

## The Fiji National REDD+ Programme

### Introduction

The Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector accounts for about a quarter (~10 – 12GtCOeq/yr) of net anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions mainly from deforestation, agricultural emissions from soil and nutrient management and livestock (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – IPCC Fifth Assessment report, 2014). The AFOLU sector plays a central role for food security and sustainable development and plays a critical role in both climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The IPCC report recognises that when implemented sustainably, activities to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation are cost-effective policy options for mitigating climate change, with potential economic, social and other environmental and adaptation co-benefits (e. g., conservation of biodiversity and water resources, and reducing soil erosion). The REDD+ policy framework (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forest and forest carbon stock enhancement) promotes an implementation regime that ensures transparent and credible emissions reduction and removal, whilst at the same time enhancing non-carbon benefits (or co-benefits), which are vital for the sustainable livelihoods of local communities.

Fiji has a forest cover of almost 1.1 million hectares, covering about fifty-six percent of the total land mass. Forest clearance, largely attributed to agriculture, can be observed on parts of Fiji. The country also has large areas of degraded and unutilised land which has potential for broad reforestation and afforestation activities. Fiji recognised REDD+ as an opportunity to contribute towards global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen the socio-economic status of its forest resource owners and protect its forest ecosystems. In 2009, the Fiji Forestry Department established the Fiji National REDD+ Programme.



### Key points

REDD+ progress in Fiji include:

1. An effective multi-sectoral National REDD+ Steering Committee
2. A National REDD+ Policy (endorsed in 2010)
3. National forest carbon stock calculation and forest cover change assessment
4. Legal study on Fiji's forest carbon rights and analysis of legal framework for REDD+ published
5. Development of REDD+ lease (for the Emalu pilot site).
6. Current development of a national forest biodiversity monitoring framework
7. Current development of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent approach for Fiji (will be applied for all consultation and consensus-seeking process in Fiji).
8. Drafting of national forest stratification approach and forest reference level determination
9. Emalu pilot site provides valuable experience's and lessons for technical and social approaches and procedures
10. Extensive REDD+ awareness-raising initiatives and material
11. Secured USD3.8million from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) for REDD readiness efforts in Fiji
12. Fiji accepted into the FCPF carbon funding pipeline (2015)

## Objectives of the Fiji National REDD+ Programme

The Fiji National REDD+ Programme aims to implement the National REDD+ Policy. The Fiji REDD-Plus Policy has the overall objective of enhancing the national forest-based carbon balance by:

- i. Supporting and strengthening initiatives that address the drivers of forest-based carbon emissions

- ii. Encouraging the drivers of forest-based carbon sinks

The implementation of the national REDD+ programme is overseen by the National REDD+ Steering Committee, a multi-sectoral and inter-agency committee with decision making capacities and technical expertise in various fields.

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## REDD+ co-benefits

Aside from retaining and enhancing carbon in forested landscapes, the Fiji national REDD-Plus Programme will also:

- a) Contribute to the core forest sector goals as defined in the Fiji Forest Policy including:
  - i. A transition to sustainable forest management.
  - ii. Reducing the loss of forest from the expansion of agricultural lands and other land use change.
  - iii. Protecting indigenous forest areas of high cultural, biological diversity, and ecosystem services value.
  - iv. Increasing timber production from the plantation sector through afforestation/reforestation of non-forest lands (excludes the conversion of wetlands/peatlands; indigenous palms).
  - v. Increasing agroforestry activities on non-forest lands (excludes the conversion of wetlands/peatlands; indigenous palms).
  - vi. Assist Fiji achieve its strategic goals in land based development and environmental management.
- b) Contribute to the Green Growth Framework for Fiji and the National Development Plan by:
  - i. Promoting the sustainable sourcing and production of forest products (both timber and non-timber products)

- ii. Promoting sustainable agriculture production and land use development
- iii. Promoting holistic land use planning
- c) Improve the livelihoods of local communities through initiatives that include:
  - i. Diversifying income generation including establishment of niche markets
  - ii. Capacity building of local communities on various issues including sustainable practices, good governance, financial management, technical field assistance etc.
- d) Support the strengthening of good governance structures and institutional strengthening through initiatives that include:
  - i. Developing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) guidelines for Fiji
  - ii. Strengthening community-based organisations and CSO institutions

As seen above, REDD+ is expected to contribute to multiple benefits and not only emissions reductions. These benefits include poverty alleviation, improved community livelihoods, technology transfer, sustainable use of forest resources, biodiversity conservation, good governance, benefit distribution structures, gender, etc.

