UN-REDD Programme 2023 Annual Report

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Abbreviations

AFF	African Forest Forum
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
A/R	Afforestation/Reforestation
CbF	Community-based forestry
IEF	Indonesia Environment Fund's
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
AIM4Forest	AIM for Forests (A4F) initiative
BC3	Basque Center for Climate Change
BRGM	Indonesia Peatland and Mangrove Restoration Agency
BSDS	Benefit Sharing Distribution System Guidelines
BSP	Benefit Sharing Plan
BTR	Biennial Transparency Reports
CAFI	Central African Forest Initiative
CATIE	The Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center
CBIT	GEF-Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency
CCDA	PNG Climate Change Development Authority
CDE	Myanmar Centre for Development and Environment
CEMIS	Cambodia Environment Management Information System
CF	Community Forests
CFE	Community Forest Enterprises
CFMGs	Community Forest Management Groups
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CONAF	Chile National Forest Corporation
CPA	Community Protected Areas
CREF	Forest Emissions Reduction Contract
CRF	Climate and Resilience Fund
CRGE	Climate Resilient Green Economy
CSF	Conservation Society Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ENUMeC	The National Strategy for the Use of Carbon Markets
ERP	Emissions Reductions Program
ERPAs	Emissions Reductions Purchase Agreements
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
EUDR	EU's Deforestation-free Regulation
FAN	Foundation Friends of Nature
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FCPF-CF	FCPF Carbon Fund
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forestry Users
FGRM	Feedback, Grievance, and Redress Mechanism
FONAREDD	The National Fund for REDD+
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
FREL	Forest Reference Emissions Level
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCFTF	Governors' Climate & Forests Task Force initiative
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIBEC	Inter-donor environment and climate group
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism Guidelines
HFLD	High Forest, Low Deforestation
IPAM	Amazon Environmental Research Institute
ISFL	Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LEAF	Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest finance
LMCC	Framework Law on Climate Change
LUCF	Land Use Change and Forest
LULUCF	Land use, land-use change and forestry
MAFF	Cambodia Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MARD	Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MAyDS	Argentina Ministry of Environment
MDA	Direct Measures of Action
MIDAGRI	Peru Ministry of Agrarian Development and Irrigation
MINAE	Costa Rica Ministry of Environment and Energy
MINAM	Peru's Ministry of Environment
MOA	Memorandum of Agreements
MoEF	Indonesia Ministry of Environment and Forestry
MoNRE	Vietnam Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MRLG	Mekong Region Land Governance
MRV	Measurement, reporting and verification
MWE	Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NFI	National Forest Inventory
NFMS	National Forest Monitoring System
NWFP	Non-wood Forest Products
PEFC	The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
PPICC	Indigenous Peoples' Platform for Climate Change
RBPs	Results-based Payments
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
RENAMI	National Registry of Mitigation Measures
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SEP/REDD+	Un Secrétariat Exécutif Permanent pour la REDD+
SOI	Safeguards Information
TMR	TREES Monitoring Report
TRD	TREES Registration Document
USFS	US Forest Service
WGCFNR	Wondo Genet College of Forest and Natural Resources

Foreword

2023 marked the 15th anniversary of the UN-REDD Programme. Since UN-REDD was launched by the UN Secretary General in 2008, the forest and climate agenda has evolved significantly, with forests have emerged as the axis from which progress can be made towards the Paris Agreement goals and from which we can mobilise finance for climate action and advance the SDGs. This was evident at UNFCCC COP28, where forests, including mangroves, featured prominently. For the first time in the formal COP28 negotiations, the goal of "halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030" was included in an adopted UNFCCC decision. The Green Climate Fund board was requested to continue its financing for REDD+ Results-based Payments. Costa Rica and Ghana signed the first two landmark Emission Reductions Payment Agreements (ERPAs) with the LEAF Coalition.

These are important developments, but amid escalating greenhouse gas emissions, record-breaking temperature highs and exacerbated climate impacts, global efforts to reduce emissions have fallen short. Deforestation and forest degradation continue to take place at an alarming pace, and finance to support implementation has been insufficient to date. The need to rapidly accelerate action on forests, to meet global commitments to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030 and to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050, has never been greater.

As we reflect on the heightened urgency to deliver forest and climate action, we are pleased to present the 2023 Annual Report of the UN-REDD Programme. The report highlights the expansion of the breadth and depth of the Programme, including the launch of three new initiatives: the UN-REDD African Forest Forum partnership, the REDD+ Academy 3.0 and the Accelerating Innovative Monitoring for Forests (AIM4F) initiative. We are also pleased to recognise an enlarged donor base, having welcomed the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom to the Programme.

Through strategic partnerships and targeted interventions, we have contributed to enabling countries in the design and deployment of policies, institutional frameworks, and programmes for the sustainable management of forests, while also promoting inclusive development and resilience to deforestation pressures. As we reflect on the achievements and progress of the UN-REDD Programme, it is clear that our collective efforts have yielded significant results in advancing forest solutions and addressing the climate emergency. This report highlights the central role of forests in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainable development.

Our work with forest countries has focused on technical assistance to address the drivers of deforestation, mobilising and implementing climate finance for forests, and promoting social inclusion and socio-environmental safeguards in climate and forest policy and financing endeavours. In doing so, we recognise the vital contributions of Indigenous peoples and local communities to the climate and forests agenda, as well as inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches. The Programme has continued to apply the Gender Marker Rating System to monitor the integration of gender perspectives into technical assistance and ensure systematic efforts to advance gender equality. The Programme's commitment to supporting countries in meeting their forest commitments, improving policies and promoting synergies with agriculture underscores our commitment to sustainability and climate resilience.

The 2023 Annual Report underscores the wide range of support that UN-REDD has provided at the global, regional and country level, but equally shows the urgent need for more coordinated action to protect and restore forests.

This report comes out in 2024 as the global community is preparing to scale up actions and finance to deliver on the 2030 forest objectives throughout the second half of this decade, and so is UN-

REDD for its post 2025 Strategy. There are a number of strategic issues for the success of the forest and climate agenda that we hear being raised, including complex reflections on land-use; transparency frameworks; the critical need for forests to be strongly embedded in NDCs for their mitigation, adaptation and finance potential; carbon pricing and markets. These are some of the issues that will need to be considered as we start reflecting on the next phase of the UN-REDD Programme, which will be done collaboratively with all stakeholders.

We remain firm in our commitment to partner with forest countries to unlock the full potential of forest solutions. Together, let us harness the power of forests and nature-based solutions to build a more resilient and sustainable future for all.

Executive summary

The UN-REDD Programme is pleased to present its 2023 Annual Report, which summarises its efforts to assist developing countries in recognizing forests for their global roles in climate mitigation, as well as their importance in national, rural and community economies. This report provides a detailed overview of the programme's activities and achievements throughout the year, highlighting efforts to advance climate action, conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable development on a global scale.

As the world is increasingly affected by the urgency of the climate crisis, the Programme has remained firm in its commitment to unlocking the full potential of forest solutions to the climate and planetary crises. Through the implementation of the UN-REDD Programme's Results Framework for 2021-2025, the Programme has redoubled its efforts to support countries in accessing performance-based financing schemes for REDD+ results. This strategic focus underscores the Programme's determination to support international development agendas, particularly the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Programme works hand-in-hand with the UN Climate Promise initiative to assist countries across the Global South to accelerate the implementation of their national climate pledges (NDCs) in the forest and land sector, ahead of the review and enhancement cycle that will come in 2024-2025.

Against the backdrop of escalating climate change and biodiversity loss, critical challenges have been identified in reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UNEP Emissions Gap Report. In response, the UN-REDD Programme has emerged as a key player in accelerating action for forests and nature, from NDC ambition to action at community level, achieving significant milestones in strengthening technical capacity, mobilising financial resources and fostering stakeholder engagement.

Expanding its reach in partner countries, the Programme has provided tailored technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of national REDD+ strategies and action plans. Key initiatives have been launched to promote sustainable land use practices and mitigate emissions from agriculture and land use, with a focus on accessing and mobilising climate finance from multilateral funds, such as the Green Climate Fund.

Continuing its commitment to support partner countries in achieving the four pillars of UNFCCC's Warsaw Framework for REDD+, the Programme has intensified efforts to improve policy implementation, establish sound monitoring systems and strengthen safeguards information systems. Significant progress has been made in several areas, including policy implementation, financing strategies and social inclusion efforts, as well as progress in decoupling agricultural and forestry supply chains from deforestation.

In advancing forest solutions, the programme has made significant progress in mobilising results-based financing for REDD+ initiatives, for example in countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana and Peru. Technical assistance has been instrumental in facilitating access to financing mechanisms such as the LEAF Coalition, with potential REDD+ results-based financing by helping countries comply with ART-TREES, estimated at $1-1.5 billion from 2022 to 2026.

Efforts to strengthen forest-related activities within NDCs remained a key priority, with support extended to more than 25 countries since 2018. Particular achievements include the inclusion of forest-related solutions with quantified targets in revised NDCs and the alignment of financing strategies with voluntary carbon markets. Despite progress, challenges remain in translating commitments into concrete actions to facilitate mitigation and adaptation efforts in the forest sector.

The programme's ongoing commitment to knowledge management and capacity building has culminated in targeted initiatives focusing on [REDD+ finance](#), [social inclusion](#) and the agriculture-forestry nexus. Events and dialogues aimed at building political and societal support for nature-based solutions have been instrumental, as have efforts to integrate [gender equality](#) and women's empowerment principles into REDD+ activities.

The UN REDD Programme facilitated more than 25 knowledge-sharing events in 2023, involving 8,000 stakeholders worldwide, including governments, academia, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and the private sector. These events covered a range of topics, including sustainable forest trade and gender mainstreaming in voluntary carbon markets, and fostered collaborative learning. A particular focus was on forest carbon markets and nesting, resulting in country-specific plans for successful REDD+ implementation. Other exchanges in [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#) and [Tanzania](#) deepened knowledge on results-based financing and [social inclusion](#). For example, workshops on forest monitoring, such as the one in Colombia, emphasised the integration of satellite imagery and field data for accurate assessments, addressing the challenges of monitoring at the national level. In addition, workshops on community-based forestry and the agro-forestry nexus highlighted regional efforts to address climate challenges in a sustainable way.

The programme also produced key knowledge products, including a comparative legal study on [carbon rights](#) and briefs on [REDD+ finance](#). New communities of practice were initiated, such as the group on [gender and voluntary carbon markets](#). The programme's digital presence grew significantly, with increased social media engagement and newsletter distribution.

Collective advocacy efforts, including the #SaveForestsNow campaign and [Forest Dialogues](#), raised awareness and strengthened political support for forests. Partnerships with [indigenous peoples](#) and cutting-edge technology initiatives, such as the Predictive Deforestation Model, showcased innovative approaches to forest conservation.

The programme also continued to support partner countries in integrating [gender equality](#) and women's empowerment into their REDD+ activities, focusing on forest monitoring, carbon market readiness and REDD+ results-based payment efforts. Initiatives included improving women's access to forest monitoring and seeking their feedback on gender-responsive improvements. Support also included integrating gender considerations into various processes and activities, such as safeguards processes in Argentina, nesting approaches in Cambodia, and strengthening National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) in Indonesia.

In the Lower Mekong Region, extensive gender mainstreaming efforts were undertaken, including the collection of gender-disaggregated data and the full integration of a gender approach in all study processes. In addition, catalytic support was provided to mainstream gender in REDD+ finance and the voluntary carbon market through various initiatives, including knowledge sharing, online communities and dialogues. These efforts aimed to address gender gaps and promote women's representation and leadership in the carbon market sector. The programme also facilitated the first in-person meeting of the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Gender and REDD+ Platform and developed a social media campaign for International Women's Day to highlight efforts to challenge stereotypes and promote women's participation in forest technologies and innovation

As we look towards the horizon, the UN-REDD Programme continues to reaffirm its strong commitment to driving greater ambition, collaboration and innovation to address the pressing challenges of climate change, deforestation and biodiversity loss. With a renewed focus on REDD+ implementation, finance mobilisation and the central role of forests in achieving net zero emissions,

the Programme is well positioned to advance forest solutions and pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient future for generations to come.

Progress towards REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised

The UN-REDD Programme supported several countries to implement their policies and measures to realize their NDC-based forests commitments. This policy implementation and acceleration effort was done through continued advisory work with governments, as well as through multi-stakeholder policy and investment platforms that engaged communities, Indigenous Peoples, companies and farmer cooperatives. These ranged from sustainable forest management to community-based forestry, and from deforestation-free agricultural production and trade to Indigenous climate solutions. UN-REDD provided technical assistance to inform and enhance a number of national funding schemes for climate and forest solutions, such as FONAFIFO (Costa Rica), FONAREDD (Democratic Republic of Congo) and IEF (Indonesia).

UN-REDD support for the forest-agriculture nexus achieved a major milestone in Ecuador, through its national scheme for deforestation-free, sustainable and climate-friendly production, which has now become a recognised blueprint for action. Other countries, such as Costa Rica, are following the same pathway, and nations in Africa have signalled interest to learn from, replicate and adapt such approaches in 2024. This represents a proof of concept in the complex forest-agriculture interface that UN-REDD has helped test, and that will further deploy in coming years.

The support of the Programme on forest monitoring and safeguards has continued, primarily with a view to incorporate and institutionalize enhancements to existing monitoring systems and making them ready to address emerging needs and requirements from a variety of financing sources, and in line with national priorities.

Furthermore, the significant role of community-based forestry in realizing forest solutions has been supported in different countries, for example in Ecuador, Colombia and Zambia, and at regional and global levels. Community-based forestry initiatives not only contribute to sustainable forest management but also empower local communities and foster resilience against deforestation pressures. By incorporating this angle, the Programme ensure a comprehensive approach that recognizes diverse strategies and stakeholders' contributions towards achieving sustainable forest management goals.

Forest solutions rewarded

UN-REDD has continued its support for countries in meeting the requirements for accessing REDD+ result-based finance, voluntary carbon markets, and establishing cooperation under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement for the forest sector. The Programme assists countries in achieving Emissions Reductions (ERs) with higher environmental and social integrity and promoting better pricing for certified ERs.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the UN-REDD Program has provided support to seven countries engaged in the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest finance (LEAF) Coalition process, including Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Peru. Similarly, in the Asia and Pacific region, Nepal, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Vietnam have benefited from UN-REDD's assistance, with Lao PDR exploring options through LEAF. Additionally, four African countries, namely the Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, and Kenya, have submitted LEAF proposals, with Ethiopia in the process of preparation.

Significant progress has been made in advancing forest and climate finance initiatives, with a focus on aligning different scales and systems related to accounting, governance, and safeguards. In Cambodia, the piloting of its Nested System is being supported across its technical components providing valuable insights to facilitate the system's operationalisation and enable its scalable implementation at the national level, which has the potential to unlock climate financing opportunities and ensure high integrity in emission reductions. Efforts have also been directed towards providing dedicated technical support to Argentina, Colombia, Lao PDR, Mexico, PNG, Peru, and Vietnam, aimed at exploring options

for engaging in REDD+ results-based finance (RBF). These efforts have been characterized by a commitment to fostering participation and equity, adopting a gender-sensitive approach.

For instance, the development of the "Roadmap for Lao PDR to Access REDD+ Results Based Finance" has played a key role in contributing to the national formulation of a Presidential Decree on Carbon Markets and a Carbon Market Strategy for Lao PDR. This accomplishment has been achieved through collaborative efforts involving UN Resident Coordinator Office (UN-RCO) and national partners. Furthermore, progress has been made across various countries including Chile, DRC, Ecuador, Ghana, Mexico, Nepal, PNG, Peru, Uganda, and Vietnam. These countries have advanced in the preparation, drafting, or submission of their ART-TREES Registration Documents and Initial Monitoring Reports. Additionally, updates to co-benefit baselines and monitoring have been undertaken to support Costa Rica in accessing climate finance.

Notably, Ghana became the first African nation to submit the ART-TREES documents with support from UN-REDD. Further, Costa Rica and Ghana achieved a significant milestone by finalizing Emissions Reductions Purchase Agreements (ERPAs) with Emergent during COP28, becoming one of the first forest governments to do so. This accomplishment garnered substantial attention during the event and in subsequent media coverage.

UN-REDD has facilitated South-South exchanges involving over 250 government officials from 30 countries across Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa on climate finance and results-based payments. Additionally, in collaboration with the Basque Center for Climate Change (BC3), UN-REDD organized a series of dialogues highlighting the role of the Food and Other Land Use (FOLU) sector in achieving net-zero emissions. These exchanges have been instrumental in sharing experiences in implementing REDD+ strategies, identifying climate finance opportunities from both public and private sources, and exploring various financial instruments to achieve the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) targets. Furthermore, the "Comparative study of carbon rights in the context of jurisdictional REDD+" was launched, aiming to enhance global understanding of carbon rights and facilitate best practices in benefit distribution among governments, while addressing challenges in carbon rights management.

Looking ahead, over a dozen countries continue to receive UN-REDD support to access REDD+ result-based finance. Notable potential financing includes contributions from the LEAF Coalition, with significant sums earmarked for countries like DRC, Ghana, and Nepal, among others, totalling between USD 1-1.5 billion for the period 2022-2026. UN-REDD also support countries prepare financing and investment strategies for accessing future results-based financing. Meanwhile, the board of the Green Climate Fund initiated negotiations for a new REDD+ results-based payments (RBPs) scheme, building on the experience of the pilot phase, in which UN-REDD agencies are playing a central role as implementing vehicles at country level. UN-REDD agencies were also invited to provide inputs at the dialogues convened by the GCF Secretariat to develop Terms of Reference for such future RBPs scheme, while are expected to continue engaged as these negotiations evolve in 2024.

Forest solutions enhanced

The UN-REDD Programme has continued to support tropical forest countries to both integrate and enhance Land use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector actions related to REDD+ in their new or updated NDCs. Alongside and intrinsically linked to this aim to support increasing ambition over time, there was a strong focus in 2023 on translating ambition into action through accelerated NDC implementation. This includes support for the inclusion of enhanced or new targets or commitments including or relevant to the forest sector, improvements in institutional coordination to support submissions of new or updated NDCs, as well as securing finance to implement enhanced NDC mitigation actions in the forest sector. According to the latest update of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) NDC Synthesis Report in 2023, 85 percent of the latest NDCs include the LULUCF sector. To notable extent, this is the result of support from UN-REDD and the UN Climate Promise. While 88 percent of NDCs refer to specific mitigation options in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector, a smaller proportion of new or updated NDCs (47 percent) include a quantitative mitigation target for the sector. Furthermore, 34 percent

include explicit reference to reducing deforestation, including efforts to implement REDD+, which reflects a slight increase from previous NDCs (31 percent).

