intent

between Norway, Germany and the UK, and the REDD+ priority actions were validated with the forestry and agriculture departments.

FREL/FRL: Peru has advanced in developing a second FREL for the Amazon biome including gross deforestation using a different and enhanced methodology from the first FREL, through a sampling grid using stratified area estimations. The new document was submitted to the UNFCCC in February 2021.

NFMS: A protocol for indigenous peoples and community-based monitoring and MRV was developed as part of the national MRV system, with broad participation from communities and government institutions.

SIS: On safeguards there was substantial progress over the course of 2020, with the country publishing its first summary of safeguards information for the period 2012-2019. In addition, a prototype of the SIS has been developed and is currently undergoing review and finalization. Three meetings (including two virtual) of the Safeguards Technical Sub-Committee have been held, enabling consultation with a wide range of stakeholders on safeguards outputs and advances.

REDD+ implementation

Inter-sectoral coordination and participatory platforms were strengthened though support and creation of: i) a participatory platform at a macroregional level (Northern Coast of Peru); ii) two states (Madre de Dios and San Martin); iii) a municipal-level platform (Río Tambo); and iv) three intersectoral committees at a national level for coordination on REDD+ safeguards, forest degradation and nesting.

Five bankable initiatives aligned to Peru's REDD+ objectives were identified in the Amazon region with support of UN-REDD. There are ongoing discussions with potential funders. Support was also provided to regional governments for examining the legal gaps to set up sub-national financial vehicles similar to the Amazon Development Fund (*Fondo de Desarrollo Amazónico*, or FONDESAM).

Seven virtual exchanges were organized with the National Federation of Savings and Loans Cooperatives (*Federación Nacional de Cooperativas de Ahorro y Crédito del Perú*, or FENACREP) on sustainable finance with a focus on the agricultural sector.

REDD+ priority actions, in line with the National Strategy on Forests and Climate Change (*Estrategia Nacional sobre Bosques y Cambio Climático*, or ENBCC), were prioritized through a participatory consultative process.

The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard of the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART TREES) standard was preliminarily assessed for Peru, using existing data, however this exercise will have to be completed with the new data from the FREL.

Challenges and solutions

Peru was one of the countries hit hardest by COVID-19 and has had one of the highest excess death rates in the world during the pandemic. The government-mandated quarantine included strict prohibition of meetings of more than 10 people and forbade all national travel except for emergency and frontline personnel. Due to this all activities that required travel and visits to communities in 2020 had to be stopped and readjusted to be implemented virtually when possible. This affected mainly activities that required consultation such as the prioritization of REDD+ Actions and community-based forest monitoring activities. In addition, the president of Peru was subjected to a second impeachment in November 2020, and a new interim president was appointed by Congress, resigning after only six days.

Despite this, and through a contingency plan, most of the activities were readjusted. Nonetheless, due to the substantial disruptions during the year, it was necessary to request a second no-cost extension to the UN-REDD Executive Board, which was granted until September 2021.

There were technical challenges to the estimation of deforestation for the second FREL, and the Ministry of the Environment and other agencies had to hire more experts to meet the tight deadlines.

Gender and social inclusion

UN-REDD Programme support helped to integrate a gender perspective into the country's first summary of information on REDD+ safeguards, wherein gender is noted as a cross-cutting element, participation of stakeholders is disaggregated by gender, and links to key gender-related policies, laws and regulations are established in the elaboration of safeguards discussion.

Gender mainstreaming was also a priority in the implementation of activities in 2020. Overall, capacity-building activities benefited 162 women and 311 men (34 and 66 percent, respectively). In addition, women are well represented in Peruvian institutions and decision-making bodies related to REDD+, and the climate change director, mitigation director, and minister of environment are all women. To illustrate, women occupied at least 40 percent of the seats in the subcommittees of Dialoguemos Peru, the main platform for participatory processes for forest and climate change at the national level.

For the virtual exchanges with FENACREP, surveys included questions related to women's access to credit in the cooperative sector, and examples of gender-related actions of international financial institutions were presented during the initial session. Women represented 33.7 percent of the participants of these webinars with FENACREP.

Partnerships

Safeguards advances in Peru have been well coordinated with teams from both the World Bank and the Forest Investment Program (FIP), with inputs from work on the FCPF SESA and ESMF, and the FIP feeding into overall implementation of the safeguards road map.

Studies supported through UN-REDD on infrastructure drivers of deforestation during the pandemic, and the portfolio of investments, were coordinated with the GCFTF initiative to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.

Linkages to SDGs

UN-REDD activities in Peru contributed directly to SDGs 10, 13 and 15.

Viet Nam

TA	*On track*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

The work done by Viet Nam on the Warsaw Framework pillars was completed in 2018, thanks to UN-REDD Phase II. Continuing from 2019, in 2020, the Government undertook its MRV, supported by UN-REDD, and worked on the submission of a BUR technical annex on REDD+. Based on the Government's MRV, which indicated positive results, a process to apply for RBPs from the GCF has been initiated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

REDD+ implementation

The Programme contributed to the review of the MRV components against Viet Nam's FRLs in coordination with JICA, including support to the documentation of the NFMS through the REDD+ technical annex, and provided support to the Government towards accessing GCF RBPs in the future (Output 2.6).

Building on the revised National Action Plan on REDD+ approved in 2017 and the corresponding Mid-Term Implementation Plan, the Programme successfully supported Viet Nam to develop the project titled Integrated sustainable Landscape management through deforestation-free jurisdiction approach in Lam Dong and Dak Nong provinces project, funded by the European Union (EU) (EUR 5 million). An agreement with the EU was signed at the end of 2020 while agreement negotiations with consortium partners are on-going. Once concluded, project implementation is expected to begin in 2021. (Output 3.27).

Progress on the monitoring system of the national and provincial REDD+ action plans has been delayed, compounded by challenges posed to travel and meetings by COVID-19. However, the delays are limited, and the monitoring system is expected to be completed for presentation to Government well within the first quarter of 2021 (Output 3.28).

UN-REDD supported the development of a prototype web-based interface on results from the monitoring and evaluation framework. The Programme's technical assistance also supported the uptake of knowledge and experience on the use of spatial planning approaches and results across sectors, which has led to the development of an EU-funded project on a deforestation-free jurisdictional approach for the Central Highlands. This project is expected to be an opportunity to test and demonstrate how the monitoring and evaluation framework can be operationalized.

Challenges and solutions

COVID-19-related constraints are now being eased in-country, but international travel remains restricted.

Gender and social inclusion

Building on the lessons and gender analysis from the UN-REDD Programme, support provided to the EU-funded project in Central Highlands included assistance to help incorporate gender indicators in its results framework as well as ensure relevant project activities integrate gender considerations and promote and enable the participation of ethnic minorities.

The monitoring and evaluation framework for monitoring the impacts of implementing the REDD+ policies and measures also identifies key indicators and means of verification and disaggregates data by gender where appropriate.

Partnerships

UN-REDD is providing support to the Government in coordination with JICA, the agency proposed to take on the accredited agency role under the GCF RBP.

UN-REDD is also coordinating with partners under the EU-funded project for the Central Highlands.

Linkages to SDGs

Viet Nam is a partner in the NDC Support Programme and the partnership for the 2030 Agenda. Results from the Programme are expected to contribute to the achievement of the country's objectives in relation to SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 15 (life on land), among others.

Zambia

TA	*On track*

Progress against the Warsaw Framework

NS/AP: In 2020, Zambia's REDD+ implementation efforts were guided by the NS, including with UN-REDD Programme support for fundraising and building up the necessary country systems to

implement REDD+. Zambia first prepared its National REDD+ Strategy in 2014, which was launched in 2017.

FREL/FRL: With the support of the Programme, Zambia compiled an updated FREL in 2020 (Output 2.5). It was submitted to the UNFCCC in early 2021 for technical assessment. The new FREL includes improved activity data and emission factors. It also updates the reference period and breaks down estimates by province. This improved dataset will provide a basis for improved planning of mitigation efforts and also a basis for reporting any emission reductions from 2019 onwards.

NFMS: The UN-REDD Programme coordinated a group of agencies, including USFS, FAO and the FCPF, facilitating to jointly deliver coherent technical support on the NFMS, avoiding duplications of efforts and creating connections for potential collaboration and scaling up. Activity data were collected through a mapping campaign and using latest methodological approaches, which will make future updates easier and enhance the usefulness of data also for planning mitigation activities. Emission factors were calculated through a re-analysis of results from the National Forest Inventory (Integrated Land Use Assessment Phase II).

SIS: Zambia made significant progress in the development and operation of its SIS in 2020, by designing the webpage and structuring the database with UN-REDD support. After stakeholder validation, a formal approval will be needed to publish the SIS webpage. The country also developed a draft proposal for improving the national interpretation of UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards, by incorporating elements of the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework.

REDD+ implementation

Guided by the REDD+ strategy and the REDD+ investment plan, in 2019 and 2020, Zambia worked with UN-REDD support to acquire additional funding for REDD+ implementation from the GCF's REDD+ Simplified Approvals Process (GCF SAP-REDD+). The project proposal targets reducing GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in Zambia's North-Western Province in support to NDC implementation and for RBPs (output 3.29).

In 2020, the country's Forestry Department continued its work on designing Zambia's approach to nesting subnational REDD+ efforts and carbon credit projects. Notably, this includes work towards a statutory instrument on carbon management, which would regulate carbon ownership and benefit sharing and thereby facilitate access to carbon finance through projects and jurisdictional programmes.