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## Policy development & institutional framework

In September 2009, more than 50 stakeholders from various sectors and agencies came together in a 1-week consultation workshop to contribute to a scoping report detailing the country's capacity requirements to implement REDD-plus. The consultation also saw the drafting of a REDD+ Policy. The Fiji REDD-plus Policy was finalised in July 2010 after intensive consultations and in December 2010 the Fiji cabinet endorsed the Fiji National REDD-plus Policy.

The National REDD+ Steering Committee was formally established in May 2011 after a series of stakeholder meetings. The Deputy Conservator Forests (Services) (also

the National REDD+ Focal Point) serves as Chairperson. The Secretariat is the Fiji REDD+ Unit and GIZ. There are currently 19 member agencies and each are responsible for incorporating REDD+ activities into their organizational planning and budget and thus ensuring REDD+ activities are supported through the different sectoral agencies. The overarching function of the Fiji National REDD+ Steering Committee is to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Fiji REDD+ programme. Please refer to Figure 1 for the organisational structure of the National REDD+ Steering Committee.

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## Efforts towards a MRV (measuring, reporting and verification) system

In late 2010, Fiji national forest carbon stock of indigenous and plantation forests were calculated using existing inventory data. Figures based on current datasets estimate the national carbon stock for the forest estate to be 192, 270,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. Whilst experts confirm this as a defensible

figure, they also acknowledge this may be under-estimated. Preliminary carbon stock estimations calculated for the mahogany and pine plantation estates detected anomalies in the dataset and further analysis is currently underway to improve the data quality.

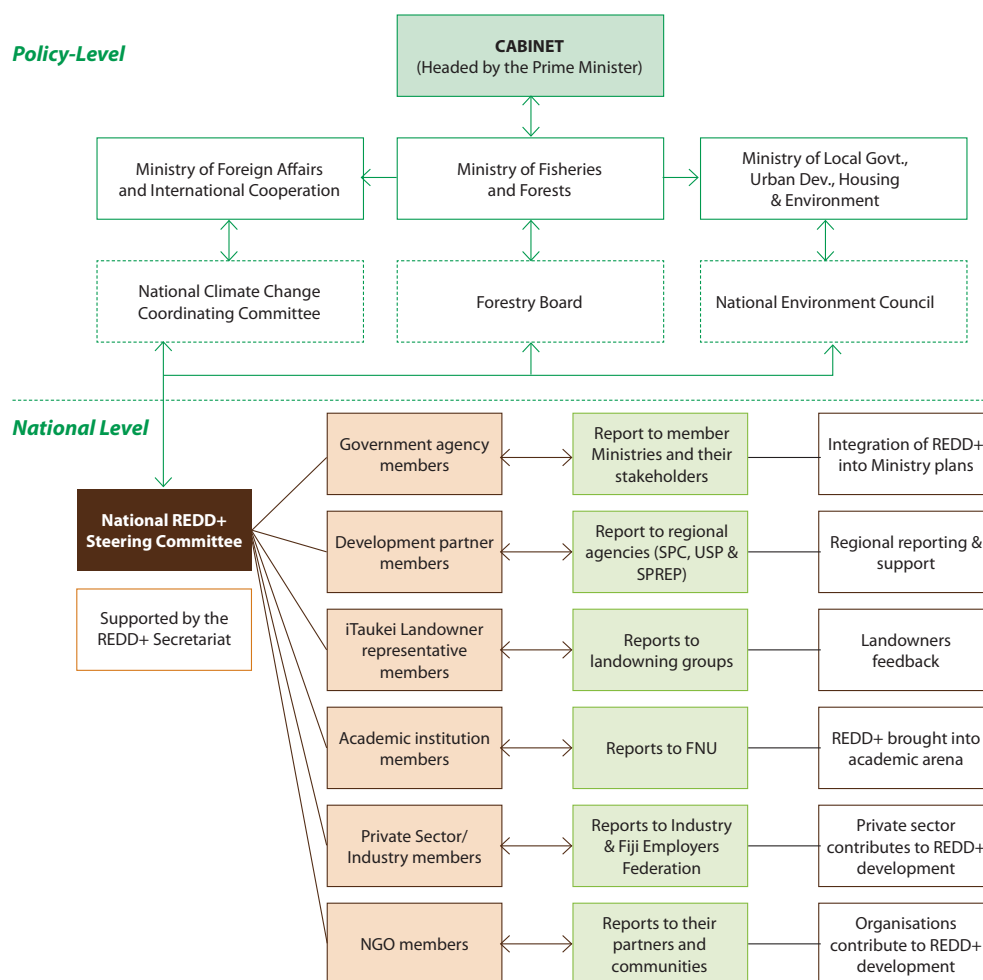


Figure 1 Steering, implementing and reporting structure for REDD+ in Fiji

The pilot site activities have provided useful and valuable information on the methodologies and procedures for biomass field measurements and forest cover change mapping. The Emalu National REDD+ Pilot site has enabled local experts to improve on the various monitoring procedures including the development of a methodology for biomass measurement of grasslands. This is necessary for the planned afforestation projects targeting the large expanse of

grasslands on both the two main large islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

The MRV activities are largely implemented by skilled local officers and experts. Capacity development of local experts on forest cover change and carbon stock assessment will be promoted.