The global-level guidance document [Aligning Short-term Land Sector Actions with Long-term Climate Goals](#) was launched in September 2023 as a collaboration between UNDP's Climate Promise and UN-REDD, to support NDC implementation in the forest sector. The guidance – contextualized for particular country priorities - has since been applied in several countries.

UN-REDD has also been developing critical analytical work to support countries to consider a strategic financing mix that combines public and private investment, innovative financing mechanisms, carbon finance opportunities, and international cooperation to drive sustainable and effective climate action. The Programme has focused on developing and refining methodologies to better understand and track public expenditures in the forestry-related sectors. The completion and validation workshop in 2023, in collaboration with FAO's MAFAP team, resulted in the development of a methodology for classifying public expenditure on forest conservation in Uganda, leading to improved understanding among ministries about resource distribution, insights into NDC implementation costs, and identification of a finance gap between government commitments and actual expenditures.

Since 2018, UN-REDD has provided technical assistance to more than 25 countries in enhancing the role of forest-related activities into new or updated NDCs, as well as NDC implementation plans. This has complemented other ongoing efforts, such as UNDP's Climate Promise, where over 53 countries have requested LULUCF-related support. In addition, in 2023, UN-REDD supported more than 10 countries (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ecuador, Ghana, PNG, Peru, Viet Nam and Zambia) in accessing finance and developing work plans to enhance forest sector components of their NDCs, while also integrating gender and social inclusion considerations. The following are examples of country-level measures that were achieved or strengthened with UN-REDD support: In Cambodia, alignment processes between government priorities and national commitment to NDC forest targets have been underway between the RS and the Ministry of Environment (MoE); Ecuador has strategically formulated a REDD+ financing sustainability strategy which serves as the framework for expanding the PROAmazonia portfolio and enhancing the implementation of NDC, including a national scheme for deforestation-free production and trade, which emerges as a foundational pillar for NDC delivery; in Cote d'Ivoire, a review of the 2022 NDC resulted in a policy brief that will inform and enhance the next iteration of the NDC; finally, in Kenya, the Climate Change Act of 2016 was amended – in part to create incentives and implement initiatives to support emission reduction and removal targets in line with the NDC.

Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

The UN-REDD Programme supports the SDGs agenda in a wide and integrated way. Analysis of the country results, presented in the following section, shows that UN-REDD technical assistance is supporting countries and stakeholders with the realization of at least seven different SDGs. UN-REDD technical assistance, policy advice and knowledge management serve countries to advance SDG targets under SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 15 (forest conservation & sustainable management), among others. Hence the recognition of UN-REDD as the UN platform for forest solutions to the climate emergency.

UN-REDD assists countries in integrating forest- and land-based climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning (SDG 13.2), improving stakeholder and institutional capacities on climate change mitigation planning and actions (SDGs 13.3 & 13/b) and helping mobilize international climate finance at scale and enabling countries in accessing the Green Climate Fund (SDG 13/a). UN-REDD also promotes the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of forests across the world, aiming ultimately at halting deforestation (SDGs 15.1 & 15.2) while mobilizing investments and economic incentives to finance sustainable forest management (SDG 15/b).

Beyond the core focus on SDGs 13 and 15, UN-REDD serves SDG 5 (gender equality) by systematically promoting the full and effective participation of women in decision-making (SDG 5.5), as well as

women's equal rights to land and natural resources (SDG 5/a). Internal UN-REDD gender mainstreaming tools and policies underpin such efforts across the portfolio.

The UN-REDD Programme also supports SDG 16 (inclusive institutions and societies) by supporting the participation of Indigenous peoples, forest communities and civil society organizations in national policies and financing schemes for forest governance and climate action (SDG 16.7 & 16.10), as well as by empowering developing countries to participate and inform international climate governance institutions and negotiations (SDG 16.8).

UN-REDD also promotes SDG 12 (sustainable trade) by promoting policies and partnerships for deforestation-free commodity chains, encouraging countries and companies to adopt and monitor sustainable production and trade practices (SDG 12.6). UN-REDD also contributes to SDG 1 (fighting

poverty) by promoting equal rights to forest lands and resources, notably with regards to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (SDG 1.4), as well as by mobilizing international climate finance towards developing countries engaged in forest conservation with local communities that are custodians of such forests (SDG 1/a).

Finally, UN-REDD is a prominent force in SDG 17 (partnerships for sustainable development) by stimulating a wide and rich diversity of collaborative arrangements and schemes, including multi-stakeholder policy platforms, institutional alliances, and public-private partnerships for forest conservation and climate action. UN-REDD helps developing countries mobilize and combine financial resources from multiple partners for national sustainability endeavours (SDG 17.3). UN-REDD also helps with the scoping and building of public-private partnerships for forest solutions to the climate emergency (SDG 17.17).

Furthermore, UN-REDD promotes the generation and sharing of knowledge on forest solutions across countries and stakeholders, including through South-South cooperation (SDG 17.6 & 17.16). UN-REDD equally builds capacities in developing countries to support national climate plans towards implementing the SDGs (SDG 17.9), along with enhancing policy and stakeholder coherence for sustainable development, notably through NDC design, implementation, and toward enhancement (SDG 17.14).

Country results

The following section outlines results across the 23 countries and initiatives that were actively supported by UN-REDD in 2023 through technical assistance. A traffic-light colour code is used to give a snapshot of progress in each country.

Under the traffic-light system, the implementation status of each type of support is identified as follows:

On track: All activities are under way in accordance with the 2023 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.

Argentina

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
In 2023, the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development (MAyDS) and FAO with support of UNEP moved forward in developing and socializing key technical and safeguards instruments, as well as in building capacities necessary for a successful implementation of the Green Climate Fund's (GCF) RBPs project, designed to enhance and scale up implementation of national policy on forests and climate change, including the law for the conservation of native forests and the country's NDC. UN-REDD technical assistance complemented support related to enabling activities and ensuring synergies with broader REDD+ efforts, including by providing technical support to review and update the Project's Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), and gender mainstreaming approaches.

Forest solutions rewarded:
The National Strategy for the Use of Carbon Markets (ENUMeC) was approved by Resolution 385/2023 of the MAyDS. As part of this process, initial inputs and guidelines were provided to MAyDS for the development of a roadmap to design a financing mechanism for emission reductions. This was also linked to the operationalization of the Environmental Fund under the General Environmental Law in the country. These inputs referenced the model of the Climate and Resilience Fund being developed in Indonesia and would seek to support the establishment of the country's first environmental fund capable of leveraging financial resources directed to the AFOLU sector.

Forest solutions enhanced:
UN-REDD, through the regional Safeguards and Integrity Working Group, has supported the safeguards teams of the MAyDS to build capacity on SIS and integrated safeguards frameworks, subnational to national safeguards reporting, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In addition, with the aim of ensuring that safeguards-related requirements of the Warsaw REDD+ Framework are met, a strategic note has been prepared for the new government administration pointing out key aspects of context, UNFCCC requirement and milestones recommended to be approached in 2024.

Challenges and solutions

A successful UN-REDD mission in March 2023 facilitated further coordination on the TA for the year's activities. Some delays occurred in 2023 due to presidential elections and reengagement with the new authorities will commence as soon as they are appointed.

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Gender and social inclusion

Promoting and strengthening the gender approach continues to be a key focus in UN-REDD support to Argentina. For example, for the technical support provided to the update of the RBP Project's ESMP, a number of the activities developed were aimed at complementing the applicable legal analysis on gender and strengthening the evaluation of alignment between the three safeguards frameworks applicable in the project (FAO's, GCF's and Cancún Agreements), including the gender approach. In the case of the UN-REDD Working Group on Safeguards and Integrity, two sessions included discussion of different options and their suitability for ensuring a gender approach in SIS and/or integrated safeguards frameworks. The exchange and experiences of countries discussed the pros and cons of introducing separate gender-specific safeguards or indicators or implementing gender-specific indicators or safeguards in the different thematic safeguards. Additionally, Argentina participated in the Gender Day of the Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America (September 29 to August 1, 2023). During this gender knowledge exchange, Argentina shared its lessons learned, experiences and good practices in integrating gender into its REDD+ action.

Partnerships

The Undersecretary for Environment is leading, with support from UN-REDD, the implementation of the GCF REDD+ RBP project, recognizing Argentina's REDD+ results for the years 2014 and 2016, worth of $82 million. The REDD+ RBP is not a stand-alone project, but it is fully framed within Argentina's Forest Law as an active element of the country's forestry agenda implementation. The RBP project helps Argentina as it advances its Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement targets, while promoting territorial forest management and forest restoration, enhancing and upscaling forest-friendly livestock management, the sustainable use of wood and non-wood forest products, and the improvement of prevention and early response to forest fires. UN-REDD leverages the established, solid partnership with the project, including various aspects of gender, safeguards, climate finance, emerging standards and high environmental integrity.

Linkages to SDGs

UN-REDD´s TA contributes directly to SDGs 13 and 15.

Bolivia

On track	Delayed
X	

In 2023 UN-REDD resumed support to the country through Technical Assistance and in synergy with the AIM for Forests (A4F) initiative, a dedicated UK-funded programme specialized in forest monitoring issues, executed by FAO. In this context, UN-REDD seeks to complement Bolivia's efforts to consolidate, implement, monitor, and report on forest solutions under results-based cooperation, in a way that contributes to its NDC objectives.

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
Initial discussions with both the Vice Presidency's and UK delegates were held in the context of the Regional Forum on Forests and Climate Finance, hosted by the Government of Costa Rica and UN-REDD in late August 2023, focusing on the overall scope and objectives of UN-REDD's technical assistance, including through A4F, for the period 2023-2024. Further discussions and preliminary identification of TA priorities were held with the government in the last trimester of 2023, including

in the margins of the Climate Week LAC, between 23 and 25 October 2023 in Panama City. Some priorities preliminarily identified with the government include the consolidation of an integrated strategy to reduce forest loss and degradation, accompanied by financing roadmap and regulatory solutions, and strengthen Measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) processes.

Forest solutions rewarded:

Bolivia submitted a [Proposal to the LEAF Coalition](#) in September 2022 and approved in 2023, with a view to accessing to international results-based cooperation. Bolivia's proposed accounting area under its LEAF proposal is subnational, including two jurisdictions: Department of Pando, and the Indigenous Territory of Charagua. During 2023, Bolivia submitted a proposed Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL) to the UNFCCC for technical assessment. These actions have received the support of the international cooperation, mobilizing resources so that Bolivia can move towards compliance with its climate commitments associated with forests. UNREDD's technical assistance seeks to complement on-going efforts geared at facilitating Bolivia's access to results-based international cooperation, including through the LEAF Coalition. During the last quarter of 2023, a delegation from the government attended UNREDD's side events in the margins of the Climate Week LAC, between 23 – 25 October 2023 in Panama, which focused on matters of nesting and environmental and social integrity.

Forest solutions enhanced:

Bolivia has included relevant objectives in the forest sector as part of its updated [Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for the period 2021-2030](#), presented to the UNFCCC in April 2022. This NDC includes a target of reducing deforestation to 80 percent, compared to its baseline for the period 2016-2020 (262,178 hectares annually) by 2030, and a 100 percent reduction within protected areas.   Accordingly, UN-REDD's technical assistance was agreed to ensure alignment with Bolivia's overarching territorial management approach to achieve all its forest-related objectives and goals under the Paris Agreement in a comprehensive manner, including through result-based on cooperation approaches.

Challenges and solutions

A country mission was planned for the first half of October with the objective of further discussing with the government and key stakeholders in preparation to UNREDD 2023-2024 workplans, however this had to be postponed due to transport workers strikes announced for the originally proposed dates. Discussions and preliminary identification of TA priorities was feasible taking advantage of in person and remote opportunities, as detailed above.

Partnerships

With UNDP's support, and funding from the UK government and the support of UK's Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia submitted a LEAF proposal and has been making important progress in putting in place the enabling conditions to submit TREES proposals, and ultimately secure results-based financing. UNDP has been facilitating the delivery of financial assistance from the UK to undertake efforts in relation to: MRV and the construction of its FREL, with support Foundation Friends of Nature (FAN) and a dedicated MRV team hosted under the Ministry of Environment and Water; analytical legal and economic studies in relation to the NDC forest objectives through Conservation Society Fund (CSF); analytical studies to develop a benefit distribution mechanism and a safeguards' roadmap. On the other hand, FAO Bolivia has been implementing a GCF readiness project supporting the Ministry of Development Planning to strengthen its institutional capacities to report on its NDC, and which is in closing stages. Similarly, with funding from Sweden and in close coordination with the Swedish Embassy in La Paz, FAO Bolivia will be implementing a project on sustainable forests in Pando, and so synergies require to be ensured for TA planning purposes.

Linkages to SDGs

Results from UN-REDD TA are expected to contribute to the achievement of the country's objectives in relation to SDGs 13 and 15, among others.

Cambodia

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions rewarded:

The design, scope, activities, technical and consultation approaches to pilot the national Nested System were defined through targeted technical assistance provided to the REDD+ Secretariat. Additionally, support was provided to undertake a comprehensive review of existing REDD+ portfolio activities, financed by other sources. This was conducted to ensure compatibility with key provisions of the Warsaw Framework and to maximize synergies with the Nested System. UN-REDD also supported facilitating the alignment process between government priorities and Cambodia's national commitment to NDC forest targets. This involved collaboration with the REDD+ Secretariat and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) to establish a framework for managing REDD+ revenues in accordance with the Environmental and Social Fund. Additionally, efforts were made towards operationalising the REDD+ registry and SIS, with a focus on developing the second Summary of Information for REDD+ Safeguards. The intent is to enhance technical assistance provided to the REDD+ Secretariat and MoE, enabling them to effectively access carbon finance and prepare for potential Results-based Payment initiatives.

With the technical assistance of UN-REDD, the country progressed and gained capacities on highly technical issues, including enhancing precision on carbon accounting through the development of an allometric equation for deciduous forests. While Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and SilvaCarbon collected forest inventory data following the National Forest Inventory methodology in several locations in Cambodia, UN-REDD supported the analysis of the National Forest Inventory (NFI) results for forest biomass and the development of updated emission factors, thus contributing to enhanced carbon accounting and forest management. In addition, in response to a request from the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), the development of the activity data and the land use and land cover map for 2024 has been initiated. Initial discussions have taken place to identify approaches, methodologies, and to develop a work plan for conducting this exercise.

Challenges and solutions

The transition to a new government in mid-2023 required an adjustment and reprogramming of the technical development processes. To mitigate the impact on delivery, UN-REDD proactively engaged with the new administration, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities, and adapting the implementation plan to reflect the evolving context. With increasing opportunities to access different types of carbon finance, extensive technical assistance was provided to ensure alignment with the NDC and with national priorities through active government engagement and multi-stakeholder engagement in the Nested System pilot. The coordination mechanism for REDD+ and MRV has been inactive, leading to challenges in facilitating government-led consultations. Consequently, consultations have remained limited. UN-REDD has stepped in to provide direct technical support to

the Department of Geographic Information Services, and to the General Department for Environmental Knowledge and Information within the MoE.

Gender and social inclusion

UN-REDD activities were implemented with equal participation from both men and women, integrating gender-responsive approaches throughout the process. As part of its technical support, UN-REDD is utilizing a gender approach and integrating specific criteria to effectively manage and disaggregate data based on gender. For example, gender has been integrated into guidance provided on various approaches for the piloting of the national Nested System. This includes requesting the collection of gender disaggregated data to track progress and address inequalities, as well as the integration of gender within associated work on safeguards.

Partnerships

Under the Nested System pilot programme, UN-REDD is working closely with several international NGOs, such as Conservation International, to ensure coordination across efforts and activities. Technical work on NFI, and more broadly on monitoring, has been implemented in partnership with the Royal University of Agriculture, SilvaCarbon, JICA and the technical departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the MOE. This partnership is expected to further grow to include development partners, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and other relevant stakeholders.

Linkages to SDGs

The activities contribute to SDGs 5, 13 and 15.

Chile

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:

Chile accessed results-based finance under the GCF's REDD+ pilot programme for the results achieved at the subnational level from 2014-2016, for a total of $63,607,552. Led by National Corporation of Forest (CONAF) and implemented with the support of UN-REDD, the +Bosques project directly contributes to the NCD´s sectoral goals through the implementation of direct measures of action (MDA) of the ENCCRV in six regions prone to the increased occurrence and magnitude of wildfires: Maule, Ñuble, Biobio, Araucanía, Los Rios, and Los Lagos. This project has a target area of 25,540 hectares. In 2023, CONAF carried out an in-depth evaluation of the pilot projects in addition to evaluating the first cycle of the Benefit Sharing Plan (BSP). Resulting lessons learned include the determination of real implementation costs, and bottlenecks and opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of direct MDAs through CONAF´s BSP. Consequently, UN-REDD will support CONAF in the revision of its finance strategy for the ENCCRV. This was originally conceived for 2023, but will carry over through 2024. This includes dedicated expertise to undertake analytical assessments from a financial, legal, and institutional perspective, with a view to providing recommendations for a financial and resource mobilisation strategy that enables CONAF to achieve its sectoral NDC commitments. By the end of 2023, CONAF and the UN-REDD team agreed on terms of reference for a climate finance expert to support the consolidation of an integrated financing approach to guarantee the long-term effectiveness and financial sustainability of the ENCCRV.

With UN-REDD's technical assistance, Chile completed the technical assessment process of its updated Forest Emissions Reference level (FREL) under the UNFCCC including six additional regions and methodological improvements. Moreover, UN-REDD strengthened institutional capacities on the Montecarlo analysis by developing a tailored Montecarlo tool for deforestation. Technical assistance will continue throughout 2024 to support CONAF in the development of this implementation and estimations for each activity and transition in Chile's FREL. UN-REDD also supported CONAF's efforts to prepare its second summary of safeguards information (SOI), and facilitated Chile's participation in virtual Regional Exchanges on REDD+ Safeguards and Integrity in LAC. Further technical assistance will continue during 2024 to strengthen Chile's SIS, particularly focusing on gender mainstreaming and the identification and assessment of social and environmental benefits at the territorial level.

Additionally, a dedicated UN-REDD mission in October, 2023 facilitated a provisional identification of functional, technical, and institutional capacities and requirements, further enhancing Chile's forest monitoring and MRV. This effort considered the technical requisites under available RBP funding sources and environmental integrity, while reporting Chile's inaugural Biennial Transparency Report. A UN-REDD country mission, combined with a GCF RBP, concluded in July. A legal consultant will evaluate results under carbon markets, in support of the implementation of the ENCCRV and the sectoral NDC, during the first semester of 2024.

Forest solutions enhanced:
CONAF, with support from The Nature Conservancy via Climate Focus, is integrating forest carbon projects into Chile's GHG accounting. UN-REDD's mission in October, 2023 identified needs for monitoring and reporting, with ongoing technical assistance in 2024.