Challenges and solutions

The Zambian Forestry Department is stretched in terms of human resources and time available to dedicate to the development of the REDD+ work.

In 2020, COVID-19 created enormous challenges for delivery of technical assistance. Missions to the country had to be suspended, some in-person meetings could not take place, other meetings and workshops were postponed, or had to be reorganized to implement COVID-19 protocols. The UN-REDD team has shifted their *modus operandi* towards online interaction and has, despite great difficulties, been able to deliver progress.

Gender and social inclusion

Gender equality is a guiding principle when organizing capacity development interventions. For example, when organizing workshops, the Programme has tracked gender indicators.

As part of the process of gathering safeguards information, the Department of Gender was identified and engaged as information provider. The template developed for gathering information on safeguards also considered gender disaggregated information, where available.

Some CSOs were identified and engaged as information providers as part of the work developed to gather safeguards information for Zambia's SIS, and these will be engaged at the stage of review and

validation of the information. The National Safeguards Technical Working Group, comprised of diverse government institutions and other stakeholders, holds periodic meetings to advance the safeguards processes.

Partnerships

The UN-REDD Programme's work is closely coordinated with other REDD+ initiatives. During 2020, the UN-REDD Programme continued closely coordinating with the Zambia Integrated Forest Landscapes Programme (ZIFL-P) in Eastern Province, which is being proposed for results-based funding to the BioCarbon Fund. Coordination especially covered exchange of information on activity data and emission factors, as well as potential alignment between the benefit-sharing arrangements for the North-Western Province developed in the context of the GCF SAP-REDD+ project, and for the ZIFL-P for Eastern Province.

Linkages to SDGs

The completion of the FREL, the continued development of the NFMS, and the progress towards the SIS all relate to SDG 15 about the sustainable management of forest resources.

Lower Mekong Region

Lower Mekong TA	*On track*

Introduction

A new UN-REDD Programme Technical Assistance (TA) for the Lower Mekong region, titled Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region (SFT-LMR)[4], was approved by the UN-REDD Executive Board in August 2020. The technical assistance is implemented in the five Lower Mekong countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. It aims to increase national commitment to legal and sustainable trade and investment in wood products in the Lower Mekong Region and supports countries to reduce the likelihood of forest crime and illegal logging by strengthening forest and land use governance, ultimately reducing deforestation and forest degradation. The initiative is intended to promote dialogue, policy alignment and inter-compatibility within the Lower Mekong Region, boost cooperation between the region's countries and China, and improve sustainable management of forests across the region and beyond. A dedicated webpage for the initiative has been established on the UN-REDD website.

Inception period

The technical assistance has been designed for an initial implementation period of two years (2020-2021) with the potential for a three-year second phase. The initiative concluded its inception period at the end of 2020 with the submission of an inception report.

During the inception period, the technical assistance rationale, outcomes, outputs and activities were consulted with stakeholders, including government and non-government partners, in the target countries. National consultations were organised in Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam in 2020, with consultations in Myanmar and Cambodia taking place in early 2021. All countries have appointed a government focal point.

The inception period also saw the cultivation of important partnerships with regionally or globally active partners (see section on partnerships below). The part virtual, part in-person regional partners'

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[4] While the official title is 'Addressing Forest Crime through Improved Governance in the Lower Mekong Region,' this alternative title is used in the initiative's communications; see section on challenges and solutions. The project team and partners remain well cognizant of the underlying objective to address forest crime.

[dialogue](#) held on 20 November 2020 brought together key national stakeholders and regional and global partners to reach a shared understanding of the initiative's vision and main areas of work and introduce national priorities as consulted throughout the inception period.

Finally, in 2020, regional and national coordinators and project personnel were recruited. Together with the existing UN-REDD team of experts and technical advisors, they represent a wide range of expertise and networks related to forest trade, sustainable forest management, REDD+, FLEGT, certification and financing.

Challenges and solutions

Good progress has been made to date, although the inception period has not been without challenges. The travel limitations brought about by the COVID 19 pandemic constrained discussions and outreach to web-based tools, with their associated difficulties.

Engagement with China has made slow progress, as this is a new area of engagement for the UN-REDD Programme overall; however, a number of strategic entry points for engagement with China have been identified. These include potential partnerships with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to connect regional producers and buyers of certified forest products, and with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) to reach more Chinese companies via the Global Green Supply Chain (GGSC) network, as well as engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) building on the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry. Engagement with China will be a key area of focus in the months to come.

Discussions with government institutions in the target countries have pointed to the use of the term 'forest crime' in the initiative's title posing barriers to government engagement, particularly acutely in some countries. Through discussion with donors and stakeholders, it was agreed to adopt a shorthand title, 'Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region (SFT-LMR)', while the official title remains 'Addressing Forest Crime through Improved Governance in the Lower Mekong Region' and the project team and partners remain well cognizant of the underlying objective to address forest crime.

Further information on identified challenges and mitigation measures can be found in the inception report.

Gender and social inclusion

Gender balance and women's participation were measured and promoted in all inception and consultation meetings. Women's participation was recorded at between 28 and 43 percent in the three national consultation meetings and the regional partners' dialogue held in 2020, despite forestry typically being a male-dominated sector in these countries. Efforts to strengthen women's engagement and further mainstream gender in implementation are foreseen, for example continued promotion of women's participation in events and trainings and measurement of this, including in activities conducted by partners. The project team has also designated a gender focal point.

Partnerships have been cultivated with a number of NGOs operating in the region (see partnerships section), and CSOs and communities have been involved in consultations during the inception period. The partnership with RECOFTC will identify barriers to smallholder and community access to legal and sustainable forest product value chains and support capacity development. The initiative also aims to improve financing for smallholders undertaking sustainable timber production models and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Partnerships

In 2020, partnerships were explored and initiated with regional and global partners active in the Lower Mekong Region. In particular, partnerships progressed significantly with RECOFTC, to build national capacities and enable community-based groups and smallholders to access legal and sustainable

forest-product value chains. One partnership was around the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, to support sustainable forest management through development or strengthening of forest management standards and promotion of compliance with legal requirements. Another consisted of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) Secretariat, to support CITES implementation and address ongoing compliance processes under CITES. Discussions were held with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), to enhance prudent banking policies for forest-based projects and identify innovative sustainable models for timber production and trade for SMEs, with the FSC and with the ITTO and its GGSC (see challenges and solutions section).

Linkages to SDGs

The activities under Outcome 3 will contribute to Lower Mekong countries' ability to report progress against SDGs 12, 13 and 15 in a consistent and coordinated manner.

Knowledge management results

Landscape approaches and planning

UN-REDD recognizes that reducing deforestation and forest degradation depends upon coherent policies and actions across sectors, including ensuring sustainable production while conserving or restoring key ecosystem values and socio-economic benefits. The world is facing an unprecedented challenge to turn the tide on deforestation, achieving SDGs and meeting Paris Agreement goals. This can only be accomplished with a paradigm shift at an unprecedented scale and reimagining business models, including our food and land-use systems. REDD+ can be catalytic for this purpose, for example by supporting enhanced integrated land use planning (ILUP) for simultaneously meeting multiple policy objectives, and boosting a deep and systematic (transformational) change towards synergies among agriculture, forestry and other land uses; a change of even greater urgency in the post COVID-19 pandemic world.

In 2020 UN-REDD continued highlighting the importance of such an approach and actions by generating and consolidating knowledge, for example through the brief on integrated land-use planning and approaches to REDD+, engaging in expert meetings or influencing key international events through its partner organizations. The need for transformation of food systems, its connection with land use, and reduced deforestation and the catalytic role of REDD+ was brought to attention through a World Forestry Week Event and at the Committee on Forestry High Level Dialogue on turning the tide on deforestation. Elements, drivers and barriers for transformational change across landscapes were further elucidated through this virtual meeting of experts on transformational change in land use and climate change, making linkages with NDCs, NAPs, investment plans and climate finance country programming. In partnership with CIFOR, key collaborations with the Transformational Change Learning Partnership, World Economic Forum, Tenure Facility, and key representatives from donors, research institutes and civil society were boosted.

Moving from global discourses and knowledge generation to facilitating tools supporting practitioners on the ground, a detailed guidance was finalized titled 'How to Present Complex Data on Maps and other Visuals for Effective Policy Communication: Using visual tools and spatial information to support decisions for REDD+ implementation.' The guidance was part of the UN-REDD series titled 'Step-by-step tutorials: Using spatial information to support decisions on safeguards and multiple benefits for REDD+.' A review of UN-REDD partner agencies' tools that can contribute to, and be integrated with, interventions related to reducing deforestation from agriculture was also undertaken. Forty-two tools were identified and analysed for their support in decision making at landscape level. The review has

been undertaken as preparatory work to design and pilot the interactive tool navigator to inform decision-making at landscape level, reducing conflicting priorities for resources and deforestation from agriculture expansion.

At country level, despite the impacts of the COVID-19-related restrictions, progress has been made in promoting landscape approaches. Technical backstopping and consultations had to be reorganized to largely take place online, for example in the case of agroforestry mapping work in Côte d'Ivoire. A methodology has been developed for mapping potential areas for cocoa agroforestry and quantifying carbon storage and other ecosystem service gains from agroforestry implementation, given the country's target of restoring forest cover to 20 percent of land area by 2030. This methodology is being finalized integrating feedback from a stakeholder consultation in January 2021. Challenges can also highlight opportunities, such as the beneficial collaboration that was developed with the Cocoa Soils project in Côte d'Ivoire, funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). Support in Myanmar was also moved online due to COVID-19 restrictions: The technical assistance on integrating the sustainable management, restoration and conservation of mangroves into REDD+ implementation kicked off through a virtual inception workshop, ensuring participation of key actors and partners.