## The Emalu REDD+ pilot site

The main Fiji REDD+ pilot site is located on Viti Levu and is one of the largest pieces of land (7,400Ha) to be owned by a single landowning clan (mataqali). The pilot site was established in 2012 after extensive landowner consultations. Activities in the pilot site have largely been undertaken by local experts including trained forestry officers and resource owners. This has not only reduced costs but also contributed to the development of local experts in the area of forest carbon stock measurements, biodiversity and social monitoring and participatory rural appraisal approaches.

A recent study reported that “the national REDD+ pilot site

approach in Fiji is able to deliver co-benefits (non-carbon-benefits) even during a demonstration phase based on a so-called ‘proof of concept’ experience. The REDD+ strategy and its demonstration site activities have left a substantial impact on livelihood models, natural resource management and deforestation.”

Achievements from the pilot site include:

1. Socio-economic and cultural surveys, carbon stock analysis, biodiversity surveys and land use mapping (carried out by a trained multi-sectoral and inter-agency team)



2. Development of a land use plan for areas around the pilot site. The land use plan considers economic, environmental, social and cultural issues. Approach and lessons learnt will be fed into the national land use planning guideline
3. Stratification of indigenous forest and grasslands for more accurate monitoring of forest carbon changes
4. Extensive community awareness-raising programmes on climate change and REDD+.
5. Local communities trained on alternative income generating sources such as bee-keeping, improved livestock management, and crop diversification. The main purpose of these exercises is to reduce the agriculture clearance pressure on the Emalu forest.
6. The Draubuta community nursery was established in 2013 and included training on nursery management. The establishment of the nursery has facilitated tree planting amongst the communities in the area with the availability of tree seedlings
7. Afforestation and reforestation of degraded grasslands began in 2014 and is ongoing. This includes the establishment of agroforestry systems for food security and growing woodlots (for firewood) close to the village. Aside from improving livelihoods these activities also serve to reduce pressure off the Emalu forest
8. Women have been trained to strengthen their socio-economic status and improve personal wellbeing. An evaluation of the trainings revealed a change in mind



set amongst the ladies (like more conscious on reducing, reusing and recycling waste, better time management).

9. Local counterparts trained on participatory tools, surveying skills, land use planning and climate change issues. The upskilling of local counterparts will be necessary for upscaling and replication of activities including training on climate change related issues.
10. Pilot site approach for biodiversity monitoring used as case study in international publication (ref: [https://www.zsl.org/sites/default/files/media/2014-10/ZSL\\_GIZ\\_REDD\\_Sourcebook\\_2014\\_0.pdf](https://www.zsl.org/sites/default/files/media/2014-10/ZSL_GIZ_REDD_Sourcebook_2014_0.pdf))

The pilot site activities are informing the development of national approaches and methodologies to implement REDD+ at both the national and sub-national scale.

## Conclusion

Fiji has advanced rapidly with its REDD+ readiness actions and this progress is quite significant given the relatively small funding compared to other countries. Whilst REDD-plus is acknowledged to be a complex mechanism, the wide participatory consultation process, along with capacity development on the subject, ensured a common understanding of REDD-plus and issues being openly addressed. Collaboration and cooperation was greatly facilitated by the presence of existing policy frameworks protecting indigenous land and cultural rights, and a recognition that REDD+ in Fiji will not only protect forest resources but also contribute towards improving the

livelihoods of resource owners. Another contributing factor is the trust between forestry sector stakeholders, developed over more than 2 decades of working together in the areas of sustainable forest management, community-based forestry, and forest policy development.

Political support for REDD+ in Fiji is strong, providing a positive environment (like the commitment of various government agencies) towards REDD+ readiness. This political support is also reflected in Fiji Government's budget allocation of F\$300,000/per annum for REDD+ since 2012.

The Fiji National REDD+ Programme was established in 2009. The focal agency is the Forestry Department (which includes a REDD+ Unit) of the Ministry of Fisheries and Forests. The implementation of the programme is guided by the National REDD+ Steering Committee, composed of members from various sectors and agencies. The REDD+ secretariat supports the National REDD+ Steering Committee in carrying out their roles.

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