Challenges and solutions

UN-REDD's technical assistance for Chile's NDC commitments builds on CONAF's project evaluation in 2023. UN-REDD's coordination ensures alignment with GCF's AE role. As a result of this evaluation, and to better align with ongoing work, this TA was postponed to 2024. Growing private sector interest drives CONAF to expedite forest carbon project integration, prioritizing UN-REDD's 2024 support.

Gender and social inclusion

Chile participated in the Gender Day of the Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America in September, 2023). During this gender knowledge exchange, Chile shared its lessons learned, experiences and good practices in integrating gender into its REDD+ action. In addition, the UN-REDD Working Group on Safeguards and Integrity discussed different options and their suitability for ensuring a gender approach in SIS and/or integrated safeguards frameworks in Chile. The exchange and experiences of countries discussed the pros and cons of introducing separate gender-specific safeguards or indicators and then also implementing gender-specific indicators or safeguards.

Partnerships

CONAF is leading the implementation of the +Bosques Project, with FAO´s support as both the accredited and implementing agency. To date, the project has supported the launch of operation of CONAF´s BSP and has supported on-the-ground implementation through three public-bidding cycles of the BSP. Similarly, the project is supporting selected enabling measures of action under the ENCCRV and is strengthening CONAF´s institutional capacities to operate all information and monitoring systems under the ENCCRV, including on MRV and safeguards, on a regular basis. The Nature Conservancy, through Climate Focus, is providing dedicated support to develop a draft approach to nesting private sector projects.

Results from UN-REDD TA are expected to contribute to the achievement of the country's objectives in relation to SDGs 13 and 15, among others.

Colombia

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
With UN-REDD support, Colombia reviewed its National REDD+ Strategy (EN-REDD+). A governance workshop highlighted the need for better institutional coordination. A plan to enhance implementation and update biodiversity strategies was also proposed. Financial instruments like thematic bonds and Result-based Payments were discussed, with UN-REDD supporting Colombia in analysing debt-for-climate-and-nature swaps. Dialogues on Environmental Integrity were facilitated by UN-REDD, engaging with stakeholders to better understand concepts like additionality and leakage. Several inputs were generated (deforestation, degradation, emission factors for the IFN). Technical support has also been provided to adjust and advance the operation of RENARE, and technical tables on accounting for emissions under the REDD+ mechanism were supported. UN-REDD further supported Colombia in designing a monitoring system for community forestry and conservation agreements, capacity-building workshops, and a regional workshop on forest degradation which address safeguard measures. UN-REDD also supported the development of proposals for adapting safeguards to Indigenous rights. Administrative processes are ongoing to hire legal expertise for REDD+ regulation.

Forest solutions rewarded:
Forestry solutions recognized with awards are linked to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and aim to enhance forestry practices. This encompasses our efforts in updating the Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL) and engaging in accounting dialogues. These dialogues enabled us to pinpoint discrepancies between the standards and methodologies implemented by REDD+ programs and projects, facilitating improvements in the environmental integrity of these initiatives.

Forest solutions enhanced:
The GCF-Amazon Vision Project continued to advance in its implementation with the linking of technical teams, the start of activities in the prioritized deforestation centers, and the joint preparation with the national government to carry out consultation as part of legal protocol for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) with Indigenous peoples. The GCF-Amazon Vision Project is working with the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) to collect the information required for carbon accounting, which is crucial for the national accounting and NDC compliance. Technical meetings were held in 2023 to assess the compliance conditions related to environmental integrity, ensuring transparency of the results in the upcoming REDD+ technical annex the country will submit to the UNFCCC in 2024. UN-REDD technical assistance has provided support for these activities to ensure coherence and synergies with broader national REDD actions and policies.

Challenges and solutions

The TA transition process in the Ministry of Environment led to delays in some of the planned activities. The subsequent change in authorities within the Deputy Minister of Territorial Planning and

Coordination of the National Environmental System (SINA) and the climate change director further complicated the delivery timeline and affected the implementation of ongoing dialogues. Efforts taken to address this include meetings with the new authorities to expedite the allocation of 2023 resources and strategic planning for REDD+. However, navigating regulatory and consultation issues remains a challenge for prioritizing biodiversity agenda updates and the upcoming Biodiversity COP in Colombia. Additionally, the government's evolving stance on carbon markets and climate finance requires clarification through a meeting with the minister to align perspectives and definitions.

Gender and social inclusion

In 2023, UN-REDD convened five national workshops in environmental integrity and carbon accounting. The workshops were attended by 223 participants, with nearly 50 percent women and 57 representatives from Indigenous communities. Two regional workshops were organised around Prevented Deforestation, Restoration (PBR), and Degradation. Moreover, case studies on Community Forestry (SOFO) and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) within the GCF were selected for publications. UN-REDD also produced a gender analysis for 297 clusters of the National Forest Inventory. Colombia also participated in the Gender Day of the Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America. During this gender knowledge exchange, Colombia shared its lessons learned, experiences and good practices in integrating gender into its REDD+ actions.
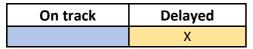
Partnerships

The main partners in the implementation of UN-REDD are the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MinAmbiente) and IDEAM. Through dialogue and social participation, agreements were reached with non-governmental organizations, universities, and research institutes on REDD+ to promote fair and equitable treatment of the voluntary market (WWF initiative). The partners have requested UN-REDD take over the secretariat to present recommendations to the national government from civil society. As a result of this collaboration, a diagnosis of the voluntary market projects was produced, and was presented to the government in January, 2024. Additionally, WWF, TNC and GGGI participated as observers in the dialogues on mitigation results under REDD+ led by UN-REDD and the MinAmbiente.

Linkages to SDGs
UN-REDD contributes to advancing SDGs 1, 2 10, 14, 15 and 16.

Congo (Republic of)

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
The Republic of Congo is actively implementing its REDD+ national strategy to curb deforestation and forest degradation, having secured substantial funding from donors like GCF, Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), and others, including private sector institutions for savanna plantation projects. Initial findings from a study assessing the strategy's implementation status and investment framework reveal overly ambitious objectives and investment requirements, leading to challenges at the national level, compounded by delays due to various factors like the Covid pandemic. Despite setbacks,

promising resource mobilisation signals are evident, with more tangible outcomes expected following the completion of ongoing investments. UN-REDD TA has been instrumental in enhancing Congo's tenure regime, organizing workshops on responsible tenure governance guidelines, and providing technical training on Open Tenure for field facilitators. Through the SYNA-MNV program and UN-REDD TA support, Congo updated its reference level in 2023, incorporating forest degradation monitoring and other improvements for submission to the UNFCCC. UN-REDD TA primarily focused on aiding Congo in developing its first Summary of Information on Safeguards, with a kick-off meeting held to initiate the technical assistance, finalize terms of references, and commence the hiring process for a national consultant. Discussions during a UN-REDD TA mission in Q4 centered on understanding the country's safeguards framework and support requirements.

Forest solutions rewarded:
In May, 2023, the Republic of Congo submitted an expression of interest to the LEAF coalition, aiming to reduce 1,679,775 tCO2e in five forest departments between 2022 and 2026. This excludes departments already engaged in emission reduction programs. The submission aligns with the Forest Code, recognizing the right to generate and trade carbon credits for natural or legal persons. Carbon credits from state-owned forests belong to the state, while those from community forests benefit local communities or Indigenous populations, emphasising the recognition of customary rights. At the policy level, UN REDD TA supported the mainstreaming of carbon markets in the country's Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), with a specific emphasis on forestry and land use. Similarly, key stakeholders' capacity was built on the fundamental elements of carbon markets during the validation workshop of the INFF.

Challenges and solutions

With the full resumption of activities in Congo after the pandemic, the expectation of the country is very high, while the capacity of the REDD+ national coordination is insufficient, technically and financially, to cover all needs. The limited personnel on the National REDD+ Coordination team is a major limiting factor. In this context, the REDD+ National Coordinator and the UN-REDD Programme decided to take advantage of the results of the REDD+ national strategy to prioritize actions at the national level. As such, the country focused in 2023 on implementing the projects, programme and initiatives already launched, including the development of the country's response to LEAF's call for interest. Strengthening of the REDD+ national coordination is foreseen in 2024.

Gender and social inclusion

Gender equality was a strong focus during UN-REDD activities carried out in 2023. For the workshops on responsible tenure, governance guidelines and technical training on Open Tenure for field facilitators, efforts were made to integrate gender. For example, women were invited to attend the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) event, which also included introduction of the principle of gender equality in the context of tenure governance. In the case of the Open Tenure training, there were open discussions on challenges faced to provide tenure rights to women. As a result of the training, upgrades to the Open Tenure tool to specifically address registration of women's land rights were discussed.

Partnerships

The collaboration among stakeholders, such as CAFI, in major REDD+ projects like PREFOREST and PROREP demonstrates alignment on themes like tenure and carbon rights at the national level. The technical assistance sought to align its actions with national requirements, particularly in data collection and analysis. Various stakeholders contributed to the discussions on LEAF's call for proposals and response development, showcasing diverse partnerships in REDD+. In November,

Congo participated in an UN-REDD/AFF partnership-organized training in Arusha, Tanzania, focusing on RBPs and social inclusion in benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Linkages to SDGs

The continued progress towards the SIS, and the work related to the NFMS and REDD+ national strategy relates to SDG 13, 15 and 15.3.1.

Costa Rica

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:

Extensive support was provided in reviewing and updating the co-benefits baselines and monitoring approaches for reporting to the Carbon Fund. This included a spatial analysis of the convergence of various non-carbon benefits that could potentially result from the policies, actions, and measures outlined in the National REDD+ Strategy (EN-REDD+). The updated process involved incorporating new information, sources, databases, and, in some cases, employing improved assessment methods (e.g., for biodiversity conservation benefit). As outputs, an internal methodological brief was developed for Costa Rica, including technical materials, data, and maps.

Forest solutions rewarded:

Efforts have been directed to support Costa Rica in the validation and verification process under the TREES standard) carried out by VVB Aster Global. In March, a kick-off meeting for the verification process with Aster Global/FONAFIFO and ART Secretariat took place. Also, a workshop was held in Costa Rica, organized by the ART secretariat on May 15, to set up the bases and steps of the process that Costa Rica will have to follow in issuing the results under the standard TREES. Once the kick-off meeting was done, the field mission took place in July with direct support from UNDP through UN-REDD's technical assistance in workstreams, monitoring, and safeguards. After the field visit and receiving the first round of findings, support was provided to Costa Rica on assessing and responding to the findings, a process that is continuing into 2024.

The government of Costa Rica, through two delegates of the National Forest Financing Fund (FONAFIFO), participated in a technical exchange with other UNFCCC REDD+ focal points and personnel with legal expertise to exchange the common understanding of ERPAs. This exchange supported informed decision-making and facilitated understanding of LEAF transactions' financial and legal structure.

In 2023, Costa Rica has become one of the two first forest governments to finalise ERPAs with Emergent to supply high-integrity jurisdictional REDD+ emissions reductions and removals credits to LEAF Coalition buyers. The signature of the ERPA took place during COP28 which featured prominently in media and reports from COP and was highlighted in a number of side events.

Forest solutions enhanced:

The Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America was hosted by the Government of Costa Rica in September, 2023 through the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE), the FONAFIFO, and organized by UNDP Costa Rica and the UN-

REDD Programme. It was the first meeting of its kind to be held since 2016, where eight countries in the region reflected on the state of climate finance, its achievements and challenges and discussed new horizons -- focusing on implementing RBP projects. More than 70 participants included representatives of government, Indigenous peoples, project coordinators, and gender specialists from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Mexico; Norway and the UK as donors; representatives of the ART and Verra standards; and representatives from the GCF and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Challenges and solutions

Regarding the validation and verification process, it was a challenge to obtain Aster Global's availability to start the verification process during Q1 of 2023 as the VVB was tied up in other previously scheduled validation and verification processes. Also, the validation and verification process brought to light the value of giving consideration to further work to enhance clarity in the TREES Standard and the accompanying guidance documents, particularly with regards to validation and verification at jurisdictional scale.

Gender and social inclusion

Costa Rica participated in the Gender Day of the Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America in September, 2023. During this gender knowledge exchange, the country shared its lessons learned, experiences and good practices in integrating gender into its REDD+ action.

Explicit gender considerations are included in the TREES Registration Document and the Monitoring under the Safeguards section. Also, recommendations in terms of gender balance were made to the interview plan with stakeholders that were undertaken during the verification field visit. Regarding the consultation process with Indigenous peoples, Costa Rica held a workshop in February, 2023 to raise awareness among the Indigenous leadership of negotiations with the LEAF Coalition for the sale of CO2 credits and to help them understand the market mechanisms with the LEAF coalition and the required certification.

Partnerships

The UN-REDD Programme in Costa Rica continues to foster links with the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and with GCF RBP projects. An example is the support for activities aimed at properties that do not qualify for the conventional Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) and which recognizes forest owners only for the environmental service of carbon emissions reduction. Although the amount allocated is lower, this modality will more than double the number of hectares of forests with a payment for environmental services scheme in the country, diversifying the sources of payment for these services. The Costa Rica Forest Emission Reduction Contract mechanism (CREF) will allow using the resources granted by the GCF project and the World Bank's FCPF to strengthen and expand the PES program, especially given the fiscal and economic crisis the country is facing. Also, links are manifested in elaborating the Indigenous peoples plans and the information on market and non-market carbon programs presented and in consultation with Indigenous territories.

Linkages to SDGs

Implementing the National REDD+ Strategy contributed and will continue to contribute to numerous Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 1, 5, 13 and 15.

Côte d'Ivoire

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
Côte d'Ivoire is actively committed to the implementation of REDD+, demonstrated through various initiatives at different levels. The country has ongoing actions that focus on strengthening and operationalising the elements of the UNFCCC framework for REDD+. In 2023, UN-REDD TA's support was concentrated on consolidating the elements of the REDD+ framework to facilitate the future capture of potential payments from emissions reductions results. Additionally, technical guidance on climate finance was provided during this period.

Forest solutions realised:
UN-REDD TA organised an online exchange on responsible land governance principles for implementing a new land law in Côte d'Ivoire. Discussions included transparency, gender equality, and sustainable development, along with introducing Open Tenure, a mobile tool for recording tenure rights. In 2023, UN-REDD TA supported identifying actions of stakeholders overseeing REDD+ initiatives for revising the National Investment Framework. The Côte d'Ivoire Permanent Executive Secretariat for REDD+ (SEP-REDD+) collaborated in data collection, with a comprehensive analysis due in 2024. UN-REDD TA and SEPREDD collaborated to provide technical guidance on accessing climate finance, with a particular focus on emission reduction measurement standards aimed at assisting the country in meeting essential technical criteria for securing such funding. SEP-REDD+ updated its FREL/FRL in 2023, with UN-REDD's extended technical assistance for its submission to UNFCCC in January, 2024. UN-REDD also provided technical assistance in national consultations for document validation. UN-REDD TA was provided on deforestation-free cocoa production between key stakeholders (i.e., the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and the EU) through dialogue that focussed on jurisdictional approaches to deforestation-free commodity production.

Forest solutions rewarded:
In Côte d'Ivoire, efforts are underway to enhance the forestry and climate legal framework, focusing on clarifying emission reduction rights and benefit distribution. UN-REDD TA supported the organisation of a three-day workshop to build the capacity of key stakeholders from various ministries on carbon markets, and to validate a national carbon markets access roadmap. UN-REDD TA further supported the operationalisation of the roadmap, which included the development of a draft national policy framework on carbon markets, the development of a carbon market registry and the elaboration of a draft decree on the institutional framework on carbon markets.

Forest solutions enhanced:
UN-REDD TA supported the review of the 2022 NDC and the development of a policy brief for policymakers that identifies a number of inconsistencies and discrepancies that need to be addressed during the next phase of the NDC revision.

Challenges and solutions

The changing global climate finance landscape demands increased government resource mobilisation. Regular updates and technical insights aim to align global opportunities with local emission reduction goals in 2024.

Gender and social inclusion

Efforts to integrate gender into UN-REDD activities were consistently prioritized throughout 2023. To illustrate, for the virtual workshop presenting the Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure and introducing the Open Tenure tool for recording tenure rights, efforts were made to integrate gender. For example, special efforts were made to ensure that women were invited to attend the event, which included an introduction of the principle of gender equality in the context of tenure governance.

Partnerships

Partnerships with different country partners, organizations and entities have been strengthened. This includes the Ministry of Environment and its agencies, especially SEP-REDD+, EU-REDD Facility, the Governors' Climate & Forests Task Force (GCFTF) initiative, the World Bank, German Development Agency (GIZ), the GCF, the FAO-GCF PROMIRE project, and the Cocoa & Forest Initiative, among others. These partnerships are expanding internationally with the support of UN-REDD TA on climate finance.

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 in several SDGs in an integrated manner, including SDG 5, 12, 13, 15 and 17. Through project activities, such as with PROMIRE, as well as the Emission Reductions Program (ERP) jurisdictional programme, Côte d'Ivoire will significantly advance on SDG 15.3.1.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

UN-REDD technical assistance to the Democratic Republic of Congo builds on the country's continued and confirmed interest in pursuing the LEAF Coalition's Results-based Payment access pathway, a pre-requisite of which is conformance with the ART-TREES requirements.

Forest solutions realised:
UN-REDD continued to provide support to the country in its effort to strengthen and operationalise its Warsaw framework. On safeguards, building on the previous work, UN-REDD focused its support on advancing towards alignment of the existing safeguards framework to the ART-TREES requirements, informing the development of the TREES Registration Document (TRD).

Technical support was provided to analyse the institutional arrangements of the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) at the national level, in the framework of a potential future nested MRV system. Leveraging its extensive involvement in the development of NFMS, UN-REDD TA provided the knowledge of the developed system and information on the diverse institutional stakeholders which could guide the structure of this potential future nested MRV system. In DRC's case, the nesting of REDD+ projects in a national accounting framework is complex because existing projects have not

used a standardized methodology for reporting emissions reductions results, therefore the need for a national methodology.

Efforts have been undertaken to update certain elements of the Warsaw Framework, aligning the country with the requirements of various standards set by potential donors. UN-REDD TA actively contributed to various national initiatives. This includes participating in discussions about a potential second phase of the NFMS program designed to operationalise the system. Additionally, UN-REDD TA is engaged in updating the national "General status of the forest" [*Etats généraux des Forêts*] with FAO as a member of the GIBEC (*Groupe Inter-bailleurs de l'Environnement et Climat* – Inter-donor environment and climate group). Preliminary insights underscore significant benefits from forests. However, several constraints persist, such as governance weaknesses and inadequate resources for forest controls, among other challenges.