Forest tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples

In 2020, and despite the coronavirus pandemic, UN-REDD continued its proactive engagement to raise the profile of secure tenure rights, to mainstream indigenous rights and to promote social inclusion in REDD+ policy and actions. Innovative digital approaches were necessary to sustain cooperation on multi-stakeholder and rights-based affairs. This approach served to prepare the ground for the digital transition in development cooperation and to examine barriers and opportunities for digital inclusion.

The UN-REDD knowledge and policy engagement on forest tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples continued at global, regional, national and local levels.

At **global** level, the collaboration with the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform continued, adapting to the digital processes established by the UNFCCC. UN-REDD continued participating and contributing to the Platform's coordinating sessions and knowledge and capacity segments. Current and former UN-REDD Programme executive board indigenous peoples' representatives and other stakeholders participated in the Platform's digital events in 2020.

The global knowledge work on securing forest tenure rights continued in 2020, especially through the Dgroup on REDD+ and Forest Governance, which has members across more than 100 countries. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis, attention turned to the importance of secure land titles and tenure as a key factor in boosting community resilience and recovery to the impacts of the pandemic. The platform helped reveal how forest tenure rights are indispensable in any green recovery effort involving land-based investments, such as in forest restoration or agroforestry. Attention to the particular vulnerability of women – who commonly have more limited tenure rights – was acknowledged as an important consideration in designing green recovery strategies. In addition, an Information Brief on tenure and REDD+ was published in early 2021. This brief will inform the green recovery dialogue and the intense climate agenda foreseen throughout 2021, especially on the road to the Glasgow Climate Change Conference, 2021.

In addition, UN-REDD helped to organize and contributed to a number of global knowledge and civic events by integrating country and field cases of inclusive approaches to solving forest challenges, as well as by facilitating the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives from forested territories. For instance, the indigenous representative to the UN-REDD Executive Board was a speaker at the Local Action Day organized during the UN General Assembly on 29 September 2020. A special edition of the UN-REDD newsletter on indigenous peoples was issued in August 2020 on the occasion of the 2020 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, highlighting key issues for indigenous

peoples and their rights in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, while disseminating indigenous views on green recovery strategies to address the climate emergency.

At **regional** level, UN-REDD continued a joint initiative with the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact to hold consultations on the interface between indigenous rights, environmental affairs and climate action to inform NDC reviews in 14 countries across the region. Although financing from various partners was secured and coordinated (including Sida, NICFI, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, TCF, and UN-REDD), the actual activities could not be accomplished due to travel restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan remains alive, and is being implemented in 2021, progressively, as country circumstances allow, with the aim of informing the forthcoming intergovernmental conferences of the UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

At **national** level, UN-REDD helped diverse processes to integrate forest tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples in REDD+ policy, investments and performance-based finance. Further details are available in the country sections. In response to the challenges and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, UN-REDD applied innovative digital approaches to keep multi-stakeholder processes alive, turning to virtual tools to facilitate participation of remote communities in a safe and inclusive manner:

- In **Colombia,** UN-REDD organized and facilitated a series of virtual meetings to sustain a critical policy dialogue between the government and indigenous peoples. This policy dialogue, which was at risk of halting due to the pandemic, focused on developing two innovative policy instruments that are key for safeguarding indigenous rights and for ensuring that natural resource management and climate action are socially inclusive: a National Indigenous Environmental Commission and an Indigenous Environmental Policy. The pandemic risked halting the process – as it has many policy processes across the world – so UN-REDD rapidly engaged to seek and establish digital alternatives to sustain the process and keep it alive and fruitful. In what would become one of the forerunner experiences in the digital transition that the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered, UN-REDD established and offered the Government of Colombia a series of virtual meetings to sustain the policy process, engaging and connecting civil servants in the capital city with indigenous leaders across the national territory, sometimes in remote locations. Several virtual meetings were held, led by the Ministry of Environment and supported by UN-REDD. This solution rescued the policy process by connecting the environmental agenda with indigenous rights, leading to a national and international success story for inclusive digital cooperation.

- In **Peru,** UN-REDD supported the Ministry of the Environment in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic to conduct virtual consultations to inform the legal identification and classification of REDD+ actions. The virtual meetings organized and facilitated by UN-REDD enabled the participation of seven national indigenous peoples' organizations that are part of the indigenous peoples' platform to address climate change in public discussions with officials and experts from the Ministry of Environment. Though these initial dialogues had positive results, both in terms of fostering public policy and facilitating inclusive processes, indigenous peoples' organizations rejected the government's proposal to hold similar virtual consultations with private companies in the extractive industries sector (mining) and launched a communiqué rejecting virtual consultations as a substitute for public consultations. Since then, some participatory processes have continued virtually, such as dialogues on subnational projects in San Martin and Ucayali, where indigenous organizations accepted them. However, the principles, means and basic requirements for digital consultations need to be discussed and agreed between Government and indigenous peoples to ensure they align with the national guidelines enshrining the principle of free, prior and informed consent, which are regulated by the Ministry of Culture, and to demonstrate their effectiveness in terms of social inclusion and political rights.

These digital consultation processes, crafted and supported by UN-REDD at the request of partner countries and indigenous peoples' stakeholders, resulted in valuable lessons on how to sustain multi-stakeholder processes and social inclusion in the digital transition during the pandemic. Experience showed that digital cooperation and engagement is feasible, although it requires user-friendly tools, new skillsets, new mindsets and capacity building. Issues of social inclusion and gender equality also require careful consideration: Digital tools open new opportunities, but do not automatically solve the social divisions as underlying structural and cultural factors remain. Digital cooperation reduces travel and the related carbon footprint and opens new avenues for stakeholder engagement, but it can dilute the human contact that is so valuable for inclusive and engaging policy processes. Under the lead of UNDP, the UN-REDD Programme has started a process of documentation and critical analysis of digital approaches to technical cooperation and policy processes, with a focus on social inclusion. The experience gained in 2020 will inform the integration of innovative digital co-operation approaches in UN-REDD's new strategic framework (2021-2025).

Financing and the private sector

UN-REDD finalized a brief titled 'Lessons learned from private sector engagement, finance and investment,' highlighting main results achieved over the past years, challenges encountered and lessons learned. A UN-REDD private-sector event was organized during the Global Landscapes Forum online conference in June 2020.

Business case studies were also finalized, highlighting the conditions needed for a transition to sustainable land use, including incentives that need to be provided to farmers and producers.

- The business case for sustainable coffee production in Viet Nam was launched on 9 July 2020 with representatives from governments, civil society and the private sector.

- The business case for low-carbon livestock in Costa Rica was launched, highlighting the opportunities and challenges to move towards sustainable livestock production.

Unlocking private finance will be critical if sustainable and long-term REDD+ results are to be generated. Some proof-of-concept transactions are highlighted below. These are amongst the few long-term loans and investments that require changes in the underlying business models and whereby both the client (farmer or producer) as well as the financier (bank or investment firm) have spent significant time and resources to agree on a business and financial (repayment) model. In all these cases some form of blended finance, using public funds to attract and support private-capital investment, was needed to make a financial transaction viable from both bank and client perspectives.

- The &Green Fund made an eight-year, $10 million investment into Brazilian Roncador Group, for low-emissions integration of cattle and soy production at scale on a large single farm in Mato Grosso State. Co-finance for this deal came from a loan issued by Banco do Bradesco (BRL 150 million, or US$28 million). &Green's financing will enable completion of an effort that started in 2018 with a proof of concept and that will reach maturity within 3-4 years. 60,000 hectares of the 150,000-hectare farm will be converted to a sustainable ICL model, whilst conserving 71,180 hectares of forest and ensuring early compliance with the Brazilian Forest Code. &Green's loan tenor is for eight years, which is complementary to Roncador's credit line with the commercial lender.

- The &Green Fund has signed a 10-year loan facility for $30 million with PT Dharma Satya Nusantara Tbk ("DSNG"). DSNG is a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and is committed to managing, operating and producing certified, sustainable palm oil. The second Indonesian investment of the Green fund will catalyse the implementation of DSNG's ambitious No Deforestation No Peat No Exploitation (NDPE) strategy. Moreover, the long-term loan facility provides DSNG the flexibility to diversify its sources of funding amidst a volatile global credit market backdrop impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The anticipated environmental returns include:
    - forest conservation of nearly 8,000 ha;
    - up to 700,000 tons of crude palm oil certified to be sustainably sourced and produced;
    - sustainable intensification of more than 85,000 ha of productive land on concession; and
    - reduced pressure on more than 200,000 ha of forest cover in surrounding forestry licence areas by securing smallholder livelihoods with NDPE.

Forest monitoring systems and measurement, reporting and verification

Since 2008, UN-REDD has supported the development of a variety of technical solutions to assist countries in REDD+ MRV and for transparency in REDD+ efforts and catalysing climate actions. These tools include the free and open-source Open Foris (OF) suite maintained under UN-REDD. OF enables countries to design and host NFI databases (the Collect function), carry out efficient field data collection (Collect Mobile), and analysis (Calc). It also includes tools for collecting activity data with the help of Collect Earth, Collect Earth Online and SEPAL. With the help of these tools, countries can provide information on NFI and FRL/FREL reporting to the UNFCCC secretariat.