UN-REDD assisted FONAREDD and the National Fund for REDD+ through a combination of technical and institutional support. This included strategic and operational support for enhancing implementation and synergies in various investment and reform programmes financed by FONAREDD, particularly on land use policy, transition to clean energy and integrated development. Finally, UN-REDD supported FONAREDD by assisting with the finalisation of the formulation of the FONAREDD-CAFI-UNDP carbon market project document.

Forest solutions rewarded:
The ART-TREES safeguards assessment exercise progressed, although gaps remain to show conformance with some safeguards' indicators. A key gap is subnational/province level information, specifically for Tshuapa province. A mission to Tshuapa in August, 2023 advanced the objective to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders and contribute to the ART-TREES assessment exercise. The mission found that more engagement is needed to close the information gap and advance UN-REDD sub-nationally. A gaps and recommendations document has been developed to guide efforts to show full conformance for ART-TREES. A key recommendation is to enhance capacity on safeguards through trainings, among other things. Furthermore, the country has not advanced in establishing its MRV and safeguards monitoring plans because the ART-TREES Secretariat has not issued any updates to guide this process.

A technical brief has been drafted on the rights of local communities and Indigenous peoples and their access to REDD+ climate finance. The brief outlines current benefit sharing both at the policy level as well as in practice, examines barriers to more equitable distribution of benefits, including gender considerations, and makes several recommendations. To prepare the brief, a series of interviews with key stakeholders from the government and civil society in the forestry sector was conducted. The brief integrates insights obtained from the implementation of the PIREDD (*Programme Intégré REDD*+) in the Equateur province. The analysis emphasizes that, despite improvements in the legal framework and support for local communities and Indigenous peoples through various initiatives, additional actions are needed to ensure the genuine engagement of these groups in REDD+ implementation. This support is essential for them to effectively access climate finance, thereby providing tangible benefits to local communities and Indigenous peoples. The brief is scheduled for publication in 2024. It's worth noting that this brief is part of a series on access to climate finance, with similar briefs on the Republic of Congo and Côte d'Ivoire already published.

UN-REDD provided TA for the operationalisation of the carbon markets readiness roadmap, including the organisation of a training workshop for parliamentarians; support to the organisation of a high-level side on the margins of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September, 2023 on the theme, 'Towards a Fair Carbon Market in Africa;' support to ART-TREES certification

inception activities; formulation of draft concept note; the Haut Uele Integrated REDD+ Programme; and support for the FONAREDD-CAFI-UNDP carbon markets project inception activities.

Challenges and solutions

FONAREDD's team restructuring impacted UN-REDD TA's implementation in early 2023 and created uncertainty about the country's need for this support. To adapt, activities not reliant on FONAREDD were prioritised including the TREES safeguards assessment and an analysis of IPLC rights. A mission in October confirmed the government's interest in UN-REDD support, including advancement towards TREES registration. This led to an agreement on having personnel in situ to support the government in coordinating currently scattered efforts conducted by various stakeholders on REDD+ topics such as nesting and carbon markets. The absence of potential buyers for High Forest, Low Deforestation (HFLD) credits persists, primarily attributed to risks such as leakages, permanence, and reversals, at both national and subnational levels. Despite these challenges, UN-REDD TA, as part of the national LEAF Task Force, stands ready to provide prompt support upon the country's request. Finally, one of the main challenges in 2023 relates to the organisation of the general elections in DRC. Most government officials with influential roles in decision-making were interested in political positions and shifted their priority to that front. This occasionally caused disruption in the activities prior, during and after the elections.

Gender and social inclusion

Gender and social inclusion are mainstreamed in all UN-REDD activities in DRC. For example, at the programming level, key gender indicators have been included in the FONAREDD-CAFI-UNDP Carbon Markets Prodoc, both as beneficiaries and main implementing agents. At the operation level, UN-REDD ensured the active participation of women and other social groups in their activities, such as the training workshop of parliamentarians, where nine women representatives out of 20 parliamentarians attended the training. Likewise, consultations throughout the development of safeguards elements for TREES assessment fully involved gender in the whole process. Moreover, DRC benefitted from a regional exchange on social inclusion and benefit-sharing mechanism, organised by the UN-REDD and African Forest Forum (AFF) in October. However, efforts must increase to ensure an inclusive approach in key decision-making processes, like the inter-ministerial "Arrêté" on Benefit Sharing Mechanism (BSM) from REDD+, issued in September, which faced criticism from CSO and IPLC representatives for their lack of involvement and consultation.

Partnerships

Aside from the continued support from the task force established by the VPM-MEDD, a strong partnership is being established with the UK Embassy in DRC, including the development of an integrated workplan on capacity for carbon markets, as well as with the Embassy of Norway. Also, a newly established partnership between UN-REDD and the African Forest Forum started to provide a platform for DRC, as part of a cohort of 101 African countries, to benefit from trainings, knowledge exchanges and access to UN-REDD knowledge products.

Linkages to SDGs

The UN-REDD activities in DRC contribute directly to achieving SDGs 13 and 15.

Ecuador

On track	Delayed

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[1] Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:

With UN-REDD support, Ecuador showed steadfast dedication to environmental sustainability by implementing a nationwide deforestation-free certification scheme, expanding globally, and forming partnerships with industry leaders and national companies. The Programme provided strategic advice and technical assistance to uphold deforestation-free production agreements and engaged the financial sector to promote green credit lines. Over 35 percent of engaged local producers were women, reshaping gender dynamics. These efforts resulted in exporting 17 tons of certified sustainable coffee and seven tons of cocoa, gaining prominence in European markets. With UN-REDD support, Ecuador also facilitated knowledge exchange initiatives between several countries, fostering a global network committed to sustainability. Ecuador's holistic approach integrated economic considerations, gender inclusivity, and global collaboration, setting a precedent for impactful initiatives locally and internationally.

Forest solutions rewarded:

UN-REDD TA assisted Ecuador in implementing the ART-TREES framework nationwide, facilitating technical and political meetings, and providing strategic advice to propel the country towards certification under TREES. With UN-REDD's guidance, Ecuador advanced towards the certification and registration stage, in preparation for document submission to the ART Secretariat. UN-REDD's influence extended to ERPA negotiations, providing technical assistance for evaluating draft agreements shared by Emergent with Ecuador, resulting in Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) establishing a clear roadmap for ERPA signing. UN-REDD supported Ecuador in formulating a benefit-sharing plan for future emissions reductions purchases and technically assisted in forest and carbon monitoring for ART-TREES, ensuring compliance with carbon accounting requirements and providing quality control and assurance of data processing. The South-South exchange on forest degradation monitoring took place in November, 2023, hosted by Colombia due to the political situation in Ecuador. This exchange aimed to accelerate solutions in collecting better data for degraded forests. UN-REDD also supported Ecuador in addressing safeguards under ART-TREES, clarifying requirements, assessing gaps, and incorporating feedback into Ecuador's third summary of safeguards information, positioning the country as a leader in sustainable practices compliant with international standards. This work not only contributed to sustainable and deforestation-free practices, but also set a precedent for impactful initiatives at both the local and international level.

Forest solutions enhanced:

With UN-REDD's support, Ecuador developed a REDD+ financing strategy to mobilise international finance and engage the private sector, aiming to bolster environmental conservation efforts. This collaborative initiative aims to strengthen initiatives like PROAmazonia and enhance the implementation of NDC targets. Ecuador is seeking to balance economic growth and sustainable development, while preserving biodiversity and forest ecosystems, aligning agricultural practices with sustainability through deforestation-free production and trade.

Challenges and solutions

Ecuador faces challenges in ERPA preparation and negotiations related to technical gaps and juridical issues; however, efforts to improve forest degradation data collection show promise. UN-REDD compiled an assessment of the LEAF ERPA proposal to aid nations like Ecuador in comprehensive review and decision-making. Collaborating with the International Trade Agency, UN-REDD conducted webinars and pilot initiatives to address regulatory challenges, supported by strategic alliances with

the International Trade Center. Despite implementation challenges, UN-REDD remains committed to supporting activities like forestry strategy development, emphasising capacity-building and collective decision-making.

Gender and social inclusion

Various efforts were undertaken to ensure gender was mainstreamed into UN-REDD TA support in Ecuador. To illustrate, and as noted above, UN-REDD provided strategic advice and technical assistance to uphold deforestation-free production agreements and engaged the financial sector to promote green credit lines. Over 35 percent of engaged local producers in this process were women. In addition, within the TREES registration document and monitoring report, gender disaggregated information was promoted, and inputs related to gender were included where available, including on gender-related safeguards.

Ecuador also participated in the Gender Day of the Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America in September, 2023. During this gender knowledge exchange, Ecuador shared its lessons learned, experiences and good practices in integrating gender into its REDD+ actions.

Partnerships

In 2023, collaboration with DEFRA UK and international companies, like Lavazza and Silva Cacao, were established to open new markets and ensure compliance with regulations, while partnerships with ITC and EUSPA aimed to strengthen capacities in response to emerging market trends. Additionally, important partnerships to support the forest monitoring unit were formed under the leadership of the Ecuadorian government, involving organizations like Expertise France, Euroclima, The Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) , and the University of San Francisco from Quito.

Linkages to SDGs

UN-REDD support to Ecuador contributes directly to achieving SDGs 13 and 15

Ethiopia

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
UN-REDD financing bolstered field initiatives under the MRV phase 2 project, funded by Norway's REDD+ Investment Program. Extra support for enhanced data collection was also provided, with FAO technical assistance. UN-REDD support included adding more field plots to measure aboveground biomass in degraded plots ("degradation plots"), improving the assessment of biomass loss between intact and degraded forests. This data will help Ethiopia report carbon emissions resulting from forest degradation more accurately. These field plots have been seamlessly incorporated into the NFI for efficiency. Additionally, UN-REDD assistance facilitated additional remote sensing support through collaboration with SIG-NAL, enhancing the MRV phase 2 project's value, particularly in Activity Data generation and visual interpretation support. UN-REDD support included: developing Collect Earth Online surveys for activity data generation; creating an interpretation key for land cover classes; quality control on national and regional sample points; creating a software application for result

visualization; and, documenting methodologies and standard operating procedures for each key step in the process.

Forest solutions rewarded:
UN-REDD is providing high integrity MRV support to Ethiopia for them to assess TREES-compliant emission reductions in the context of their [TREES Concept Note](#) (accepted January, 2023). The Programme is also supporting subnational reporting on activity data for Oromia under the Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (ISFL) programme for which an ERPA was signed in early 2023. This agreement signifies a milestone in incentivizing community-driven initiatives aimed at mitigating carbon emissions by addressing deforestation, land degradation, and forest degradation. The ERPA enables the allocation of up to $40 million, providing essential support to communities, government entities, and stakeholders in their efforts to curtail carbon emissions. This funding aims to enhance carbon sequestration through practices such as forest preservation and other eco-friendly land uses. This agreement, the first of its kind for ISFL, is set to reward endeavors directed at reducing approximately 4 million metric tons of emissions by 2030 under Ethiopia's ambitious Oromia Forested Landscape Program. With regards to support of ART-TREES documentation, this can be envisioned under future UN-REDD support.

Challenges and solutions

The collection of a complete set of field data for determination of emission factors is challenging for security reasons in certain regions. For 2023, the solution has been to postpone field work in areas that pose serious security risks for the field teams, and to focus the initial field work in regions that do not have security concerns. In cases where field work cannot be implemented sufficiently, the methodology for calculating emission factors will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Gender and social inclusion

As part of the ongoing NFMS strengthening efforts in Ethiopia, and in preparation for field data collection, a total of 56 trainees (5 females, 51 males) were trained on NFI data collection at an 11 day training session. The regions were encouraged to select female participants for the training. That only 9 percent of the trainees were female reflects the small number of female staff in forestry in Ethiopia. It is, however, a positive development compared to the first NFI (ending in 2018) where there were no female participants.

Partnerships

There are several partners involved in efforts to support Ethiopia on strengthening its NFMS for REDD+ reporting. These partners include the World Bank, as well as SilvaCarbon (for methodological and implementational support on OFLP). Furthermore, the Wondo Genet College of Forest and Natural Resources (WGCFNR) has been an integral partner in strengthening capacity in both the national and subnational MRV teams.

Linkages to SDGs

Implementation of the REDD+ Strategy and pursuing the NDC's contribute to SDG 1, 13 and 15.

Ghana

On track	Delayed
X	

In January, 2023, Ghana received $4,862,280 as its first Emissions Reductions payment from the FCPF Carbon Fund, with UN-REDD's technical support. Sixty-five percent of the payment goes directly to communities and cocoa farmers. Ghana is Africa's second nation, after Mozambique, to receive ER payments from the FCPF. The government has commenced distributing ER payments following the Benefit Sharing Plan. In July, 2023, five hotspot intervention areas received the payments for farmer inputs. With UN-REDD's help, Ghana achieved FCPF Carbon Fund (FCPF-CF) milestones and registered its first TREES documents, becoming the first African country to propose ERs under TREES. This progress secured an ERPA with Emergent. UNDP was requested to act as the financial intermediary for the LEAF coalition.

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
UN-REDD support in 2023 built on the progress made by Ghana under the FCPF-CF and scaled this up to the context of Ghana's ART-TREES registration process. UN-REDD provided technical assistance to the Ghana Forestry Commission to: enable their ART-TREES participation; support the TREES-compliant MRV data on emissions and emission reductions and legal aspects; support the TREES-compliant safeguards; and, support the drafting of the TREES Registration Document (TRD). Ghana submitted the TRD to the ART Secretariat in October for a completeness check and, subsequently, UN-REDD provided further technical assistance in addressing necessary corrections for a successful listing under the ART registry. The TRD was published on the registry in January, 2024. There was a need to consistently analyse Ghana's inventory data to complement the vegetation zones in the TREES accounting area that was not covered by the FCPF-CF. The current inventory data has some gaps, especially in dry forest areas. To address this, in 2023 UN-REDD contributed to the design preparation phase of Ghana's National Forest Inventory (NFI). The NFI design will build on and be informed by existing inventory data from Ghana.

Forest solutions rewarded:
In 2023, UN-REDD facilitated Ghana's completion of its first TREES Monitoring Report (TMR), submitted to the ART Secretariat for review in October and listed in the ART registry in January, 2024. UN-REDD's support ensured adherence to emissions assessment best practices and TREES requirements. Ghana's landmark ERPA with Emergent positions it as one of the first countries to supply credits to the LEAF coalition, advancing global climate efforts. Pending validation and verification, the ART Board will issue serialized TREES credits to Ghana for 2017-2021. In this context, UNDP was requested to act as the financial intermediary for the LEAF coalition. One of the requirements is a comprehensive Benefit Sharing Plan and stakeholder engagement plan, with work on this already underway in 2023. Building on the BSP developed for the FCPF-CF, for the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme, support is provided to extend the plan to the full TREES areas through a process to engage current and new stakeholders. The objectives are to test and assess approaches, analyse what is currently working and to review and revise where needed.

UN-REDD reviewed Ghana's forest legal framework, clarified ERs transfer rights, and emphasized CREMAs' role and benefit sharing with local actors. Five cocoa Hotspot Intervention Areas (HIAs) have signed agreements with Forestry Commission and COCOBOD, with stakeholder consultations ongoing for benefit sharing. UN-REDD support on safeguards, provided in 2023, on the TREES Registration Document submission to the ART-TREES Secretariat, included: the development of the country's second Summary of Information on Safeguards, currently in final stages of approval at FC before submission to the UNFCCC; issuance of recommendations to strengthen the country's Feedback, Grievance, and Redress Mechanism (FGRM) and Benefit Sharing Plan, and input on safeguards to the TREES monitoring report; and, further capacity building and meetings as part of the stakeholder engagement process.

Challenges and solutions

Several Afforestation/Reforestation (A/R) projects operate in the TREES accounting area. Ghana initially reported public plantations, but later included private planted areas after consistency checks by the ART Secretariat. This highlights the challenge of aligning greenhouse gas (GHG) removal accounting. In 2024, UN-REDD will support the alignment of A/R projects with national forest monitoring standards.

Gender and social inclusion

The submission of the TREES Registration Document was mostly carried out at the national level, involving primarily national institutions. In all activities undertaken by REDD+ partners, it was promoted that there would be at least 40 percent women representation. Within the TREES Registration Document itself, comprehensive reporting and details are provided on gender, which also includes gender disaggregated data across a range of activities and efforts. This gender-specific information outlines how Ghana has taken concrete and detailed actions to support gender and women's empowerment in its REDD+ action.

In addition, the preparation of the TREES Monitoring Report involved consolidating the relevant technical information, with data collected with careful consideration to the gender context. The TREES Monitoring Report integrates a range of gender considerations, including through use of gender disaggregated data to document how the country supports gender in REDD+, as well as related governance arrangements.
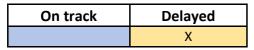
Partnerships

In January, 2023, Ghana received $4,862,280 from the FCPF Carbon Fund for reducing 972,456 tons of carbon emissions during June to December 2019 under its REDD+ program. This program aims to mitigate deforestation and forest degradation while promoting afforestation and reforestation in the Cocoa Forest landscape. Ghana also signed an ERPA with Emergent during COP28 of the UNFCCC on December 1, 2023, becoming the first country to do so under the LEAF Coalition.

Linkages to SDGs

Implementation of Ghana's REDD+ Strategy, which includes the Ghana Shea Emissions Landscape Project in the Northern Savannah Zone, the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Project and the partnership with LEAF Coalition, aims to achieve positive impacts on SDGs 13 and 15.

Indonesia

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
Indonesia's capacity for monitoring mangroves was enhanced, building on UN-REDD support provided in 2022 and reported in FAO's World's Mangrove Report 2000-2022. Four Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) staff learned new methods of forest monitoring at international forums, including the "South-South Exchange on Estimating Emissions and Removals from Forest Degradation" workshop and the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) plenary event in Rome. Presentations

on peatland and forest monitoring were delivered, and [interviews](#) on mangroves and the national forest monitoring system were conducted. UN-REDD also presented on improvements in [identifying mangrove areas](#) with specific reference to Indonesia.

Indonesia conducted a joint mission with MoEF and Peatland and the Mangrove Restoration Agency (BRGM) to restore peatland sites, refining technical assistance for peatland management. Collaboration expanded, involving MoEF, BRGM, and private concession holders, with workshops integrating satellite technology for groundwater level monitoring. New models adapted to Indonesian peatlands were showcased at UNFCCC COP28. National capacity for land cover assessment improved through a workshop engaging 45 MoEF staff. Guidance development for implementing safeguards was postponed to 2024 due to administrative delays. UN-REDD provided technical assistance to Indonesia Environment Fund's (IEF) consideration as a GCF Direct Access Entity, advancing discussions for further action in 2024.