OF tools and platforms continue to attract new users: there were 8,847 software downloads from the openforis.org website in 2020, and the OF home page had 19,174 unique page views. During the 2020, planned launch of OF Online (also known as Arena) platform was delayed but the system's online data database management, data entry, validation, and main processing parts were successfully completed, and data aggregation for reporting were developed.

For other OF tools, Adobe Flash was removed from the OF Collect in December 2020, and a new Project Development Manual was developed for OF Collect Earth Online. In addition, UN-REDD developed a new practical R/Shiny application for tree species list validation and synonym search. That tool will be launched by mid-2021.

OF training and support were switched to virtual from March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions. The active online support for OF users was provided through emails and OF Support Forum, with 138 questions addressed in 2020.

The training and information sharing focused on promoting existing and new OF tools for forest and land monitoring, showing implementations for efficient field data collecting, management and processing as well as lessons and good practices learned in the country projects. The following training events were organized in 2020:

- Thailand Mission on FRL report, and follow-up on OF tools (UTF/THA/034/THA), 13-17 January 2020, Rome.
- FAO Forestry Division Technical Network webinar titled 'Towards a tool to calculate sustainable wood use levels in tropical forests based on inventory data,' 17 June 2020.
- Webinar on FAO NFI and geospatial tools – Session 10, titled 'Introduction to OF tools for field data collecting, management, processing and reporting,' 30 November 2020.
- FAO Forestry Division Technical Network webinar titled 'FAO Open Foris tools in action in the Myanmar National Forest Inventory,' 3 December 2020.
- Two online meetings (in English and in Spanish) about OF Arena for forestry experts, held on 8 and 11 December 2020.

A total of 239 people attended OF training events and meetings, of which 90 were women (38 percent). Many more viewed recordings of the sessions, which were made available online.

Linking REDD+, the Paris Agreement, NDCs and SDGs

In early 2020, UN-REDD provided technical inputs and review to inform the inclusion of forest-related activities in the workplans for NDC enhancement for at least 15 countries, in the context of the Climate Promise, UNDP's 2019 commitment to help more than 100 countries meet their climate targets. Through the Climate Promise, a total of 20 countries have been supported to enhance the role of forests and land use in their NDCs planned for submission in 2021.

UN-REDD developed the Paris Agreement LULUCF and NDC Tool (PLANT) tool to support this technical assistance to countries on NDCs, as well to evaluate Article 6 opportunities within the NDC context. The tool is an Excel-based rubric developed in the context of UNDP's Climate Promise initiative and has been populated with country-specific NDC, GHG-inventory and REDD+ data. The tool can be utilized to evaluate, for example, the level of ambition of a country's NDC *vis-à-vis* REDD+ submissions, prospects for generating results beyond the NDC targets using ART TREES and the Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ (JNR) standard developed by the US-based organization Verra, as well as consistency with the national GHG inventory. PLANT is being applied to provide guidance and support on the development of diversified financial strategies to support implementation of the forest component of the NDC, through both market and non-market-based resources.

UN-REDD also contributed to the development of customized briefing notes for REDD+ countries on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for NDCs. These 'Nature for Climate' briefs include an introduction to NbS and their role in climate mitigation and adaptation. They also analyse some potential climate mitigation benefits of various NbS, and provide an overview of existing commitments for NbS within national environmental policies as well as national development policies. UN-REDD contributed inputs on REDD+ data, frameworks and policies for a number of these briefs.

Knowledge sharing via webinar events as well as production of knowledge products were carried out throughout 2020. UN-REDD staff contributed to planning and design and participation on panels in webinar sessions on NDCs and markets. These included the WRI Webinar titled 'Enhancing NDCs in 2020: Opportunities in Forest and Land Use,' which took place on 23 April 2020, and the UN-REDD webinar on Accounting for reductions in a Paris-era world, of 5 May of that year. In June 2020, as part of UN-REDD technical assistance support, a webinar was also held with country offices in LAC about carbon markets as part of the Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. UN-REDD contributed to the LEDS-LAC webinar on 8 October 2020 titled 'Integrating Nature-based solutions, Forests and Indigenous Peoples into NDCs in LAC.' UNDP Regional Technical Specialists participated as speakers, presenting on both forests in the NDCs as well as the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in the NDCs. UN-REDD contributed to the development of the paper '#NDCsWeWant: Enhancing Forest Targets and Measures in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs),' which was launched in November 2020, with production led by WWF and including a number of other contributing authors from various partner organizations. The paper provides recommendations for decision-makers in governments to incorporate the full potential of forests for climate change mitigation and adaptation in NDCs under the Paris Agreement. It seeks to inform policymakers in developing measurable policies and actions for NDCs and other national climate strategies and policy documents.

Drawing on lessons from UN-REDD's support to countries on REDD+, an information note was finalized titled 'Considerations for Integrating Nature-based Solutions in Nationally Determined Contributions: Illustrating the Potential through REDD+,' and an information brief was developed, titled 'Linking REDD+, the Paris Agreement, NDCs and the SDGs: Realizing the Potential of Forests for NDC Enhancement and Implementation,' planned for release in Q2 of 2021. Both papers reflect the important linkages and lessons offered by REDD+ in the context of NDC enhancement and implementation.

REDD+ funding mechanisms

In 2020, UN-REDD continued to generate, tailor and provide specialized knowledge on national financing mechanisms, instruments and innovations to underpin the REDD+ agenda. Some country examples follow:

Advice was provided to **Indonesia** in the context of the creation and operationalization of the BPDLH, a national Environmental Fund Management Agency under the Ministry of Finance. This work was done in close collaboration with the World Bank and NICFI, all supporting the same process of assessing BPDLH's capacity and areas for improvement, leading to a shared recommendation in terms of improvements required to ensure BPDLH is effective and transparent. In particular, UN-REDD has: (i) presented the international standards and best practices for National Funds with country case studies, and in particular the critical elements for a Fund to be eligible to ODA funding; (ii) undertaken a preliminary assessment of capacity and gaps to be addressed, later followed and widened in scope; and (iii) reviewed and provided guidance on various key regulations for the operationalization of the Fund.

Ecuador received support in the design and piloting of an innovative mechanism to incentivize municipal governments to create and maintain local protected forest areas. Through this mechanism pilot municipalities will receive up to $2 million in transfers, conditional on performance in terms of forest area under effective conservation. The mechanism will be implemented through the Sustainable Environmental Investment Fund (FIAS) as the responsible party for the implementation of this activity.

Also in Ecuador, UN-REDD supported an analysis of gaps of national institutions that have expressed an interest in becoming accredited by the GCF, as well as the action plans of the entities prioritized. The entity recommended for accreditation is the Banco del Estado. This was then approved by the NDA of Ecuador, and an NAP to close the gaps for its accreditation has been developed. In 2021, UN-REDD will continue to support Banco del Estado's accreditation and proposal development on its behalf to the second phase of RBPs under the GCF.

Costa Rica, Ghana and Paraguay received support in the creation of optimization strategies to mobilize REDD+ RBPs from a variety of market and non-market sources, while ensuring environmental integrity through sound national accounting procedures. The PLANT tool was used to estimate the carbon market potential for these two countries based on two key existing standards for REDD+ market-based transactions: ART TREES and Verra's JNR. Multiple RBP opportunities were explored with a range of actors such as oil majors and Microsoft. By the end of 2020, these efforts opened significant new opportunities in Ghana and Costa Rica. In Ghana, an agreement is under negotiation between the Forestry Commission and the oil company Eni SPA for the purchase of REDD+ credits. In Costa Rica, negotiations with Microsoft for the sale of REDD+ credits failed. However, a TREES concept note has been submitted by the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a tremendous economic crisis, which can severely affect REDD+ financing. At the same time, REDD+ finances can serve in the COVID-19 livelihoods recovery. UN-REDD has started to develop thinking and knowledge briefs on how to align REDD+ funding mechanisms to the forthcoming COVID-19 economic and livelihoods recovery plans. PESs were identified as a key mechanism to transfer needed cash resources directly to impoverished groups to support the COVID-19 recovery phase. In addition to being widely used to cushion the economic damage from sudden shocks such as this pandemic, cash transfers have long been an effective tool for poverty reduction.

In the context of the COVID-19 recovery phase, cash transfers offer three important forms of relief: (1) a rapid and cost-effective way to provide basic needs like food and shelter; (2) a means to recover and rebuild after the crisis; and (3) protection from future shocks. Cash transfers accomplish all of this while giving individuals the autonomy to manage their own expenses and stimulating local economies. PESs are not like any other cash-transfer programme. One key requirement is that payments must be conditional upon performance—that is, participants achieving certain outcomes or doing (or

refraining from) certain activities. Four key government programmes received support from UN-REDD in the COVID-19 recovery phase to improve targeting to achieve desired environmental and social outcomes, taking into account the particular goals of the programmes as well as synergies and trade-offs with other goals, programmes and sectors. These are as follows:

1. **Brazil's Floresta+** is a new and innovative programme that aims to provide incentives for environmental services (IESs) in the Legal Amazon region for family farmers, traditional communities and indigenous peoples. UN-REDD has supported the design of the operations manual for this programme.

2. **Ecuador's Socio Bosque** Programme, which provides financial incentives to individual and community landowners who voluntarily commit to conserve native forests for a 20-year period. New agreements were signed with indigenous communities of the Amazon with support from UN-REDD.

3. **Indonesia's Social Forestry Programme**, which aims to alleviate poverty, halt deforestation and end forestland conflicts by giving local communities the opportunity to manage forests themselves – and to develop sustainable livelihoods based in and around them. Support was provided to national institutions in putting an innovative, performance-based disbursement instrument into practice. This modality will be used to channel USD $93.4 million in the context of a GCF REDD+ RBP proposal approved at the 26th meeting of the Board in August 2020.