Forest solutions rewarded:
UN-REDD is supporting IEF with accreditation through the GCF's Project-specific Assessment Approach (PSAA) Pilot to help Indonesia access finance. The programme has helped develop capacity across Indonesian agencies and civil society for a proposal aiming to transform high-emitting and vulnerable, degraded peatlands, to reduce their emissions and to enhance climate resilience. The capacity of the IEF to broaden the range of financing sources was improved by the development of a Climate and Resilience Fund (CRF). The CRF aims to accelerate the implementation of REDD+ by attracting investments in support of NDC targets in the forestry sector and accelerating the delivery of Indonesia's FOLU net sink 2030 operational plan. In collaboration with the UNDP-led Climate Promise program, a carbon pricing roadmap for the forestry sector was developed in collaboration with MoEF. A report defining a mechanism for accessing RBP, at the jurisdictional level, although delayed for administrative reasons, has been developed. The findings of this report have informed 2024-2025 work plans on priority RBP actions.

Forest solutions enhanced:
Due to rapidly evolving priorities, support under this outcome for IEF has been refocused on carbon market revenues, considering market demand and supply, as well as an investment plan to manage these revenues.

Challenges and solutions
Following MoEF's new regulation on foreign cooperation (MoEF Decision 134/2023, February, 2023), the Programme focused on institutional and legal responses. Two missions in March and November engaged government partners. An official letter has been sent to the DG of Climate Change at MoEF regarding the 2024 UN-REDD work plan.

Gender and social inclusion
Women's representation in activities noted above was collected, with results showing that women made up a significant proportion of participants in the five workshops, ranging from 30 to 53 percent.

Partnerships
UN-REDD facilitated initial discussions between prospective provinces - Central Kalimantan and Riau - and development partners interested in implementing REDD+ jurisdictional emissions reductions programmes. To enhance subnational capabilities pertaining to REDD+ architecture, several dialogues have taken place with Central Kalimantan and Riau provinces concerning the insights gained from the execution of REDD+ initiatives in East Kalimantan (FCPF) and Jambi (BioCF). In addition, UN-REDD also facilitated the establishment of a REDD+ working group in Riau Province. UN-REDD remains in close coordination with the Global Peatlands Initiative with its over 50 partners, and the International

Tropical Peatlands Centre, to continue attracting support for and from Indonesia. Indonesian partnership with many agencies was enhanced by supporting four Indonesians to participate in the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) Plenary event, attended by over 300 people.

Linkages to SDGs

Results from the UN-REDD Programme contribute to SDGs 13 and 15.

Kenya

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:

Progress in implementing forest solutions in Kenya has been relatively modest since the approval of the 2023 UN-REDD workplan. The FAO-implemented IMPRESS project initiated a pilot activity to refine the methodology for quantifying changes in forest cover and estimating area. This improved method has been integrated into a revised Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL), and preparations are underway for an updated FREL document. The UN-REDD Programme assisted in the creation of the necessary reporting documentation, while the UK-PACT-funded IMPRESS project made it easier to update the National Forest Monitoring System. The contents of the FREL document have been transferred to the ART-TREES Registration Document. Ongoing FAO and UN-REDD supported monitoring activities utilise the standard operating procedures, and there is a concurrent effort to enhance these tools to align them with the best practices associated with the analysis of forest cover changes and area estimation. Simultaneously, FAO is facilitating updates to the annex material linked to sections 10 and 11 of the TREES Registration Documents. This includes the incorporation of an up-to-date Carbon Calculation Database, currently in progress and facilitated by the data collected as part of another activity within this program.

Forest solutions rewarded:

The ongoing FAO-supported monitoring activities mentioned earlier are being integrated into the draft monitoring report for the ART-TREES documentation. Kenya's updated reference level has adopted a shorter reference period, now aligned with best practices in forest monitoring and emissions reduction reporting and verification. According to the updated reference period, Kenya has achieved a reduction in emissions exceeding 40 percent during its initial monitoring year, potentially leading to payments for emissions reductions. Given Kenya's established relationship with the LEAF Coalition, finalising the documentation and numbers has become a top priority. Simultaneously, while preparing the registration and monitoring documents, FAO has facilitated a review of legal aspects and title transfer within the context of ART-TREES. The resulting document provides several recommendations to Kenya regarding title transfer and options for moving forward. Stakeholders are currently providing input on the document, enhancing the collaborative process.

Forest solutions enhanced:

In 2023, UN-REDD continued to support the government, partners and non-state actors to advance policy and action in the forests, climate and REDD+ sphere. Discussions on how to engage on the implementation of the forest component of the NDC in the forest and land use sector continued, both with respect to programmes and carbon markets. The engagement of a wide range of actors, with varying interests especially in the land use sector, provided advice and support to the government on legislation on carbon markets; these dialogues were a particular feature of 2023. It enabled a community of practice to engage through various platforms with the government, whose desire was

to set up a framework for carbon markets. As a result, the Climate Change Act of 2016 was amended to include a set of regulations on carbon markets to: support the framework for implementing the carbon market project; create incentives and implement initiatives to support emissions reductions and removal targets in line with NDCs; and, to provide guidance on the annual social contribution for carbon market projects in the final stages of approval.

In addition, Kenya has embarked on a program to improve the NFMS. Funded by UK-PACT, and with technical support from the FAO IMPRESS project, this program has supported Kenya to align its NFMS with the needs of climate standards such as ART-TREES and the VCS Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ (JNR).

Challenges and solutions
Challenges in 2023 included a policy environment that was characterised by opposing interests, many actors, the retirement of the long-standing REDD+ focal point, a new staff member replacing the focal point in the State Department of Forestry in the MECCF, and the need for much better coordination and collaboration with the MECCF's Climate Change Department. Discussions to streamline the objectives and coordination meetings with other actors have been ongoing, as well as meetings with the ministry. A clearer roadmap will guide activities in 2024.

Gender and social inclusion
The Government of Kenya conducted a public review of a set of draft carbon market regulations in the country. UN-REDD, together with other partners, submitted a comprehensive set of comments on the regulations; social inclusion was a key feature of these inputs. The UN-REDD team also provided support to the deployment of direct grants to Indigenous peoples and women-led civil society organisations to implement the forest components in Kenya's NDC. These grants were funded by UK-DEFRA.

Partnerships
A community of practice has been set up at various levels, for example with programmes funded through UK-PACT, coordinated by the UK office in Kenya, with Conservation International and Pollination Foundation on nesting and benefit sharing.

Linkages to SDGs
Implementation of Kenya's REDD+ Strategy, engagement with the private sector, and working with communities link to SDGs 5, 13, 15 and 17.

Laos

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
Within the Mekong region, Lao PDR, along with Cambodia, stands at the frontier of forest exploitation and development. In this regard, the UN-REDD Programme explored opportunities for decoupling the impacts of agriculture commodities on forests, outlining two general approaches focused on actions to be taken by commodity supply chain actors and others on the role of jurisdictions and their land-use governance. A commodity-based analysis was conducted for the Mekong region including cassava and tree-plantations. Under safeguards, a rapid review of the country's safeguards information was completed, against three relevant standards, including ART-TREES, as well as an initial review of the

proposed SIS structure. A review of two REDD+ Benefit Sharing arrangements was also completed (SFT-LMR).

Forest solutions rewarded:
Against the backdrop of increased interest from private sector actors and developed countries in voluntary and Paris Agreement Article 6-compliant forest carbon projects, the UN-REDD Programme provided timely advice to the government to raise awareness on priorities, opportunities, risks and solutions on nesting within jurisdictional REDD+ initiatives. Through the hosting of national consultation workshops, stakeholders were made aware of the legal basis of carbon and benefit-sharing, and of the potential opportunities of private and public finance, as well as risks including jeopardizing NDC achievement. A gap assessment was conducted specifically on the carbon accounting requirements applying the ART-TREES standard, against Lao PDR's existing NFMS institutions and capacities. While the TREES standard poses a number of unique criteria, the existing national system is largely compliant with TREES requirements. The next step, therefore, would be to conduct an emissions reductions potential assessment by subnational jurisdictions, and to consider the opportunities for Lao to access Results-based Payments applying TREES. A roadmap to engage with forest carbon markets to access REDD+ RBF was prepared and shared with the government through a high-level political dialogue with four ministries. The roadmap serves as a guiding document to identify data and requirements for optimal options and opportunities for accessing REDD+ RBF from a variety of forest carbon finance streams available to Lao PDR.

The UN-REDD Programme provided core knowledge contributions on forest carbon financing, responding to the government's request to the UN system and World Bank, on the theme of carbon finance opportunities. The UN-REDD Programme also took part in organising a series of carbon finance knowledge-sharing seminars and webinars covering the fundamentals of carbon finance, including forest carbon markets that benefited the government, coordinated by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the World Bank.

Forest solutions enhanced:
The forest carbon landscape in Lao PDR is evolving rapidly, attracting the private sector and developing countries seeking mitigation opportunities. UN-REDD TA effectively addresses government advisory needs amidst rapidly changing circumstances, demonstrating increased flexibility. A national coordinator installed in 2023 enhances coordination with partners and government counterparts, fostering synergies in activities.

Gender and social inclusion

A rapid review of the country's safeguards information was completed, against three relevant standards, including ART-TREES, as well as an initial review of the proposed SIS structure. A review of two REDD+ Benefit Sharing arrangements was also completed (SFT-LMR). For the rapid review, criteria including FPIC, gender, Indigenous peoples, carbon rights including ART-TREES, and stakeholder engagement were applied. Gender was also considered in consultation events, ensuring balance of women presenters and speakers where relevant.

Partnerships

Beyond the close coordination with the Department of Forestry, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as the government counterpart of UN-REDD TA, other national partners were involved, including the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Planning and

Investment, the Ministry of Finance among others. UN-REDD enhanced partnerships domestically and internationally, collaborating closely with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in 2023 for political dialogues and advancing forest carbon market engagement in Lao PDR alongside partners like JICA, GIZ, World Bank, and Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG).

Linkages to SDGs

Results from UN-REDD TA are expected to contribute to the achievement of the country's objectives in relation to SDGs 13 and 15, among others.

Mexico

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
UN-REDD provided recommendations to enhance economic incentives for forest landscape conservation in rural areas, focusing on strengthening the forest value chain through initiatives like establishing Forest Social Companies, certifying chain of custody, and offering specialised guidance on timber and non-timber forest product marketing, along with promoting productive diversification. These suggestions, based on CONAFOR's "Guía para la elaboración del Plan de Desarrollo Integral (PDI)," aim to enhance production levels, productivity, competitiveness, and community well-being.
To bolster Mexico's NFMS, technical assistance was rendered to improve satellite monitoring algorithms, implement the eSBAE algorithm for deforestation rate estimation, and utilise SEPAL, alongside developing mobile data collection apps using Open Foris. Experiences were shared with countries employing MRV systems for REDD+ activities, including forest degradation and sustainable forest management. Moreover, the OECD-FAO Business Manual on Deforestation and Due Diligence in Agricultural Supply Chains was introduced to CONAFOR for an upcoming meeting with the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture.

Regarding environmental and social safeguards, the UN-REDD Programme aided CONAFOR in capacity building and developing an integrated safeguards framework to meet various funding sources' requirements for the National REDD+ Strategy. This involved delivering a technical document with an analysis matrix of international safeguards frameworks, recommendations, and a roadmap for designing an integrated safeguards framework for the national Safeguards Information System (SIS), alongside strengthening CONAFOR's safeguards experts through engagement with the UN-REDD Programme's Safeguards and Integrity Working Group.

Forest solutions rewarded:
Mexico focused on evaluating options to access finance for its significant emissions reductions from deforestation and forest degradation, as reported in its REDD+ Technical Annex. This included assessing eligibility for the Green Climate Fund's REDD+ Results-based Payment programme's follow-up phase, a priority for CONAFOR. UN-REDD played an active role in supporting this assessment by providing capacity building sessions, facilitating Mexico's participation in global consultations on the programme's technical content, and promoting cross-regional exchange of ideas. Additionally, UN-REDD encouraged technical exchanges with other UNFCCC REDD+ focal points to explore accessing GCF funding.

Challenges and solutions

CONAFOR's operational capacity continues to be challenged due reduced budgets and changes in personnel. Despite this, the UN-REDD Programme was able to maintain a general stable working relationship with CONAFOR over the course of the year. The reduced capacities in personnel at CONAFOR, however, impacted the workflow of the activity related to financial inclusion and social banking. In this context, UN-REDD strengthened the dialogue across agencies and with CONAFOR, offering flexible and pragmatic alternatives to ensure delivery of preliminary results. Additionally, in view of strengthening the inter-institutional work on REDD+, UN-REDD strengthened the linkages with CONAFOR and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) as well, through active collaboration around the regional forum on forest finance in Costa Rica.

Gender and social inclusion

Gender inclusion was reflected in Mexico's 2023 proposal integrating gender considerations into safeguard approaches. The CONAFOR team working on NFMS comprised 10 women and 15 men.

Mexico also participated in the Gender Day of the Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America in September, 2023. During this gender knowledge exchange, they shared lessons learned, experiences and good practices in integrating gender into its REDD+ action, such as the work on "Green Sisterhood Networks" which empowers women in biodiversity protection, breaking cycles of violence, and fostering economic activities across Chiapas, Oaxaca, Yucatán, and Mexico City. In another exchange, Mexican counterparts shared the success of Payment for Ecosystem Services projects in Oaxaca, delivering economic, social, and environmental benefits to local communities.

Partnerships

In the region, significant partnerships were formed among REDD+ countries through regional exchanges in Costa Rica and Colombia, focusing on finance, forest degradation, and knowledge management. Collaboration with GCFTF continued in 2023, including coordination on ART-TREES standard submissions and project implementation in Jalisco and Yucatán. Mobilising co-funding through CONAFOR's Payments for Environmental Services scheme was crucial for local conservation efforts in Yucatán. Future synergies are anticipated with the Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMI) and the launch of a VCM Access Strategy in Yucatán, in partnership with various government entities.

Linkages to SDGs

The activities developed contribute to SDGs 5, 8, 12, 13 and 15.

Myanmar

	On track	Delayed
TA for REDD+ Implementation	NA	NA
Mangroves TA	X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:

The Government of Myanmar has made significant progress in implementing the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, including completing the National REDD+ Strategy and initiating a National Forest Monitoring System. However, due to the political situation, technical assistance for REDD+ is currently on hold. In 2023, the UN-REDD Programme continued its work under the "Myanmar Mangroves Initiative," focusing on spatial analysis and support for mangrove communities. Achievements were showcased at a regional dialogue in Bangkok. Budget savings may allow activities to extend into 2024. Activities under the National REDD+ Strategy include raising awareness among non-state actors and providing technical assistance for forestry-related documents. Support for Community Forests (CF) and Community Protected Areas (CPA) concluded successfully, strengthening community capacity for forest protection and income generation. Field data analysis improved emission factor estimates for mangroves, contributing to the country's FREL submission. The Mangroves Initiative conducted extensive spatial analysis in two regions. Data exploration portals were launched, and near-real-time forest monitoring methodologies were shared. Spatial analysis also covered biodiversity significance and coastal vulnerability, with feedback obtained through webinars.

A guidance package on applying national safeguards at the subnational level, especially in community forestry, was developed. Traditional practices were integrated into management plans, and a webinar on REDD+ safeguards in community forestry was held. Lessons and challenges in safeguards implementation were shared in workshops in Yangon and Bangkok. Despite challenges, progress has been made in REDD+ implementation in Myanmar, particularly in mangrove conservation and community forestry. The UN-REDD Programme's efforts have contributed to capacity building, data analysis, and safeguard implementation. Ongoing evaluation and adaptation are essential for continued progress in REDD+ initiatives in the country.

Forest solutions rewarded:
After the REDD+ readiness phase was completed in 2020, the Mangroves TA was intended to serve as a pilot initiative with a view to generating high quality forestry data and good practices for fully-fledged implementation of the National REDD+ Strategy. The Mangroves TA utilised field inventory data from the National Forest Inventory, which was combined with remote sensing technology to yield better estimates for FREL when the political situation allows. The TA also trained over 1,000 individuals and developed several important manuals for CF, Community Forest Enterprises (ICFE) and CPA development that can be adopted by local CSO/NGOs and communities and tailored to the context.

Challenges and solutions

Implementation challenges related to the political situation remained unabated, particularly in the later part of 2023. However, by focusing on remote support and direct engagement at the community level, the Mangroves TA succeeded in advancing towards its stated objectives. The deployment of local implementing NGOs and building strong partnerships with local actors and experts was an important strategy to enable the TA implementation at community level.

Gender and social inclusion

The TA dedicated significant resources towards social inclusion, reorienting part of the planned actions specifically towards strengthening capacities of local communities. Overall, both men and women in over 25 communities benefitted from capacity development programmes and awareness initiatives related to CF, CFE and CPA. Recognizing the different roles women play in natural resource management and enterprise development, the TA ensured their meaningful participation in various training and forest management committees by making sure that their roles are explicitly recognised in the management and business plans. In addition, the safeguards guidance package specifically addresses issues of gender, social inclusion, and participation.

Partnerships

The partnership with UNEP-WCMC led to the core of the work on safeguards, as well as on mapping mangrove biodiversity and ecosystem services. The Mangroves TA fostered and strengthened partnerships with local non-state actors, such as CSO/NGOs and international institutions such as the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE).

Linkages to SDGs

The activities of the Mangroves TA, through the conservation and sustainable management of mangroves ecosystems, provide a key pathway to achieving progress across several SDGs, including SDG 14, 15, 13, 9 and 5.

Nepal

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:

Under carbon accounting, UN-REDD TA supported the development of country-specific emission/removal factors for Nepal's LEAF jurisdictional programme. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) protocols were developed and tested, resulting in emissions factors based on the differences in carbon stocks for change events. These are based on two physiographic region-based strata, and two forest quality-based strata. Safeguards processes and monitoring and reporting has been strengthened, including the draft first summary of safeguards. Key documents for the proposed LEAF Program are making progress, including the Benefit Sharing Plan and documentation of the country's grievance redress mechanism for REDD+.

Forest solutions rewarded:

Nepal has made progress in the drafting of the TREES Registration Document (TRD) of its LEAF subnational jurisdictional programme. Under carbon accounting, UN-REDD TA provided support in close collaboration with the US Forest Service (USFS) and Silva Carbon on the estimation of activity data. However, high levels of uncertainty remain a technical constraint and overall bottleneck has resulted in delays in submission of the TRD. Defining participant's ownership rights of emissions reductions and removal units, according to Nepal's legal framework, has been largely concluded. Following the national legal framework, a process of gaining FPIC from rights holders and stakeholders through consultations at national, provincial, district and community levels began in 2023 through UN-REDD TA. This included drafting and consultation with key national stakeholders of the implementation steps and guidance on how to roll out the FPIC for REDD+, and is guiding FPIC processes in the LEAF jurisdiction. Submission of the TRD to the ART Secretariat is anticipated around April 2024, provided that the technical challenges around uncertainty of carbon accounting are resolved, and public consultations are successful.

Challenges and solutions

Nepal's submission to the ART Secretariat for its TREES Registration Document is delayed due to technical constraints, particularly in enhancing emissions reductions potential and addressing carbon accounting uncertainties. There's a pending decision on including removals, which requires identifying private forests and obtaining consent from owners. Despite the pressure to submit on time,

maintaining technical integrity and building in-country capacity cannot be rushed. Hence, the delay in TREES Registration Document drafting and delays in streamlining consultation and FPIC processes among partners.

Gender and social inclusion

In conducting stakeholder consultations for the Nepal LEAF jurisdictional programme, participation and engagement of women and women's groups was specifically targeted by design. In order to meet FPIC requirements, a draft FPIC guidance was prepared and shared with key stakeholders, including Federation of Community Forestry Users (FECOFUN) and Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), who will form a panel to finalise the draft. The draft FPIC guidance will guide the FPIC process in the LEAF area, which is being coordinated by the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC).

Partnerships

Beyond the close coordination with the REDD+ Implementation Center under the Ministry of Forests and Environment as the government counterpart of UN-REDD TA, other national partners were involved, including the Forest Resources Training Center, NEFIN, FECOFUN, among others. UN-REDD TA was delivered in close collaboration and coordination with partners including the US Forest Service, and Silva Carbon. The World Bank has also been a close partner in the delivery, particularly for the carbon accounting area. The UN-REDD Programme maintains ongoing communication with Emergent in the progress of the technical work for the ART-TREES TRD. Plans to engage RECOFTC in the next steps of the FPIC process have been confirmed.

Linkages to SDGs

Results from UN-REDD TA are expected to contribute to SDGs 13 and 15, among others.

Papua New Guinea

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
UN-REDD's support to PNG included development of the National REDD+ Development Guidelines; Benefit Sharing Distribution System Guidelines (BSDS), Grievance Redress Mechanism Guidelines (GRM), and FPIC. UN-REDD also provided inputs to the draft on carbon market regulation, an outline for the second summary of safeguards information (SOI2) prepared. SIS indicators have been reviewed as part of this process. These REDD+ documents will help guide the development of REDD+ activities, accommodate REDD+ Voluntary Market Projects and relevant initiatives under a REDD+ framework for the country. Supporting the SOI2 is crucial for the country's preparation of the ART-TREES Registration document and aim to claim RBPs under LEAF. PNG's first SOI only covers the years 2015 – 2020, and the second SOI covers the years 2021 – 2022 and is under the second FRL period (2019 – 2027). A workplan for consultations and training on SIS was developed by the government.

UN-REDD's support on updating land use and land use change assessment (data collection on deforestation, forest degradation and restoration areas for 2020-2022) and the development of ART-TREES compliant Emission Factors using existing data is ongoing. With detailed plans in place, this work

will continue in 2024. Safeguards processes, monitoring and reporting have been strengthened. This includes drafting the ART-TREES Registration Document, with specific support on the development of safeguards sections that focus on conformance with structure and process indicators, and plan for conformance for outcome indicators. Apart from the technical assistance given to PNG, there were also additional capacity building opportunities for PNG to participate in regional knowledge exchange programs among REDD+ participating countries.

Forest solutions rewarded:
A detailed assessment of PNG eligibility under ART TREES 2.0 requirements, looking at carbon, safeguards and legal aspects has been finalised. UN-REDD also supported the preparation of the ART-TREES Registration Document. This development includes a monitoring plan, safeguards sections and plan for conformance with outcome indicators, a plan for securing ownership rights of the ERs from local stakeholders, a detailed description of the crediting level calculations, and an initial monitoring report (for the crediting period 2017-2021). A discussion paper on "Understanding Policy Priorities of Government of PNG towards National REDD+ Implementation and Nesting Approach" was developed and is under review by the Climate Change Development Authority (CCDA).

Forest solutions enhanced:
A detailed plan has been developed for the operationalisation of the National REDD+ development and implementation guidelines. This will be fully implemented in 2024. The UN-REDD National Coordinator works closely with the national government agency, the CCDA, responsible for coordinating climate change policies and programs in the country. Knowledge of Article 6 opportunities and requirements is delayed and will be advanced in 2024.

Challenges and solutions

Challenges in PNG were numerous, with constant high logistics costs, capacity needs within the implementing government agencies, changes in certain high-ranking government officials within the key agency, and other unexpected events. These challenges continue; however, a UN-REDD national coordinator has joined to support and coordinate the technical assistance and liaise directly with government counterparts. A detailed work plan for REDD+ activities for the country have been developed for 2024.

Gender and social inclusion

Official guidelines for REDD+ programs and projects, including how projects are developed, benefit sharing, FPIC and GRM, have been finalised by Government of PNG, and linked to the proposed carbon market regulation and carbon registry. These guidelines emphasis equal participation of everyone in the REDD+ project area, including women and children.

Partnerships

UN-REDD support is in direct collaboration with ongoing work under the GCF Readiness project, GEF-Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) Project and Australian Government Project which FAO has been implementing. Ongoing work includes the enhancement of a NFMS System and MRV Dashboard and REDD+ Geoportal System, which will enable green growth in Papa New Guinea to address climate change and conserve biodiversity.

Linkages to SDGs

All efforts under UN-REDD in Papua New Guinea contribute to SDGs 13 and 15.

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
Technical support has been provided by UN-REDD to Peru's Ministry of Environment (MINAM) to enhance their nesting process, which integrates REDD+ actions into Peru's NDC while maintaining environmental integrity and engaging the private sector in forest carbon initiatives. This support includes assistance in finalising regulations for the National Registry of Mitigation Measures (RENAMI), evaluating rights and regulations related to emissions reductions, and strengthening the national forest monitoring and GHG accounting system. Additionally, UN-REDD has aided MINAM in building capacities on safeguards, ensuring compliance with the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, and providing guidelines for the operation of the MRV system for nesting and reporting at national and international levels.

Forest solutions rewarded:
Support has been provided for monitoring and safeguards, advancing the ART-TREES Registration Document by FAO and UNEP. Assessment of compliance with TREES safeguards indicators and the development of a guiding document on interpreting indicators have been supported. Additionally, assistance has been given in generating information, data, and estimates on deforestation and forest degradation for 2020-2021 through a consultancy team working with MINAM. The team has made significant progress in interpreting deforestation data, undergoing quality control, which will inform the preparation of Peru's first REDD+ Technical Annex.

Forest solutions enhanced:
UN-REDD has supported MINAM in the review of draft versions of Peru´s Climate Finance Strategy (EFMCC), which focuses on financing for the NDC implementation and the transition to net-zero in 2050. Consultancies are being planned by MINAM and UN-REDD to strengthen the REDD+ component, to lead the overall technical coordination and validation of the strategy, and to support work on the voluntary carbon market. In addition, comments and feedback were provided on the first draft of the proposal on the establishment of a climate fund for Indigenous women. Peru requested UN-REDD support a number of countries (Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay and Peru) in the preparation and submission of their views on this topic to UNFCCC as an input for the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body.

To advance technical understandings and facilitate sharing of information, one representative from Peru participated in the knowledge exchange on nesting held in Panama in October, 2023. In addition, support was provided for Peru's participation in COP27 with a focus on forest carbon markets. To enhance the capacity of estimating forest degradation, two representatives from Peru participated in a regional knowledge exchange in November, 2023, focused on experiences with forest degradation monitoring. The knowledge exchange will support the estimations for forest degradation to be included in the ART-TREES Registration Document.

Challenges and solutions
Ongoing challenges are related to insufficient resources within MINAM to hire longer-term technical staff to advance forest and carbon monitoring in a way that allows them to meet bilateral and international reporting commitments, including in relation to the ART-TREES Registration Document and the first monitoring report. Extra resources have been mobilised to support Peru in advancing with technical and participatory aspects needed to advance these ongoing commitments, and to

potentially access additional financing. Despite additional resources being available to support progress in 2023, coordination with MINAM has been limited at times. In order to help address this, resources have been mobilised to hire eight consultants focused on MRV, one related to the finance strategy, one for nesting. Additional recruitment processes are underway for safeguards, legal and finance specialists.

Gender and social inclusion

UN-REDD provided feedback to the government's initial concept note for the design of a fund for Indigenous women in the country. This fund would be aimed at strengthening the leadership of Indigenous women in climate action through the establishment of a Climate Program for Indigenous Women. Additionally, UN-REDD provided technical support for the ART-TREES Registration Document and initial monitoring reports.

Partnerships

A number of commitments and partnerships have been developed in support of REDD+ implementation in Peru. The Joint Declaration of Intent is an international cooperation agreement on REDD+, updated in May, 2021, with endorsement from the governments of Germany, Norway, UK and the USA. This agreement includes performance finance for REDD+, under ART certification, which requires compliance with TREES. Peru also established an appropriate financial mechanism for REDD+ Results-based Payments. During COP27, Peru and Norway signed an agreement in which Norway committed to disburse $10 million through PROFONANPE (the Peruvian Trust Fund for National Parks and Protected Areas), to continue supporting Peru with its efforts to halt deforestation and to implement the RENAMI.

The UN-REDD Programme is serving as a point of coordination for a number of commitments and partnerships that have been developed in support of REDD+ implementation in Peru, with regular planning and coordination calls held with the Norwegian Embassy in Peru, as well as with NICFI, NORAD, GIZ, USAID and CIFOR. Peru is also part of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI), an international, multi-faith alliance that works to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to global efforts to end tropical deforestation. Activities being implemented since 2018 aim to protect rainforests and safeguard the Indigenous peoples that serve as their guardians.

To complement the TA of UN-REDD, AIM4Forest delivered a technical report with a comparative analysis between VERRA and ART-TREES, taking into account the technical requirements of each standard for MRV compliance. Similarly, a gap assessment of the MRV system in Peru was provided to MINAM in the last quarter of 2023. In addition, with AIM4Forest, an assessment of the National Forest and Land Monitoring Systems, in relation to the requirements of the European Union regulation on deforestation-free products (EUDR), started. This evaluation includes a comparative analysis of the definitions used for forests and an evaluation of maps and the systems currently available, coordinated by MINAM and the Register of Agricultural Producers, and by Ministry of Agrarian Development and Irrigation (MIDAGRI). As a result of the evaluation, recommendations are going to be issued on the monitoring of forests and lands and other geospatial information needs to comply with the EUDR.

Linkages to SDGs

Peru's continued progress on implementing its NDC, and REDD+ actions, contributes directly to SDGs 13 and 15 and indirectly to SDGs 5, 6, 8 and 12.

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Uganda was the first African country to submit REDD+ results for the 2015-2017 period in 2020. UN-REDD technical assistance is based on the country's commitment to access Results-based Payment options by ensuring compliance with ART-TREES requirements. A UN-REDD mission took place in November, during which the country's priorities were confirmed by the government counterpart. These include: the need to accelerate implementation of REDD+ after a four-year hiatus; implementation of the REDD+ strategy as part of the broader national planning framework, linked to the respective financing frameworks; strengthening national and district-level REDD+ institutional and organisational arrangements; and nesting, and accounting for all the REDD+ initiatives being implemented and in the pipeline for implementation.

Forest solutions realised:
Uganda joined the ART-TREES Standard global community, seeking more assurance of the market for high quality carbon credits. UN-REDD support was framed by Uganda's submission of a TREES concept note in December, 2022. UN-REDD provided support in conducting a participatory TREES safeguards assessment exercise; initial work has been completed and identified gaps are currently being filled. The TREES assessment was accompanied with a gap, links and lessons learned document to guide improvements to meet conformance in the few gaps that exist in structure and process indicators. The development of the plan of conformance for TREES outcome safeguards indicators is underway and will inform the update of the country's Safeguards Information System. A policy dialogue facilitated by UN-REDD AFF partnership brought together eight sectors to mainstream REDD+ agenda in the sectoral policies.

The high integrity MRV designed in 2022 with UN-REDD support and compliant with TREES requirements was implemented. The interpretation key was implemented, improved where needed, and QA/QC was performed through cross-validation of plots. The Standard Operating Procedures for the area estimates were drafted during 2023. Area estimates resulting from the implementation of the MRV design are expected in 2024. A particular challenge was identified in the distinction between forest and woodland/grassland, and an additional quality control activity was identified and implemented.

Forest solutions rewarded:
Despite quick initial progress in the LEAF process, the country stalled on signing the Letter of Intent (LOI) due to clause on arbitration by a United States Court that Uganda does not agree with. Nevertheless, the country is committed to be ready for ART-TREES and to explore all options on the market. Also, a draft stakeholder engagement plan was developed with the support of UN-REDD as part of the safeguards work. UN-REDD also supported the work to complete the elements of the TREES monitoring plan and monitoring report. UN-REDD support was complemented by support from AIM4Forest on nesting, which started in 202, and will continue in 2024.

Forest solutions enhanced:
The REDD+ Secretariat is a core member of the National Task Force for the development of the Regulations and Guidelines for Carbon Trade and Carbon Markets Mechanism for Uganda. Coordination and collaboration between the REDD+ Secretariat and the Climate Change Department was also undertaken with UN-REDD support through the Environmental Management for Livelihood Improvement Bwaise Facility (EMLI). Two officers from CCD will work with the National REDD+ Focal

point. A subnational workshop took place in November in Mbarara District aimed at collecting inputs to inform the TREES monitoring report and building capacity among local stakeholders on ART-TREES safeguards.

In 2023, the completion and validation workshop with the government, including an analysis of Uganda's public expenditures in forest-related sectors was conducted. This work, undertaken in collaboration with FAO's Agrifood Economics Division (ESA) Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural (MAFAP) team, led to the development of a methodology for classifying public expenditure on forest conservation, restoration, and sustainable use, extracting public expenditures across sectors. This methodology addresses the challenge of tracking investments in adaptation and mitigation related to agriculture, forestry, and other land uses, amidst scarce comprehensive global datasets. The analysis of Uganda's forest public expenditure has yielded three key lessons. Firstly, it has facilitated a better understanding among various ministries about the distribution of public resources, thus enabling more informed resource allocation in future planning cycles. This has also revealed that not all expenditures labelled for forest conservation effectively support sustainable forest management, as seen in the case of monocultures. Secondly, it has provided valuable insights into the estimated costs of implementing NDCs, which can inform the financial support required in the Biennial Transparency Reports (BTR). Lastly, it highlighted the existence of financing gaps between government commitments and actual expenditure, which could help the financial sector to better allocate resources.

Challenges and solutions

The main challenge is staff capacity with the REDD+ Secretariat being a one-person structure. In 2023, UN-REDD, in its safeguards work, helped alleviate this issue through EMLI supporting the REDD+ Secretariat on moving safeguards work forward. A technical challenge was identified by the Ugandan remote sensing team in the difficulty distinguishing between forest and woodland/grassland through the sample plot identification, which has a great impact on the assessment of forest area and deforestation/degradation areas. The proposed solution was to identify key plots for ground truthing to calibrate the plot interpretation.

Gender and social inclusion

The country's established technical working group to deliver on REDD+ is inclusive of key stakeholders, including local communities and CSO representatives. The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) and the National REDD+ Focal Point organized inclusive consultations, such as the Mbarara workshop held in November, to gather information to support REDD+ implementation and to build capacity of subnational stakeholders on ART-TREES. Furthermore, with the support of UN-REDD, a draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was developed and is being reviewed by the MWE.

Partnerships

UN-REDD and the MWE have been working together for several years; however, the partnership was strengthened by the integration of EMLI to help deliver the work on safeguards in support of the REDD+ Secretariat. Moreover, a new partnership between UN-REDD and the African Forest Forum was established in September. This partnership enables Uganda to benefit from trainings, knowledge exchange and access to UN-REDD knowledge products on REDD+, as part of a cohort of 10 countries in the region.

Linkages to SDGs

The UN-REDD activities in Uganda contribute directly to achieving SDGs 13 and 15.

Viet Nam

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:

The UN-REDD Programme explored opportunities for decoupling the impacts of agriculture commodities on forests, outlining two approaches to those centered around commodity supply chain actors, and to those centered around the role of jurisdictions and land use governance. A commodity-based analysis was conducted for the Mekong region, including commodities with significant investments from Viet Nam, such as rubber and tree plantations. Safeguards processes and monitoring and reporting has been strengthened. Subnational safeguards guidance, reflecting key procedures, are being developed including a proposed consultation protocol for the LEAF Program which is guiding the consultation processes. The Benefit Sharing Plan, in line with ART-TREES and LEAF requirements, has been developed and consulted. The grievance redress mechanism arrangements for the LEAF Program are being documented and discussed with provincial stakeholders.

Forest solutions rewarded:

Viet Nam submitted the ART-TREES Registration Document and Initial Monitoring Report to the ART Secretariat. UN-REDD TA supported the TRD and monitoring report drafting process overall, with particular support on thematic areas of carbon accounting, safeguards, and ownership rights of emissions reductions and removal units. UN-REDD TA also supported the consultation processes, reaching out to national and subnational levels on the overall jurisdictional REDD+ programme, including potential benefit sharing provisions, soliciting feedback from stakeholders. UN-REDD also provided support to draft the second Summary of Information on Safeguards (SIS), which is currently being reviewed with stakeholders. The SIS website has also been revived and a first round of updates completed (SFT-LMR).

Forest solutions enhanced:

Support was provided to Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) on assessing the requirements and recommendations for the implementation of Paris Agreement Article 6, considering emerging international market mechanisms and "mitigation contribution emissions reductions" for Viet Nam's targets. This included preparation required to establish a domestic carbon market, which is expected to launch internationally after 2027. The TA also supported inclusion of mangrove forests in subsequent NDC reviews, through developing methods of measuring carbon stocks in priority regions.

Challenges and solutions

Challenges since 2022 included delays in government approval for ODA projects; however, this was resolved in early 2023 by close coordination with MARD and UN-REDD. Day-to-day coordination was significantly improved with the appointment of an UN-REDD national coordinator in 2023. Technical challenges include sharing REDD+ proceedings and discussions on forest carbon finance. Viet Nam is developing a national carbon market, where forest carbon is crucial to offset emissions from other sectors.

Gender and social inclusion

Gender was mainstreamed in activities, ensuring representation of both men and women. The project activities also ensured active participation of women through gender-specific group discussions and developing materials with gender-sensitive considerations. Consultations and information sharing with stakeholders was carried out at national, provincial, and local levels, with attention to the participation of women and ethnic minority groups.
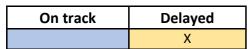
Partnerships

UN-REDD TA in Vietnam involved close coordination with the Department of Forestry under the MARD, alongside various national partners such as the Viet Nam National University and the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute. Drafting of the ART TRD and monitoring reports was done collaboratively with partners, including the US Forest Service and Silva Carbon, while maintaining dialogue with the Viet Nam UN Resident Coordinator's Office. Progress was communicated consultatively to relevant partners like Emergent, JICA, GIZ, and the World Bank through the Department of Forestry. Additionally, an international workshop on measuring carbon stocks in mangroves was organized to facilitate South-South exchange, with involvement from partners such as CIDA, Netherlands, JICA, SNV, GIZ, WWF, and MONRE.