4. **Costa Rica's PES Programme** received support to mobilize additional resources from the GCF as well as on the improvement of procedures for monitoring and evaluation and the participation of women and indigenous peoples. This is critical given that the PES is the only existing government cash-transfer programme that directly targets indigenous people in Costa Rica. Over the last five years the PES programme has been fully funded by the national carbon tax, and water fees, and minimal contribution of the national private sector. In the current economic downturn, recently mobilized international resources from the GCF are of enormous importance to further consolidate the gains of the last 25 years of effective implementation.

Cross-cutting knowledge management and communications

The year 2020 will go down in history as the year the world reconsidered its relationship with nature. The global health emergency has added to the triple planetary crisis of climate, nature, and pollution, with forests at the heart of its solutions.

As major climate and biodiversity conferences were postponed, UN-REDD rapidly adapted and moved the action online, running engaging global and regional digital sessions for audiences across the world on forest issues. Examples include the series of webinars in spring 2020 on large-scale corporate investments in forest solutions, culminating in the Green Gigaton Challenge launch at the London Climate Action Week. As part of the Race to Zero Dialogues, UN-REDD organised a Landscapes in Action session, bringing together environment ministers from Norway, the UK, and Costa Rica, as well as youth and indigenous peoples' representatives to explore how to achieve high-quality emissions reductions from forests. At the Global Landscapes Forum, UN-REDD ran several sessions on deforestation-free supply chains, building back better, and fighting illegal wood trade in the Lower Mekong Region.

Other UN-REDD global webinars focused on private-sector investments in NbS, on boosting rural and indigenous women's roles in forest management, and on opportunities for corporate mitigation. An expert meeting on transformational change in land use and climate change was co-organized together with FAO and CIFOR. Webinars on safeguards processes and community forestry management practices brought forward experiences from Latin American countries. The UN-REDD's Global Knowledge Exchange, initiated in 2020, was carried over to early 2021. The South-South exchange is

meant to share lessons learned and good practices from the first pilot phase of RBPs and to familiarize countries with ART TREES.

In Latin America, UN-REDD facilitated a virtual South-South dialogue on sustainable deforestation-free cattle ranching between Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador and Paraguay. Experts presented initiatives that are building sustainable production and conservation initiatives based on local governance and partnerships with NGOs, state institutions and local communities. Participants identified factors such as growing demand for sustainable meat products, marketing models based on transparency, and supportive government policies to encourage integrated agricultural-livestock-forest systems to recover degraded areas and protect forests.

In Asia, UN-REDD's project titled Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region, launched in 2020, ran a combination of online and in-person knowledge exchange events. National consultations in Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Thailand, as well as a regional dialogue with project stakeholders, helped identify priorities to develop the next steps, including a campaign for fighting illegal wood trade.

UN-REDD continued its storytelling strategy of highlighting forests' key role in the green recovery, featuring regional and global stories on national progress on REDD+, indigenous approaches to forest monitoring, and local forest communities' empowerment among others. A series of videos produced under the hashtag #BetterWithForests showed how forests provide safeguards from climate change, extreme weather events, and health issues.

Event-driven communication campaigns, compelling social videos and ongoing interactive engagement with diverse audiences brought the UN-REDD Programme's social media following to more than 53,000 followers. The 'Cities and Heatwaves' video received more than 800,000 views on Facebook, becoming the Programme's most engaging social post of 2020.

A wide range of knowledge products were published. Globally produced information briefs highlighted UN-REDD support on safeguards, lessons, and impacts, the importance of the landscape approach, and strategies for making SISs operational.

In 2020, UN-REDD also initiated work on 10 briefs summarising the knowledge and good practices within the Programme's main action areas: landscape approach and planning, forest tenure, indigenous peoples' rights, financing and private sector, forest monitoring systems and MRV, linking REDD+, the Paris Agreement, NDCs and the SDGs, REDD+ funding mechanisms, safeguards, gender, and NS/AP.

Knowledge and country-based lessons on REDD+ were shared through 116 blog posts, often in several languages, via the quarterly REDD+ Resource newsletter, which now has over 10,000 subscribers, and through the reimagined bi-monthly REDD+ Round-Up newsletter, with regional or thematic foci. The blog posts were seen by 120,000 visitors. A new webpage dedicated to the Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region was launched in November. The year 2020 also marked the start of an overhaul of UN-REDD's document repository, the Programme's knowledge management core, aiming to strengthen capacity development across agencies and serving partner countries as well as other REDD+ actors with lessons learned and proven good practices.

UN-REDD communications and knowledge management activities in 2021 will focus on boosting momentum for forests as a key NbS. The Programme's participation in the upcoming UN COP26 in Glasgow and other meetings will guide communications activities and campaigns aiming to gain global attention and action around forest conservation and restoration. Digital engagement will also build upon the lessons learnt from 2020's challenges, while continuously ensuring gender balance and inclusiveness.

Gender

Building on the progress made on gender in 2019, the UN-REDD Programme continued in 2020 to support 10 partner countries[5] in integrating gender equality and women's empowerment principles within REDD+ action.

In particular, this support has helped many partner countries to take large strides in incorporating gender into their safeguards-related work. In Peru, a gender perspective was integrated into the country's first summary of information on REDD+ safeguards, wherein gender is noted as a cross cutting element, participation of stakeholders is disaggregated by gender and links to key gender-related PLRs are established in the discussions of safeguards. In Côte d'Ivoire, safeguards-information parameters include a criterion on gender equity in decision-making and an indicator measuring gender-equitable benefit sharing Myanmar's SIS working group includes a seat for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement as well as setting a target of at least 30 percent female representation within REDD+ working groups.

Partner countries are also progressing well in integrating gender in a cross-cutting fashion. In Chile, such efforts included: 1) integrating a gender approach into the draft design of the Benefits Sharing System; 2) supporting women beneficiaries in a proposal to promote the productive chain focused on non-timber forest products; and 3) proposing draft gender indicators for CONAF institutional management arrangements and PES projects. Similarly, in Colombia, support was provided on community forest management efforts, which involved the integration of a gender-responsive approach in related capacity building, tool development and stakeholder engagement activities. These efforts, among others, have resulted in: 1) an increase in women's participation from 15 percent in 2018 to 40 percent in 2020; and 2) the integration of a gender perspective in the national guidance for CFM.

In January, through the Dgroup on REDD+ and Forest Governance, the UN-REDD Programme organized and hosted a webinar titled 'Empowering rural and indigenous women in forest-related climate actions.' The Programme also launched two social media campaigns to highlight the crucial role women play in forest-based climate solutions. The first, for International Women's Day, was undertaken in March, and the second, for International Day of Rural Women, was undertaken in October. For the latter a short video (available in English, Spanish and French) was also released on the vital role rural women play in REDD+ and forest conservation efforts. The two media campaigns together reached more than 450,000 people on Facebook.

In late November, the UN-REDD Programme undertook a brief online survey to explore the effect of COVID-19 on the participation of women and men in forest conservation and REDD+, and to identify ways to further promote the equitable and active participation of women and men across its support and activities. Results from this survey can be viewed here.

A draft gender-focused UN-REDD Information Brief, showcasing the Programme's gender approach and recent case studies and good practices, has also been developed (to be released in Q2 of 2021). In addition, a gender perspective has also been integrated into other draft UN-REDD Information Briefs, such as those on summaries of safeguard information, linking REDD+, the Paris Agreement, NDCs and the SDGs and forest tenure and REDD+.

Although the data is still preliminary, the UN-REDD Gender Marker results for the 2020 Technical Assistance programme show that its gender-responsiveness is improving. In 2020, 42 percent of TA outputs achieved a GEN 2 (gender-responsive) rating. This is an increase over previous years, in which only 22 percent of outputs achieved a GEN 2 in 2018 and 34 percent in 2019. There was also an increase in GEN 1 (gender-sensitive) ratings. In 2020, 56 percent of the outputs were assigned a GEN 1 rating. This contrasts with the results in 2019, wherein only 40 percent of the outputs received a

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[5] Chile, Colombia, Republic of Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Myanmar, Peru, Viet Nam, Zambia, and the Lower Mekong Region as a bloc.

GEN 1 rating (in 2018 56 percent of the outputs were also assigned a GEN 1 rating). These improvements are positive to see, particularly given the need in 2020 to adapt gender support so that it was grounded in the realities of UN-REDD support around COVID-19 and its effects.

Looking ahead

UN-REDD 2021-2015

More than 10 years have passed since the UN-REDD Programme was established to support countries in engaging and fulfilling a novel climate action and financing framework named REDD+. With UN-REDD support, more and more countries are implementing forest solutions, with the institutional systems and capacities in place to ensure that the reduction and removal of emissions from the forest sector are real, quantifiable, and verifiable and that benefits are shared in a socially equitable manner that advances the SDGs. In parallel, over the past decade, forests have increasingly been recognized as the largest and most actionable nature-based climate solution, also fit to address the '*quadruple planetary emergency*' that 2020 has revealed: the combined climate, biodiversity, inequality and pandemic crises. Forests have a massive climate mitigation potential, estimated in the range of 4.1 to 6.5 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO$_2$e) over the next decade.[6] Yet, deforestation and forest degradation continue at alarming rates. Without halting deforestation, climate milestones and ultimate goals cannot be met. REDD+ remains a critical element of the international climate commitments and an indispensable national climate action. The mitigation potential of forests can only be fully realised by urgent and unprecedented multilateral consensus on a decade of needle-shifting action, of drastically elevated ambition, to '*turn the tide on deforestation*'.

Over 2020, and into 2021, the UN-REDD Programme is pivoting and recalibrating its technical assistance and policy advisory services to catalyse that consensus at a global level and support its deployment across countries. UN-REDD is equally helping to articulate and accelerate action at the national and subnational jurisdictional scales, helping countries reform their policies, design and realize investments, mobilize performance-based finance and harnessing the emerging co-operative and carbon financing opportunities under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Looking to the 2030 horizon, the goal of the UN-REDD Programme is to help fully realize forests' mitigation potential for at least 5 GtCO$_2$e per year, with a mid-decade milestone of the first Green Gigaton of forest-based GHG emission reductions, and enhanced removals, unlocked and financially rewarded.

Quantity of mitigation results is not the sole dimension of UN-REDD's post-2020 ambition. The 2025 target of 1 GtCO$_2$e will also need to demonstrate a trajectory of increasing quality, in terms of accuracy, certainty and permanence, commensurate with hikes in prices in emerging forest carbon markets necessary to incentivise REDD+ action at scale. Climate change mitigation is essential not only to the Paris Agreement's target to limit global warming by 1.5° Celsius, but also to delivery of the SDGs by 2030. In pursuing its mitigation goals, the UN-REDD Programme will continue to employ approaches to promote social inclusion and realise non-carbon benefits that have been a distinguishing feature of the Programme over the past 10 years, from safeguarding biodiversity to supporting local livelihoods and advancing the rights of indigenous peoples.

Forests are an unquestionable source of sustainable livelihoods, prosperity and resilience. Forests provide crucial ecosystem services that reduce the vulnerability of local communities to a changing climate. Ensuring indigenous peoples and local communities continue to enjoy the full suite of multiple benefits provided by forests will complement UN-REDD's drive for mitigation results in the coming period of operations. The Programme will also be relevant to the global response to the 2020 outbreak of COVID-19 on three interrelated fronts: 1) conserving, managing sustainably and restoring forests as key to decreasing the risk of zoonosis, which are a source of pandemics; 2) raising attention

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[6] As indicated by the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land (2019) and the UNEP Emissions Gap Report (2018).

to the risks of increased deforestation as a coping response to the COVID-19 socio-economic crisis; and 3) contributing to building back better, and greener, by ensuring REDD+ finance is aligned to rural livelihoods and economies (see section on COVID-19 recovery below).

Both carbon and non-carbon ambitions of the forest solutions in the forthcoming decade are duly captured in the new UN-REDD results framework (2021-2025), which was adopted by the UN-REDD Executive Board in 2020. This new results framework was designed to encapsulate and drive virtuous cycles of forest solutions realized, rewarded and enhanced, including quantitative targets, and aligned to countries' NDCs. To achieve such virtuous cycles, UN-REDD will strategically position its knowledge and advisory services at the interface between country and jurisdictional level supply of, and private and public demand for, REDD+ results at scale, quality and yielding multiple benefits.

To meet the defining challenge of accelerating and amplifying forest solutions in the coming decade of unprecedented action, UN-REDD will adhere to the intervention principles of scale, speed and flexibility. Recognizing the importance of country ownership and country-led processes, the Programme will continue to be demand-driven, tailoring interventions to national circumstances.

COVID-19 socio-economic recovery

The year 2020 brought into sharp focus another critical role that forests play in the natural checks and balances of Earth's ecosystems: Keeping the world's forests standing also helps protect humans from zoonotic diseases, including coronaviruses. Their destruction has devastating consequences not only for climate change and biodiversity loss, but also for global public health. One in three outbreaks of new and emerging diseases, such as HIV, SARS, and now COVID-19, have been linked to deforestation and other land-use changes. This is despite the fact that, as we are now collectively learning first-hand, the cost of reducing deforestation to prevent the spread of zoonosis is substantially less than the economic and mortality costs of responding after the fact.

Faced now with the historic challenge of socio-economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Secretary General António Guterres is calling on countries to "recover better together" and to seize the opportunity to not simply reset the global economy, but to transform it to be more sustainable, more equitable, and more resilient so that all people can enjoy lives with dignity on a healthy planet. We must build economic systems that value nature as a central source of human wellbeing, environmental health and economic prosperity. And forests can play a pivotal role in green strategies to recover from the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nature-based solutions like REDD+ are win-win areas for recovery policies: they can deliver significant economic benefits while reducing the likelihood of future pandemics and building resilience to climate and environmental risks. The conservation and sustainable management of forests can boost rural economies and have long-term growth potential. Payment for ecosystem services and social forestry initiatives implemented as part of national REDD+ programmes are one example of this. In 2019 and 2020, RBPs for emissions reductions in the forest sector under REDD+ were approved by the GCF for eight countries. All of these projects direct a significant portion of the funds to support local livelihood-focused forest conservation programmes such as payments for ecosystem services (Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Paraguay) and community forest management or social forestry initiatives (Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Indonesia).

By using the proceeds from REDD+ results to support benefit-sharing programmes, countries are creating virtuous circles of emissions reductions from the forest sector, generating economic resources that support communities to engage in forest conservation and sustainable forest management activities, thereby generating further emissions reductions that can lead to greater access to international climate finance.

The UN-REDD Programme, with more than a decade of experience supporting countries to deliver emissions reductions from the forest sector while applying a socially inclusive approach, is positioned

to support livelihood-improving forest conservation and sustainable forest management activities, like those supported by PES and social forestry programmes, at the pace and scale required towards building a better, greener, more resilient future in developing forest countries. UN-REDD has helped many countries develop and strengthen data and information systems (NFMSs) that provide key information on forests, thus helping ensure that COVID-19 recovery investments abide by the principle of "do no harm", and rather create greater impact and synergies.

Concluding remarks

Building on the 2019 secretary-general's historic Climate Action Summit, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) have seen increasingly widespread attention in 2020 as legitimate and essential climate change solutions, necessary to keeping global temperature rise below the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C. Through the Leaders' Pledge for Nature launched on 28 September 2020, as part of the UN Decade of Action to achieve sustainable development, political leaders committed to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and achieve the vision of Living in Harmony with Nature by 2050. NbS are high on the agenda for COP-26, of G7 and G20 leaders, with forests front and centre.

Further, REDD+ is now recognized as an effective climate mitigation strategy for NDCs to the Paris Agreement, which is especially important to increasing the ambition of developing countries' climate commitments. Currently, mitigation measures contained in NDCs are inadequate to bridge the emissions gap to reach the Paris Agreement target by 2030. For a 2°C limit to warming, the total emissions gap from current conditional NDCs is 13 $GtCO_2eq$ by 2030; for a 1.5°C limit, the gap is 29 $GtCO_2eq$. Strongly increased forest action is therefore a critical measure to remove CO_2 from the atmosphere, at scale, to close the emissions gap prior to 2030.

As forest solutions gain political traction, coupled with a wider range of emerging financial mechanisms that recognize and incentivize them, UN-REDD becomes more valuable to, and valued by, countries trying to take action and navigate the evolving institutional, technical and financial landscape. By leveraging the knowledge and technical capacity that FAO, UNDP and UNEP have gained over a decade of delivering as one, UN-REDD can effectively help partner countries to reduce deforestation at scale and access financial rewards for the associated emissions reductions. As REDD+ transitions out of its proof-of-concept stage, in which UN-REDD was an instrumental partner, to full-scale implementation and results-based financing, UN-REDD has adopted its 2021-2025 results framework. The new results framework was designed to encapsulate and drive virtuous cycles of forest solutions realized, rewarded and enhanced through forest components, including quantitative targets, of countries' NDCs. To meet the defining challenge of accelerating and amplifying forest solutions in the coming decade of unprecedented action, UN-REDD will adhere to the intervention principles of scale, speed and flexibility.

It has become widely recognized that the transformation needed to win the interconnected planetary crises must be based on a system response. Forests are a key component of a system response, and working in partnership to shift the system is crucial. The 75th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2020 reaffirmed the importance of partnerships and the UN's collective commitment to multilateralism. The UN-REDD Programme is an exemplar of partnership, whose strength lies in the complementary skills and experience of its three collaborating agencies working and delivering as One United Nations, deploying its team of technical experts and policy advisors on the ground across the world, offering the convening capacity of the United Nations that has underpinned the success of UN-REDD since its inception.

Bold action must be taken urgently to safeguard our forests and avert a climate disaster. We will only succeed by working together: reconnecting people and nature to implement the Paris Agreement effectively and secure a sustainable future for all. UN-REDD will continue operating at the vanguard of forest solutions, building on best practices and sharing them widely, as well as fostering innovation and replicating efforts at scale.

Annex 1: Financial reporting

[*Financial report to be provided separately by the MPTF. It will then be incorporated into the fully designed version of this report*]

Annex 2: Impact stories

[*The following stories will be inserted throughout this report in its designed version*]

Innovative 1 for 20 Partnership
Côte d'Ivoire boosts stakeholder cooperation for sustainable agriculture

At the current rate of deforestation, Côte d'Ivoire will likely lose all its forest cover by 2034. Agricultural expansion for cash crops, such as cocoa, rubber and palm oil, has developed the rural and national economies over the past decades, but is also the main driver of deforestation, soil degradation and biodiversity loss. This critical situation for the Ivorian ecosystems has been exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which in turn jeopardize a strategic sector of Côte d'Ivoire's economy. Ensuring the sustainability of the agricultural sector is an urgent social, economic and environmental issue.