Linkages to SDGs

Results from UN-REDD TA are expected to contribute to the achievement of the country's objectives in relation to SDGs 13 and 15, among others.

Zambia

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
UN-REDD support to Zambia on safeguards focused on supporting the country's Second Summary of Information, as required under the UNFCCC. The related terms of reference were finalised and agreed upon with the country counterpart in 2023. The selection process for hiring the consultant to conduct the work is being finalized. UN-REDD TA also included supporting the Forestry Department in reconvening the National Safeguards Working Group. The Forestry Department of Zambia is advancing work to ensure it provides guidance and feedback to the safeguards processes in the country.

Forest solutions rewarded:
The data and information from current safeguards framework, along with newly gathered insights during the Second SOI exercise, will guide the enhancement of the existing safeguards framework to align with international standards like ART-TREES, with a particular focus on ART-TREES structural and process indicators.

Forest solutions enhanced:
Zambia has made strides in aligning with the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, establishing crucial components like NFMS, SOI, and an updated FREL. Unfortunately, an assessment undertaken by UN-REDD in 2022 revealed inconclusive evidence of ER against its FREL for 2019-2020, hindering national

access to climate finance. In response, in 2023, UN-REDD activities focused on a "green growth" approach, aligned with Zambia's national development strategy, concentrating efforts on sustainable natural resource management and an expansion of Community-based Forestry (CbF). Assessments in the North-Western Province aimed to develop a jurisdictional REDD+ program at the subnational level. These assessments included evaluating existing and potential Community Forest Management Groups (CFMGs) to capitalize on climate action, leading to a roadmap for CFMG expansion and identifying barriers to CbF enhancement. Additionally, assessments of forest value chains in the province aimed to develop alternative livelihoods that increase the value of standing forests, including mapping Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs), selecting priority value chains, and conducting market assessments. Furthermore, assessments of rural finance explored designing financial products to support forest-based livelihoods, emphasising the importance of low-interest loans and grants for sustainable forestry practices. Furthermore, an analysis of the forest-water-climate nexus in the Zambezi headwaters region highlighted the significance of appropriate forest management practices for carbon sequestration and water ecosystem services.

Challenges and solutions

Zambia's Forestry Department has been undergoing significant internal transitions in terms of its relationships with its Ministry, as well as changes in key personnel. In response, UN-REDD has focused on consolidating its relationships with existing staff and expanding relationships with new staff to ensure stable and effective working relationships. While interest in CFM in Zambia is high, most CMFGs still have limited capacity and resources. In response, UN-REDD is collaborating with other partners to identify needs and enhance capacity.

Gender and social inclusion

A range of gender-related activities were undertaken on efforts on sustainable natural resource management and Community-based Forestry (CbF) expansion. To illustrate, the survey tool included gender-specific questions, and collected information included disaggregation of gender data. Specific efforts were made to ensure women's representation in stakeholder and validation meetings, for example by asking village leaders to invite women to attend. The CFMG report has a section on gender.

Additionally, in the assessments of forest value chains, the approach used included specific reference to gender dimensions, and the template included areas where gender was discussed. Due to the traditional roles that women play in forest products in North-Western Province in Zambia, significant numbers of women were engaged in the data collection process. Specific effort was also made to ensure women's representation in stakeholder and validation meetings, and gender disaggregated data was collected as part of field work. Furthermore, in the assessments of rural finance, engagement with a large number of village savings and banking groups was undertaken with strong participation from women.

Partnerships

UN-REDD TA actively collaborated with Zambia's Forestry Department, engaging comprehensively in all operational facets and field work endeavors. This collaboration extended further through strategic partnerships with various institutions. CIFOR, for instance, played a pivotal role in mapping, selecting, and conducting market assessments of NWFP. Meanwhile, a collaboration with Polytechnic University of Valencia contributed to the design and execution of forest cover-water ecosystems services modelling. Initial engagement for Tier 2 of the forest cover-water ecosystems services modelling took place with the University of Zambia's (UNZA) Integrated Water Management Resources Center. Crucial meteorological input data was sourced from the Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD), while hydrological input data was provided by the Zambia Water Resources Management Authority

(WARMA). Additionally, the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) facilitated the provision of landscape input data for modelling activities. The collaboration extended further with Rhodes University initiating engagement for NWFP analysis.

Linkages to SDGs

UN-REDD TA in Zambia is aligned to SDGs 1, 13 and 15.

Lower Mekong Region

On track	Delayed
X	

Project implementation

The UN-REDD Lower Mekong Initiative concluded, after four years of implementation, at the end of 2023. Broadly speaking, the UN-REDD Programme achieved the three intended outcomes of the initiative, with the engagement of all five countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, and with stakeholders in China.

Cross-border and regional level achievements include the dialogues that were facilitated by the initiative between the four countries (Myanmar was constrained by domestic turmoil). Bilateral government-to-government dialogues were facilitated, cascading from technical to political and back to technical levels to ensure the coordination between technical practice and political commitments. The initiative supported such bilateral processes including the upgrading of the Lao-Viet Nam forestry sector Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from single departmental levels to the ministry level. New or updated MOUs were also drafted or signed between Cambodia-Viet Nam, Cambodia-Thailand, Lao-Thailand, and Thailand-Viet Nam. In China, the "ForestforLife" communications campaign was implemented, reaching over 200 million.

Technical achievements were made in the area of forest certification, as a means to connect the region's forest products – particularly those from smallholders -- to more legal and sustainable markets around the world. An online platform was established for connecting certified forest products from the region to buyers, particularly in China. The often-cited challenge of smallholder access to forest certification was facilitated in a number of ways, including most fundamentally, by making significant progress in the establishment of national forest certification systems in both Cambodia and Lao PDR, learning technically from the decade-old experiences of Viet Nam. Forest certification, as a voluntary mechanism, is expected to play an important role in preparing the market towards deforestation-free requirements, such as the EU's Deforestation-free Regulation (EUDR). Smallholders and SMEs in Thailand and Viet Nam were also supported through enterprise incubation programmes (using the Restoration Factory) aimed at building business and financial skills, with a total of 80 SMEs incubated.

Under the initiative, a study was undertaken to identify strategic pathways for addressing agriculture commodity-driven deforestation in the region, outlining two typologies: a commodity supply-chain, actor-centred approach, and a jurisdictional, land governance-centred approach. The first approach is relevant in the region in commodities, such as rubber and tree plantations, where a significant industry is present. The latter is relevant for commodities that are less strategically planted, and more often used as a livelihood strategy for the smallholder farmer, such as cassava. This study is complemented

by an analysis of the main financial actors involved in timber and rubberwood value chains in the Lower Mekong Region.

Challenges and solutions

Sustaining impact of regional initiatives is often challenging, and the UN-REDD Lower Mekong Initiative may not be an exception. While cross-border engagement is crucial to many aspects of sustainable forest development in a region like the Lower Mekong, government priorities and budget allocations are limited. At the final regional dialogue in December, 2023, countries identified other externally-funded regional projects to continue the exchange and dialogue from the initiative. Viet Nam and Thailand also expressed plans within the bilateral MOUs to provide support to Cambodia and Lao PDR, beyond bilateral collaboration, in respective priority areas that gained momentum through the UN-REDD Lower Mekong Initiative.

Gender and social inclusion

Social inclusion has been a central theme running through the initiative, exercised particularly through activities designed to facilitate the engagement of smallholders into sustainable and legal supply chains, and to incubate micro SME enterprises.
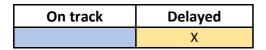
Partnerships

Partnerships from the previous years of the initiative were further nurtured in 2023, including with RECOFTC (at regional and country levels), with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) on a feasibility study on deforestation-free and forest positive commodity supply chains, with the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) for support with national certification system development in Cambodia and Lao PDR, and with Bridge For Billions rolling out the Restoration Factory in Thailand and Viet Nam, among many more. In total, the initiative engaged with more than 22 partners through letters of agreements and similar arrangements, besides the many other partners that were engaged through dialogue and coordination.

Linkages to SDGs

Results from the UN-REDD Lower Mekong Initiative are expected to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs 13 and 15, among others.

ASEAN Region

On track	Delayed
	X

REDD+ implementation

Discussions have been held with Social Forestry (SF) focal points in the three countries on their work developing SFMS, the challenges and opportunities. UN-REDD TA has worked with these focal points and RECOFTC to collate different datasets on SF, and to address inconsistencies in the data to support analysis and monitoring. This has aligned with ongoing work to assess the potential extent of SF, considering the national targets and commitments, and the resources available. The dataset on SF development is also important for updating the emissions factors for SF in the three countries.

TA also included conducting a capacity development needs assessment to strengthen capacities on social forestry monitoring in line with the agreed National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS). A proposed capacity development program is being developed based on this.

Other activities include a draft assessment of tenure security to support long-term investments in SF-based mitigation actions in support of NDC commitments.

A series of activities have been undertaken to facilitate future investments in promising SF business models. Initially, databases were established to compile information on SF enterprises (SFE) across each country, along with an inventory of government-supported SF models and available business and financing assistance for SFEs. These efforts aimed to identify the diverse range of potential SF models within each country. Subsequently, in collaboration with national stakeholders, key market intermediaries were mapped, and an analysis of priority timber and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) value chains was conducted to prioritise value chains for development. Following this prioritization process, an in-depth analysis was conducted to assess the commercial potential of identified SF value chains. Additionally, a comprehensive examination of non-financial factors influencing the success and scalability of enterprises within the main SF value chains was undertaken. Specifically, this analysis focused on seven value chains in Cambodia, six in Indonesia, and five in Lao PDR, with the aim of identifying factors that predict enterprise viability and capacity for scaling up. Furthermore, efforts were made to support the development of land suitability maps for the production of SF products within high-potential timber value chains. These maps were intended to provide valuable insights into areas with the greatest potential for sustainable SF timber production, to support informed decision-making and strategic planning in the forestry sector.

An agreement was signed with Nanyang Technological University to support the development of regional guidelines, along with a practical toolkit for NbS and EbA practices in the forest sector.

Challenges and solutions

Evidence requires sound data, and ideally, spatial data, and countries have historically made different choices or degrees of investments, across the various levels and types of data to pursue. However, challenges, such as identifying and gaining access to relevant datasets, must be addressed if the completion of assessments is to be achieved. The initiative is operating in strong partnership with participating countries and the ASEAN Secretariat to ensure access to data is possible; this work includes improving some of the available datasets. Key positive lessons will be captured, working closely with and where applicable through formal ASEAN mechanisms, such as dialogues with ASEAN working groups on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) and Forest & Climate Change (AWG-FCC).

Gender and social inclusion

Social inclusion and gender has been a central theme running through the initiative, exercised particularly through activities designed to facilitate the engagement of smallholders into sustainable and legal supply chains, and incubate micro/SME enterprises. To illustrate, gender considerations were taken into account in the design of the trainings and gender disaggregated data was collected. At the August, 2023 regional workshop, women represented 32 percent of participants (22 of 68) and 42 percent of speakers (7 of 17). At the regional closing workshop in Bangkok in December, 2023 (joint with the closing workshop of the Myanmar mangroves project), women's participation was recorded at 39 percent (45 of 115) and women were represented in more than 40 percent of plenary presentations. In addition, a gender approach was integrated into the various studies and/or analyses undertaken as part of this work, wherein selection of associated respondents in each country aimed for gender parity as well. In terms of the forest enterprises supported, in Thailand of the 46

entrepreneurs supported, 62 percent were men and 38 percent were women and in Viet Nam, 33 percent of entrepreneurs were men and 45 percent were women. Of the 53 mentors, 55 percent were men and 45 percent were women.

Partnerships

The initiative works in partnership with the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Working Groups on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) and Forest & Climate Change (AWG-FCC), and with the governments of Cambodia, Indonesia and Lao PDR, RECOFTC, Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP), Nanyang Technological University and various other partners and stakeholders in ASEAN and target countries.

Linkages to SDGs

Work in ASEAN contributes to SDGs 5, 13 and 15.

UN-REDD and African Forest Forum Partnership Project

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ implementation

Implementation of project's activities started in September, 2023. A side event was organized during the Africa Climate Week/Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi. The event addressed various issues to tackle climate change more effectively: the importance of nature, collaborative private-public efforts and integrity in the voluntary carbon market. More than 100 participants attended. The key messages were delivered via both UN-REDD channels and partners' platforms of communication.

In October, a Learning Lab on REDD+ results-based finance and a regional exchange on social inclusion and benefit-sharing mechanism took place at the 24th session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission in Tanzania. The event included 25 participants from 10 countries from the region. Experts from the World Bank, Emergent and UNEP provided sessions during the event.

A National Policy Dialogue was organized in Uganda in November, bringing together 30 participants from eight sectors to pave the way towards coherent sectoral policies to address disincentives and to ensure better coordination and integration of REDD+ across the main sectors related to the key drivers of deforestation in Uganda. The project also launched national consultations in six African countries to inform and enrich the planned regional knowledge exchanges with in-depth analyses of the national context and lessons learnt from the different countries (Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda) on topics prioritized in project agreements (RBP, Social inclusion, Benefit sharing mechanism, deforestation-free commodities).

The project was also developing an analytical framework in 2023. E-learning modules on forests and land use public expenditure analysis and policy coherence were developed, building on UN-REDD TA's initial methodology pilot in Uganda. Piloting in Ghana started, with a validation workshop planned for 2024. A draft methodological working paper on the topic was prepared, to be refined in 2024 following the Ghana pilot.

Challenges and solutions

In 2023, the AFF project encountered several challenges that impeded progress. Delays in finalising the legal agreement among partners hindered the timely implementation of activities. To address resource constraints, a prioritization exercise was undertaken, both in resource allocation and activity delivery. Furthermore, the uncertain political landscape, particularly in the DRC due to presidential elections, necessitated the postponement of activities until 2024. The global pandemic also disrupted REDD+ initiatives across Africa, leading to a delay in activities, turnover of key personnel, and a need for reassessment of project needs. Additionally, the challenge of limited resources amid high demand prompted partners to pool available resources for greater efficiency and to strategise collectively for future activities.

Gender and social inclusion

Gender and social inclusion were emphasized in the project's various activities by facilitating women's participation, which ranged from 25 to 58 percent in different events (the earlier for policy dialogue and the latter for a side-event during Africa Climate Week).

Partnerships

The partnership brings together complementary assets, including global network of practitioners, experts and policymakers, and an extensive African network of academics, policymakers and stakeholders. This ensures a positive feedback loop between science and policymaking and implementation, key to success for sustainability. An indicator of the relevance of the partnership's work towards getting countries to REDD+ phase 3 is the level of engagement of government officials in all the events organized in 2023. Taking stock of 2023 lessons, partners agreed to strengthen collaboration; this includes improving communication, planning and coordination, but also pooling resources across partners to improve cost-effectiveness. The UN-REDD AFF partnership can serve as a point of entry platform to assess aspiring countries who could benefit from more substantial UN-REDD support in the future.

Linkages to SDGs

AFF work is aligned to SDGs 1, 13 and 15.

UN-REDD Academy 3.0

On track	Delayed
X	

REDD+ Implementation

In 2023, the REDD+ Academy, with a $1.9 million grant from the Korea Forest Service, aimed to enhance the implementation of REDD+ across the globe. The initiative focused on key areas such as carbon markets, financing mechanisms, and the integration of new technologies in forestry and climate change efforts. It supported a wide range of stakeholders from 65 UN-REDD partner countries, including government officials, the corporate sector, project developers, local communities, and indigenous peoples.

To enhance REDD+ implementation efforts, the academy introduced the Howspace platform, a dynamic online space that attracted over 260 members. This platform facilitated a robust exchange of ideas, best practices, and innovations among REDD+ practitioners, fostering a collaborative learning environment. The academy tailored its educational offerings to meet the diverse needs of its stakeholders through kickstarting the development of new learning journals with micro-learning tools

and specialised labs like the Asia Pacific Learning Lab. Additionally, the academy addressed the need for actionable REDD+ strategies through discussions on jurisdictional and nested frameworks. By providing the latest information to countries in developing and implementing these frameworks, the academy ensured the alignment of REDD+ activities with national climate goals and international commitments.

Challenges and Solutions

A primary challenge was the overflow of information on REDD+, compared with significant knowledge gaps in implementing good practices effectively. The academy's response included creating platforms for knowledge exchange, like the Asia Pacific Learning Lab. This lab served as a focal point for dialogues on integrating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) into REDD+ finance strategies and leveraging international regulatory frameworks, including the Paris Agreement. The goal was to bridge knowledge gaps by fostering discussions on the multiverse of standards for REDD+ credits, operational challenges, and overcoming financial and emissions reductions issues.

Partnerships

Strategic collaborations in 2023 were key to the academy's success. A partnership with the International Training Center of the International Labour Organization (ITCILO) was formed to develop customized learning strategies, modules and sessions. Engagements with universities and research institutions also played a critical role, leveraging academic expertise and research to enrich the academy's educational content. These partnerships ensured the relevance and effectiveness of the academy's learning materials and activities, contributing significantly to global REDD+ implementation efforts.

AIM4FOREST

On track	Delayed
X	

In April, 2023, the UK signed a Standard Administrative Arrangements (SAA) with the UN-REDD Programme to support forest monitoring. Consequently, the FAO and the UK launched the AIM4Forests Programme (Accelerating Innovative Monitoring for Forests) on Earth Day in April. The initiative has a duration of five years and is designed to accelerate country capabilities in forest monitoring as a part of global efforts to stop deforestation and forest degradation and restore forests.

After its launch, the second half of 2023 was an inception phase for AIM4Forests. With the inception phase now concluded, AIM4Forests is set to begin delivering impact in 2024. During inception, the logframe was finalized and an indicator framework designed that will guide programme strategy and results monitoring in the years to come. The logframe includes a strong focus on participation and transparency and puts the programme firmly into the context of work towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

A first set of countries was identified to deliver technical assistance, with the programme set up to eventually support up to 20 countries. Also during the inception phase, workplans were developed and implementation was started for: Bolivia, Brazil, DRC, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru, PNG, Uganda and Viet Nam. Partnerships are essential for the programme to deliver impact. The inception phase saw efforts to agree on detailed modalities for collaboration and costed workplans with the Global Forest Observations Initiative and the International Land Coalition. Planning was also advanced for a range of global activities that fall, broadly, into four categories: forest monitoring to

advance better resource management, monitoring for ecosystem restoration, forest monitoring to support deforestation-free commodity production, and support for measuring, reporting and verification of mitigation results.