The 1 for 20 Partnership is an innovative new programme that aims to mobilize $$1 billion to restore 20 percent of forest cover in Côte d'Ivoire by promoting sustainable agriculture and facilitating dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders. The partnership is a collaboration between the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Coffee-Cocoa Council, with technical and financial support from UNEP, UN-REDD and the EU REDD Facility.

The country has been engaged with REDD+ since 2011, with an aim to reverse deforestation and restore forest cover to 20 percent of land cover by 2030. In addition, the country's National REDD+ Strategy includes the promotion of zero-deforestation agriculture in the cocoa, palm oil and rubber sectors. However, upscaling viable production models is a significant challenge that requires financial solutions.

"The 1 for 20 Partnership increases private sector engagement to take actions, make direct investments and advocate for change to avoid deforestation and forest degradation, promote forest restoration and zero-deforestation cocoa and other commodities production in Côte d'Ivoire," said Jean Paul Aka, the UN national advisor on the forest-agriculture-climate nexus and local catalyser of the 1 for 20 Partnership. "The programme stimulates finance for investments in the forestry and land-use sector for smallholders by connecting the country with public and private sector partners. It is only in pushing this harder and setting higher ambitions that we can prevent deforestation from commodity supply chains in Côte d'Ivoire."

There are several issues the partnership aims to overcome, including, the low and uncertain income of the farmers due to the monoculture of a volatile commodity, and local cooperatives lacking adequate financing. Additionally, microfinance institutions struggle to access long-term capital; national commercial banks cannot access collateral from smallholder farmers; investors have difficulty reaching smallholders; and the government lacks resources to decouple agriculture commodity production from deforestation.

Many financing solutions exist, and there are profitable economic models based on diversifying farmers' income through agroforestry. Financial solutions may take the form of a buyer establishing a long-term purchase contract that will support financing, or of a local bank offering loans through concessionary-rate funds, or an aggregation of several projects within a financial vehicle followed by securitization.

The 1 in 20 Partnership has a three-pillar action plan around promoting these types of sustainable financing models. This plan is anchored in viable production models and incentives for small producers that are aligned with the country's climate change objectives, and it aims to facilitate partnerships between private stakeholders, the financial sector and public partners to set up financial projects at scale and promote stakeholder dialogues to share experiences of sustainable agricultural models and practices.

The Republic of Congo makes strides with monitoring forest degradation

Situated in Central Africa, the Republic of the Congo is in the heart of the Congo Basin, the world's second-largest rainforest. Forests make up more than 65 percent of land cover in the Republic of the Congo. While these forests are increasingly threatened by unsustainable agriculture and logging, among other drivers, the country is also making significant progress in confronting climate change through the sustainable management and protection of its remaining 23 million hectares of forests.

Efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) have played an important role in bringing the country closer to achieving its national and international commitments. Since joining the UN-REDD Programme in 2010, the Republic of the Congo has come a long way in its REDD+ activities. Supported by various partners and donors, the country has strengthened its NFMS through the development of remote-sensing tools and approaches with the aim of improving sustainable forest management. This is vital information given that forests are crucial to the lives of the country's 4.6 million people and a pillar of the national economy.

In 2020, the UN-REDD Programme supported the Republic of the Congo with the ambitious task of mapping forest degradation. Forest degradation is a serious environmental, social and economic problem and, compared to deforestation, is bigger, in terms of landmass, as well as harder to detect and quantify. When a forest is degraded, it still exists, but it can no longer function well, as it loses its ability to provide essential benefits to people and wildlife that depend on it.

The country uses the SEPAL platform to track forest degradation by processing satellite images and detecting trend and seasonal changes at the national scale. The work is led by Carine Saturnine Milandou, a forest specialist with the Congo's National REDD+ Programme and one of several female experts in the country's REDD+ coordination unit. Through support from UN-REDD, Carine has been working with the government on mapping the country's forest degradation trends, improving the country's land use planning efforts to promote the development of healthy agriculture, sustainable forestry and community benefits.

Recognising forest degradation as a stepping-stone to deforestation, the UN-REDD Programme is boosting the Republic of the Congo's capacity to be autonomous in carrying out remote sensing forest mapping and monitoring. "This will ensure the protection of our forests and will also help the Congo maintain its biological diversity, while also bringing the country closer to achieving its Sustainable Development Goals," said Carine. "Forests allow people to carry out productive activities like agriculture for subsistence. Hence, the need to protect forests to guarantee the livelihoods of the people who rely on them."

The Green Gigaton Challenge brings together private and public sector funding partners for significant emissions reductions

Buoyed by a renewed international momentum to tackle climate change and to protect and restore tropical forests, the UN-REDD Programme together with NGO Emergent launched the Green Gigaton Challenge (GGC) to mobilize public and private funds to pay for one gigaton of high-quality emissions reductions from forests by 2025.

This challenge aims to make a significant contribution to keeping global warming under 2°C, to close the emissions gap by 2030, and to ensure biodiversity conservation and a green recovery from COVID-

19. It offers a concrete framework to leverage public and private finance for large-scale and high-quality forest protection and restoration. By unmistakably signalling scaled-up financial ambition it promises to be a powerful force in helping change the economics and politics of deforestation in many parts of the world, by making conservation and sustainable use of forests an attractive alternative.

"The Green Gigaton Challenge may be the only way to mobilize all our resources to protect our unique natural patrimony," according to Andrea Meza, Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica. "It's the only way to address the multiple crises. With forest conservation, we're also doing mitigation and adaptation and generating resilience and engaging communities in this global effort."

The GGC will bring together a coalition of public and private partners to channel funds into efforts led by national and subnational governments for REDD+. By using donor-funded floor prices for RBPs and facilitating and leveraging private sector demand above these floor prices, the GGC will support forest countries in achieving their NDCs, while also helping companies complement their internal emissions reductions with high-quality, jurisdictional REDD carbon credits.

The GGC paves the way for a new chapter in efforts to protect the world's remaining forests. Companies need confidence that there will be supply at scale of high-integrity jurisdictional REDD+ credits. Regarding tropical forest countries the Norwegian Minister of Environment Sveinung Rotevatn said: "The essence of this challenge is to secure large-scale, multi-year predictable results-based funding. Success needs a massive increase in private and public finance. Tropical forest countries face complicated political challenges to putting in place the changes necessary, and they need to be confident in the financial returns for protecting and restoring their forests."

Whether the GGC can make a difference is a function of price and volume: There is a number where the economics for conservation becomes overwhelmingly compelling. For example, a 1-gigaton bid starting at a floor price of $10/tCO$_2$e and increasing gradually to $30/tCO$_2$e can move the needle and change the land-use trajectory in deforestation hotspots.

This ambitious strategy sends a powerful signal to the global community and will start to pull in the finance to drive forest protection. Unlocking the first gigaton of emission reductions from REDD+ is a crucial first step in the massive increase in public and private results-based funding commitments necessary to protect forests and other NbS.

Indonesia is expanding expertise in mapping deforestation to help fight climate change

Indonesia has made strong progress in reducing deforestation in recent years. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry announced a 75-percent reduction in deforestation within the country in 2020. With a declining rate of forest loss, the country is approaching the forestry sector's goals for the country's NDC in the Paris Agreement of the Climate Change Convention, and moving towards limiting annual deforestation to an average of 325,000 hectares between 2020 and 2030.

The country is working to meet climate targets by mapping and monitoring deforestation using advanced satellite imagery technologies that enable precise characterization of changes in land cover and use. New high spatial resolution images for 64 forest countries, acquired by NICFI, are being incorporated into FAO's geospatial processing platforms and put to a wide range of applications including validating land cover changes from deforestation and forest degradation, characterizing the effects of forest fires, and restoring peatlands.

Early in 2019, Indonesia was one of eight countries to receive training by FAO to jumpstart use of this new satellite imagery in their NFMS. At a workshop in 2020, funded jointly by the UN-REDD Programme and the World Bank, Indonesia received customised technical training on change detection and sample-based area estimation using Planet Labs satellite data. Planet's support team worked with officials from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia as they incorporated high-resolution imagery into their existing SEPAL workflows to help improve accuracy.

SEPAL, or System for Earth Observation Data Access, Processing and Analysis for Land Monitoring, was developed by FAO and helps countries monitor and report on forests and land use. SEPAL offers users unparalleled access to satellite data, paving the way for improved climate change mitigation plans and data-driven land-use policies. Together these systems make forest monitoring more accessible, accurate and efficient.

According to Nurul Silva Lestari, a researcher at the Centre for Research and Development of Socio-Economic Policy and Climate Change at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in Indonesia, remote sensing is being used daily to monitor fire hotspots, as well as identify burned scar areas. Combined with ground checks, the use of remote sensing can provide robust forest fire information and improve early forest-fire detection.

Equipping these experts and local stakeholders with timely, high-resolution information has made a big difference. "This training provides valuable insights and skill development to use high-quality spatial data for deforestation and forest degradation monitoring," said Lestari. "As I am working on several REDD+ initiatives in Indonesia, the availability of time-series data to generate land-cover-change data is essential. The new satellite data can help us to detect deforestation, and most notably forest degradation, which sometimes can be hard to identify."

Making good use of the newly available data to help protect and restore previously degraded peatlands, to characterize the effects of fire, and assess deforestation and forest degradation, all contribute to the NFMS. The results are a key factor enabling Indonesia to receive performance-based payments for measured, reported and verified reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). Using Planet's wall-to-wall, high-resolution imagery, countries like Indonesia can do this with greater consistency, accuracy and efficiency.

Results-based payments help alleviate poverty and conserve forests in a growing number of countries

The UN-REDD Programme and its partner agencies, UNDP, UNEP and FAO, are supporting a growing number of countries in their efforts to secure financing to implement REDD+ strategies and access RBPs for emissions reductions from the forest sector. To date, the UN-REDD partners have supported eight countries to access $496.8 million from the GCF under its pilot programme on RBPs for reduced emissions. Approximately one-third of this funding is committed specifically to payments for ecosystem services (PES) and community forest management activities.

PESs are a unique policy instrument that rewards individuals or communities for undertaking actions that increase water purification, flood mitigation or carbon sequestration. Payments can be an important mechanism to transfer much-needed cash resources directly to impoverished groups. In addition to being widely used to cushion the economic damage from sudden shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the context of the creating a greener, more equitable and inclusive future, beyond COVID-19, cash transfers are an effective tool for reducing poverty, yielding benefits to health, education, employment and overall well-being, as well as giving individuals the autonomy to manage their own expenses and stimulate local economies.

"The economic crisis has put our PES programme at serious financial risk," said Jorge Mario Rodríguez, director of the National Forestry Financing Fund of Costa Rica. "For many families, the PSA is the only, or most important, income they receive," he said, using the Spanish acronym for PES, or *pago por servicios ambientales*. "If they are not going to receive that money, there is temptation to deforest. The GCF resources will ensure that the PES programme continues during the COVID-19 recovery phase and will benefit thousands of small and medium forest producers, particularly in indigenous territories."

Costa Rica's market-based incentives to reduce forest loss and degradation have been implemented for several years, and public and private resources have been leveraged to invest in forest solutions including conservation, restoration and improved land management. If similar market-based

incentives were deployed in 12 other diverse countries, approximately $1.8 billion could be raised each year between them to be reinvested in forest solutions.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exposed an urgent need to invest in forests to build a better, greener and more resilient world. RBPs are one innovative way to strengthen societies and economies, not only to prevent future pandemics, but also to create sustainable, long-term growth.

Pivoting to virtual: UN-REDD pilots online participatory processes during COVID-19

Social inclusion and stakeholder engagement are cornerstone elements of UN-REDD's support for national REDD+ processes. However, in the wake of COVID-19, many forest conservation and REDD+-related engagement efforts and events have been cancelled, postponed, or pushed online.

With in-person consultations, dialogues and meetings limited for the foreseeable future, virtual events have been carried out under UN-REDD supported projects in several countries, with project activities that require fieldwork and visits to communities also moving online.

Virtual dialogues engaging indigenous peoples on climate change and forest projects in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru have highlighted differences between online and in-person meetings. Some lessons learned from the past year of virtual dialogues include the need to understand barriers to participation, including any language and literacy barriers, and then to design and implement the meeting to ensure active participation. In some cases, this could mean disseminating information over the radio where stakeholders have limited access to computers, internet, or cellular technology.

Since March 2020, UN-REDD has supported virtual spaces and facilitated online dialogues in Colombia with the purpose of setting up the preconditions to advance into more formal process of consultation and validation for the National Indigenous Environmental Council. More than 20 virtual meetings took place last year and served as a good avenue for reaching agreements and commitments on both sides.

With the pandemic exacerbating gender inequalities and increasing vulnerabilities for marginalized groups, including women and indigenous peoples, UN-REDD has ensured that online meetings and missions integrate an inclusive gender perspective. Interestingly, virtual events supported by the UN-REDD Programme since the onset of the pandemic have seen an increase in women's participation in some types of online meetings.

According to a recent UN-REDD survey, more than half of both male and female respondents found it easier to participate in these virtual sessions. While both men and women prefer in-person meetings, the majority of respondents working at the local level found the virtual format easier to attend, in part because attending virtually is cheaper, safer and less time consuming. However, it is important to note that this is not universally the case. For some participants, the additional costs of data to access online consultations can be a burden, as can be the loss of income from travel stipends that are often available for attendance at in-person events.

Adapting to this new *modus operandi*, event organizers, facilitators and participants have observed that the use of small breakout groups, led and guided by a facilitator, can help ensure that participants have an opportunity to speak, as can the use of pre-recorded trainings or recorded live trainings that allow participants to undertake training when it works for their schedule. Additional lessons include: promoting gender equitable involvement and knowledge sharing through the use of both male and female facilitators, speakers and presenters; liaising with local and national women's groups to see what types of barriers women face during online consultations and to source possible solutions to overcoming these obstacles; and using diverse online platforms, such as WhatsApp, that work well via smartphone and use less data than other applications.

Turning sustainable forestry into music in Colombia: a new business vision for the Yurumanguí community

In 2020, the Colombian community of Yurumanguí became part of an innovative initiative to promote the use of legal and sustainable wood from their community forests, while also preserving their cultural and musical heritage. This fair trade initiative, supported by the UN-REDD and FAO-EU FLEGT Programmes as part of their larger work in area of community forest management and the legal timber trade, promotes the sale of wood that is harvested legally and sustainably for use in lutherie, the making of stringed musical instruments such as guitars.

The Yurumanguireños, a black community that has ancestrally occupied the Yurumanguí River basin since the mid-16th Century, is made up of 3,800 inhabitants who rely on forests to make houses, furniture, boats and musical instruments. But for decades, labour-intensive methods of wood harvesting has meant small profits for the community. This new collaboration between the Yurumanguí River Basin Community Council and the network of luthiers Red Faisán connects the community directly with buyers to promote a fair, sustainable and legal business.

Red Faisán is a cooperation between Luthiers Colombianos and the Coja Oficio Foundation, which promotes the traditional craft of lutherie and acts as the buyer, arranging and agreeing to the terms of sale, delivery and volume of wood per tree species. Since 2018, the Yurumanguí have been supported by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Minambiente), FAO and DEAM through the provision of technical assistance that has formalized their sustainable and community forest management.

"We recognise and value the ancestral connection between living creatures, and we wish to ask you a favour," Jorge Enrique Rodríguez, director of Coja Oficio Foundation and sponsor of Red Faisán, told the Yurumanguí delegates before felling began. "Please tell the trees what they will be made into – not fuelwood or charcoal, but rather that soon, they will be making music, and that we will do everything possible to make sure this music sounds beautiful and lasts."

"This tree felling was very special. For the first time, we knew what our wood would be used for, and the knowledge that it would be for creating music really motivated our eight loggers during 15 days of careful work," said Graciano Caicedo, leader of the Yurumanguí community. "Making the forest sing and bring music to Colombian ears is wonderful for us Yurumanguireños, since the rhythms of the Pacific accompany us daily in all we do."

The gender approach applied throughout this initiative has encouraged the role of women, in part through leadership opportunities and by integrating women into the community forestry process. With the wood purchased, the Faisán Network will carry out tests on the 16 species available, developing prototypes to identify which species have the best acoustics for guitars. This will enable the identification of the optimal wood composition, and eventually create a value chain centred on music and natural forests in the Pacific region of Colombia. This initiative has contributed to establishing good forest governance practices between wood producers and end-user industries, generating lessons learned on both sides that will be put into practice again soon.

Boosting forest conservation in Thailand

Covering about 40 percent of Thailand's territory, forests are critical for the country's environment, economy and a lifeline for many communities. Yet across Thailand and the larger Lower Mekong Region, illegal exploitation and trade of forest products are putting pressure on these ecosystems and the people depending on them. That pressure will only increase as global demand for wood products rises faster than supply, creating significant shortages by 2050.

With support from UN-REDD's Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region (SFT-LMR) initiative, Thailand is one of the five countries in the region working to boost its commitments to the legal and sustainable trade of wood products, to strengthening its forest and land governance to reduce illegal logging, and to reducing forest degradation and deforestation. The project includes the national government, forest and local authorities, NGOs, companies and forest communities.

Providing access to legal and sustainable forest products to communities and smallholders is a key SFT-LMR target. Located next to Bangkok's industrial area, Bangkachao is an island on the Chao Phraya river, considered an urban jungle and a green oasis for Thailand's capital. It absorbs about 6,000 tonnes of carbon per year and produces up to 6 million tonnes of oxygen annually. The local community is now working to restore and increase this green area to secure a more sustainable future. The Bangkachao Agroforestry Community Enterprise, supported by the SFT-LMR, aims to improve locals' capacity to conserve local ecosystems and improve mangrove biodiversity, planted forests, as well as water and soil management on farmland. As the area suffers from forest degradation, soil erosion and salinization, improving forest management and conservation will help address these issues.

"Local schools are among the project's beneficiaries," says Phathanajarin Suankaewmanee, manager of the training centre assisting 10 local schools on agroforestry, fruit farming, eco-tourism and commercializing forest products. "They learn to monitor water salinity, build freshwater storage for plantations and agriculture, collect water and soil data and plant perennials, such as coconut trees, rubber, bamboo, or mahogany, which can generate economic value in the future. This also increases youth awareness around agroforestry and forest conservation and improves job opportunities in the community."

The project is also helping locals use geographic information systems and mapping to monitor mangroves and planted forests and to pilot areas for carbon credit assessments. Using QR codes to register trees will also help with tracking tree growth and degradation, while improving digital skills in the community.

"Sustainable forest trade will improve Bangkachao livelihoods by generating income from a greener economy," says Suankaewmanee. "Bangkachao will be able to meet its conservation goals while generating sustainable incomes and being incentivised to engage in conservation and agroforestry."