REDD+ implementation

Forest solutions realised:
AIM4Forests will work to strengthen forest monitoring in several contexts that are key to addressing climate change and reducing forest loss. Provision of forest monitoring information can enable better forest resource management. Countries need fit-for-purpose forest monitoring that can guide their efforts for ecosystem restoration. The global effort to reduce commodity-driven forest loss crucially relies on high-quality datasets to inform sourcing strategies and consumer-side requirements.

Forest solutions rewarded:
AIM4Forests includes a focus on supporting country capacity to measure, report on and verify mitigation results. This will help countries access climate finance and reap the rewards for actions to reduce emissions. AIM4Forests will provide tailored technical solutions for forest monitoring, address outstanding methodological challenges and deliver direct technical assistance to countries.

Forest solutions enhanced:
AIM4Forests includes a strong focus on enhancing transparency and access to data for all those whose actions can help deliver progress towards NDCs and better resource management.

Challenges and solutions

The risks to the AIM4Forests Programme are the flipside of its strategy to develop impact. AIM4Forests was designed to contribute to several important trends surrounding management of forest resources and climate change. It aims to support forest monitoring in the context of deforestation-free commodity production, through supporting country efforts to measure, report and verify mitigation results, to monitor progress towards ecosystem restoration targets, and to operate forest monitoring systems that enable better management of the forest resource. By supporting forest monitoring in these several contexts, the programme has the potential to deliver much impact – but this impact also depends on progress on international climate change, ecosystem restoration, deforestation-free commodity production. It is too early to identify specific challenges, since AIM4Forests was just launched in mid-2023, but there will be more to report in the coming years on challenges and solutions.

Gender and social inclusion

AIM4Forests is designed to advance gender equality and social inclusion. Such considerations are at the heart of the programme's definition of the change it aims to promote, and they are mainstreamed throughout the logframe with several targets directly set to enhance access to women, and disadvantaged groups. There is also a whole output specifically aimed at IPLC, a key group that has so far not had sufficient access to work on forest monitoring and climate change.

Partnerships

AIM4Forests crucially relies on partnerships to deliver progress. Experts, firms, universities external to FAO will be crucial delivery partners on many occasions over the coming years. In particular, partnerships with the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) and with the International Land Coalition (ILC) stand out. AIM4Forests routinely turns to the lead group of the GFOI as a sounding board for its design, its products and its approach, for example, for collecting important feedback on workplans and on technical products. On many occasions, the GFOI partners also work alongside FAO to implement activities. The GFOI also directly leads the AIM4Forests Programme to deliver a country-

led planning process for forest monitoring capacity development. Under this process, GFOI will work with interested countries to help run a structured planning process designed to strengthen technical capacities and better integrate forest monitoring into national institutions.

The ILC directly leads the AIM4Forests Programme targeting IPLC. The ILC will develop bespoke technical materials to enable the participation of IPLC in forest monitoring and emerging carbon standards. The activities will be targeting Indigenous peoples in a community of practice on forest monitoring.

Linkages to SDGs

The activities under AIM4Forests contribute to progress against SDGs 12, 13 and 15.

Knowledge management results

Throughout 2023, the UN-REDD Programme revitalized its digital outreach, introducing a series of improvements to enhance stakeholder engagement and accessibility to its knowledge products. Key initiatives included the launch of the REDD+ Academy Howspace and the unveiling of a redesigned REDD+ Resource newsletter, which saw a 21 percent increase in subscriptions. These platforms have become central to UN-REDD's strategy for engaging stakeholders and disseminating essential evidence, case studies and knowledge on REDD+ topics.

The Programme coordinated a range of knowledge exchange activities, events, and dialogues alongside major climate and environmental meetings such as the Amazon Summit, three regional climate weeks, and COP28. In total, these knowledge exchanges and dialogues have successfully engaged over 14,000 individuals. Notably, the side event, "Everything all at once: supercharging forest solutions to the climate crisis" at COP28 attracted significant attention, reaching 4,500 people online and 80 in person.

Beyond these physical and virtual events, the Programme's ongoing #SaveForestsNow campaign has continued to resonate widely through social media, reaching approximately 90,000 people and generating over half a million impressions. This extensive engagement underscores the global community's increasing concern for sustainable forest management and conservation, and their readiness to act on these issues.

In addition to these efforts, the Programme has significantly expanded its media presence, securing high-profile interviews and op-eds in major outlets like France24 and Fortune. Furthermore, the UN-REDD Lower Mekong Initiative's "ForestsforLife" campaign to protect and restore rosewood through lifestyle changes gained substantial media coverage in Chinese, Thai, and regional publications, such as China Daily and Bangkok Post, reaching a combined audience of 230 million people.

Partnerships with the African Forest Forum, IPAM, Nature for Climate coalition, Climate Promise, and China Green Foundation significantly expanded the reach and accessibility of REDD+ knowledge products. Furthermore, the development of a prototype deforestation prediction tool in partnership with the University of Warwick underscored how frontier technologies can be applied in forest conservation efforts.

The Programme also strengthened its partnerships by maintaining active involvement with the Forests and Food Systems (UNFFS) Coalition partners, which analysed key needs and gaps in the capacities of governments and other stakeholders to decouple agriculture from deforestation and identified the first elements of its roadmap.

The OECD-FAO Business Handbook on Deforestation and Due Diligence continues to be disseminated. In Colombia, two companies have initiated piloting the Handbook, supported by a multi-stakeholder advisory group. In 2023, the Programme also provided advice to four countries to leverage tools developed for REDD+ to demonstrate compliance with market-based measures such as the EUDR.

Knowledge captured, managed and disseminated

Knowledge exchanges and learning labs

Throughout 2023, the UN-REDD Programme organized more than 25 knowledge-sharing events, including learning labs, engaging a total of 8,000 stakeholders across governments, academia, civil society, market intermediaries, IPLCs, and the private sector. These events spanned a broad spectrum of topics such as sustainable forest trade, high integrity carbon markets, and gender mainstreaming in voluntary carbon markets, significantly broadening the reach of REDD+ knowledge and fostering a collaborative learning atmosphere. However, post-event surveys identified the need for a better gender balance among speakers and participants as an area for improvement.

- As part of the revitalized REDD+ Academy, a week-long learning lab and exchange on **forest carbon markets and nesting took** place in Thailand. The learning lab sought to enhance knowledge through facilitated discussions on critical topics such as Nationally Determined Contributions and carbon markets, but also led to the development of country-specific plans to access financing and establish safeguards for successful REDD+ implementation.
- Additional learning lab and regional exchanges in Costa Rica, Panama, and Tanzania brought REDD+ practitioners together to enhance knowledge and exchange insights on **results-based finance, social inclusion and benefit-sharing.** The outcomes of these events were widely shared, contributing to a larger dialogue on REDD+ implementation.
- **Forest monitoring** remains critical for engaging climate finance effectively. Experts from seven Latin American countries met in Florencia, Colombia, under the auspices of the UN-REDD Programme, FAO, and SilvaCarbon, to share strategies for forest degradation. A monitoring workshop focused on operational definitions and the integration of satellite imagery with field data for precise assessments, highlighting both the progress in national-scale monitoring enabled by free satellite data and the ongoing challenges that necessitate further training and stakeholder communication for sustained conservation success.
- Other important topics such as **community-based forestry, agriculture-forest nexus and social forestry were also covered in a series of workshops.** For instance, UN-REDD supported the organisation of the workshop, "Community-based Forestry in West Africa: The Way Forward." Held in Somone, Senegal, the event gathered 77 experts, practitioners, and stakeholders to explore the potential of community-based forestry (CbF) in addressing climate challenges, supporting sustainable development, and preserving biodiversity in the region. In Cambodia, about 100 participants gathered to discuss the agriculture-forestry nexus and jurisdictional REDD+ approaches.

Key knowledge products

- In 2023, UN-REDD experts laid the groundwork for the report, "Comparative legal study focusing on carbon rights in the context of REDD+ countries: Legal trends and case studies from Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America." The report stresses the necessity of clear legislation to ascertain ownership of emissions reductions and to ensure equitable distribution of benefits, particularly to IPs and LCs. Highlighting the importance of ownership clarity for accessing Results-based Payments and building trust among stakeholders, the report urges countries to update legislation or establish contractual agreements.

- UN-REDD also launched two briefs entitled, "Financements liés à la REDD+: Réflexions pour un meilleur accès des communautés locales et des peuples autochtones. Cas de la République du Congo et de la Côte d'Ivoire," which outline various countries' efforts and forthcoming actions, aligned with COP26 commitments in Glasgow, with a focus on IPs and LCs rights and roles in climate action.
- The Programme supported the development and publication of a guidance for governments to implement NDCs in line with sustainable climate pathways entitled "Aligning Short-term Land Sector Actions with Long Term Climate Goals." The recommended actions in the guidance document are organized into five building blocks, including cross-sector collaboration; socially inclusive and gender-responsive stakeholder engagement; institutional, technical, and knowledge capacity-building measures; monitoring, data, and target-setting improvement; and, sufficient and appropriately distributed finance.

New communities of practice in motion

Several communities of practice were initiated in 2023, including one on gender and voluntary carbon markets. In particular, the Latin American and Caribbean Safeguards and Integrity Working Group now has over 70 experts interested in REDD+ safeguards from nine countries represented in the region, three UN agencies and five technical teams from 5 REDD+ Results-based Payment projects. The three sessions held in 2023 addressed two key issues for the current state of safeguards: integrated safeguards frameworks and updates and improvements to Safeguards Information Systems (SIS), including the experience of Ecuador and Costa Rica.

Digital media growth

The UN-REDD Programme witnessed a remarkable surge in its digital presence, highlighted by an 18 percent increase in social media followers and a 7 percent rise in website page views. Additionally, the Programme consistently engaged its audience through the distribution of at least 10 editions of the REDD+ Resource newsletter. This digital momentum underscores the Programme's effective strategies in capturing and disseminating crucial knowledge, thereby expanding its reach and impact among a diverse global audience.

Collective political and societal support to NbS increased

A cornerstone of UN-REDD's knowledge and public advocacy efforts was the roll-out of the #SaveForestsNow public-facing awareness campaign, aimed at raising the visibility of the value of forests to our daily lives and societies, and the urgency of increased action and ambition.

As part of this campaign, **"Forest Dialogues,"** a consensus-building process aimed at raising the ambition of forest countries to deliver high-quality and high-integrity emissions reductions, was implemented. These dialogues, held during major global summits and COP28, were crucial in increasing forest financing and enhancing the quality of emissions reductions, facilitating numerous impactful discussions and events across various platforms, including the Amazon Summit, New York Summit, regional climate weeks, the Three Basin Summit, and ultimately COP28. About 6,000 individuals were reached. In addition, a unique mini-social media countdown to COP28 featured engaging social cards with key messages from the conference, climaxing in the debut of the "Everything All at Once" curtain raiser trailer.

Through these spaces, forested nations advocated for enhanced investments in forests, emphasising the importance of establishing a fair market price for forest carbon. This call to action resonated with donor countries like Korea, which reiterated their commitment to supporting transitions to high integrity emissions reductions forests. The ongoing dialogue continues beyond the physical events,

with social media outreach touching approximately 90,000 people and generating half a million impressions.

UN-REDD, in collaboration with the **UN Climate Promise,** which is deployed by UNDP, also initiated a programme of knowledge sharing, dialogue and trust-building in 2023 on climate finance with Indigenous peoples. This initiative has been designed and will be implemented in partnership with Indigenous representatives, notably the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, which has played a key role in advocating on this matter. The objective is to better connect climate financiers and Indigenous peoples to advance sustainability and equality. Dialogues, side events, capacity building events and strategic stakeholder meetings were convened during the regional climate weeks, New York Climate Week and at COP28. In 2024, the initiative will continue with the development of the resource page on training materials, resources, and opportunities; development of an online course or series of webinars on climate finance for IPs and LCs; resource mobilisation to scale up the direct grants to Indigenous peoples in more countries, and exploration of the viability of an NDC implementation fund for IP and LCs.

The **UN-REDD Lower Mekong Initiative's "ForestsforLife" sub-campaign,** in collaboration with the China Green Foundation and as part of the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, has made a significant mark in major Chinese cities, including Beijing, Nanchang, and Shanghai, captivating an audience of over 230 million. Its impact was notably underscored by a month-long exhibit at the Beijing International Airport. This exhibit, designed to bridge the gap between urban residents and nature, offers a vivid journey through the life cycle of forests, from their inception and destruction to their restoration. This initiative not only raises awareness among city dwellers, but also celebrates the vital efforts towards forest conservation and ecosystem restoration.

Digital cooperation and frontier technologies deployed

In 2023, the UN-REDD Programme began exploring the frontiers of technology, particularly machine learning to innovate and enhance its efforts to halt deforestation. Against this backdrop, UN-REDD collaborated with the Data Science for Social Good programme in the UK (DSSGx UK) to prototype a predictive model to assess the likelihood of deforestation over time. The Amazon biome was chosen as a test case for this prototyping exercise because it plays a crucial role in global biodiversity and climate change mitigation and is under threat from deforestation.

By analyzing different factors, the tool not only predicts where deforestation might happen, but also explores why it happens, including the impact of human actions and the protective role of Indigenous lands. This method shows how combining research and international cooperation can lead to significant impacts on shaping policy. The insights from this tool can help policymakers decide where to focus resources and how to regulate rules to halt forest degradation and deforestation.

This project highlights the importance of using digital tools and frontier technology to address forest loss. The next steps involve making the tool easier and more effective through a process called prototyping. Lessons learned have already been compiled. The tool is accessible here: https://gee-tool.projects.earthengine.app/view/dssg23-deforestation

Gender

The UN-REDD Programme continued to support 21 partner countries in advancing their efforts to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment principles into their REDD+ actions, particularly on forest monitoring, carbon market readiness and REDD+ Results-based Payments. This included supporting efforts to improve women's access to forest monitoring through a course under the new AIM4Forests Initiative. This initiative sought the equitable and active participation of women

(34 percent of participants were women), as well as their feedback on gender-responsiveness. Through an online survey conducted at the end of the course, the Programme was able to gather suggestions for making upcoming sessions more accessible to women and underrepresented groups, as well as obtaining positive feedback on some gender-inclusive aspects already in place, including the fact that the course is free, and a self-paced version is available to help accommodate women's schedules. (See summary provided here).

Additional support involved helping countries integrate gender considerations into SIS and related safeguards processes in Argentina, Nepal and Viet Nam; initial work on nesting approaches in Cambodia; and, efforts to strengthen NFMS. In five workshops in Indonesia, women's participation ranged from 30 to 53 percent. Furthermore, in Kenya, assistance was provided on integrating a gender perspective into institutional and regulatory capacity building for engagement in Article 6 and the voluntary carbon market (VCM), while in Costa Rica and Ecuador gender considerations and data were integrated into analysis and data collection around TREES Registration Documents.

In the Lower Mekong Region, comprehensive efforts to mainstream gender within Programme support were also undertaken in 2023. Gender disaggregated data was collected for all events organized, in which women's participation ranged from 32 to 42 percent. In addition, a gender approach was fully integrated throughout and in the various studies and analyses, including in the study team, methodology, data collection, analysis and reporting, validation workshop and final report.

Recognizing the gender gaps and the underrepresentation of women in the carbon market, as well as the positive impact a gender approach can bring, the UN-REDD Programme provided catalytic support in 2023 to mainstream gender in REDD+ finance, including within the VCM. This support included the following:

- Organizing an online knowledge exchange and capacity building dialogue on VCM with gender and women's-focused organizations in June, 2023 to help address the lack of women's representation, voices and leadership across the growing carbon market sector. (See UN-REDD Newsletter article and Dialogue video recording for more information.)
- Launching a dedicated online Community of Practice (CoP) in June, 2023 to help facilitate knowledge sharing and community exchange on gender around the VCM. To date, the CoP has over 90 members across LAC, Africa and AP regions, representing a range of governments, NGOs, women's organizations, carbon market standards, project developers and intermediaries, as well as international organizations.
- Organizing an online dialogue in October, 2023 on "Fostering Change: How to improve gender considerations within the VCM," which aimed to share awareness, build capacity and identify options to enhance gender mainstreaming within the VCM arena. (See UN-REDD Newsletter article and Dialogue video recording for more information.)

Through this support, good practices and lessons learned illustrate what positive strides have been taken to integrate gender within the VCM, but also what issues, bottlenecks and gaps still exist and need to be addressed. As such and building on this work, the UN-REDD Programme, will be developing gender and VCM knowledge products to help fill these identified gaps, as well as continuing to facilitate UN-REDD's Gender and VCM CoP.

The UN-REDD's "Regional Forum on Climate Finance and Forests: Achievements and Lessons Learned in Latin America" held in August, 2023, was the first in-person meeting of the LAC Gender and REDD+ Platform. The platform's membership includes a range of LAC UN-REDD partner countries working on gender within REDD+ implementation and RBP projects. Participants shared results achieved,

discussed options for further strengthening gender mainstreaming efforts in climate and forest programs and identified existing gender gaps, support needed in the region, as well as possible solutions. A publication summarizing the practices shared at this event is forthcoming in 2024.

The Programme also developed a social media campaign for International Women's Day on March 8, which included a photo story here, highlighting efforts under the Programme to challenge stereotypes and remove barriers that limit women's potential in forest technologies and innovation.

Financial reporting

[*Financial report will be provided by the MPTF separately in May 2024*]

Looking ahead

Looking ahead to 2024, building on discussions at the [Seventh UN-REDD Programme Executive Board](#) meeting in October 2023, the UN-REDD Programme is entering a crucial phase of action and strategising to accelerate our mission to support system-level transformational climate action in forest-rich countries. The urgency of halting deforestation by 2030, to avert the climate crisis, is paramount, as forests offer a significant mitigation potential of over 4 gigatonnes of emission reductions per year.

The Programme will continue to advance its strategic interventions, focusing on key priorities such as supporting public policies and field investments for forest solutions, strengthening forest monitoring systems, and promoting social inclusion and gender equality in forest policies and climate finance. UN-REDD will also facilitate scaling up donor and private sector finance, supporting countries with the forest components of their NDCs, acting as a trusted information broker, and reducing risk through robust safeguards and monitoring mechanisms.

On the road to COP30, to be hosted by Brazil and billed as the 'Forest COP', UN-REDD will continue to support countries as they make forests a leading frontline of progress to achieve the Paris Agreement as they accelerate progress towards halting and reversing deforestation by 2030.

Looking beyond 2024, as the current funding cycle of the UN-REDD Programme ends in December 2025, in 2024 we will begin the process to reflect on the next phase, expected to cover the period from 2026-2030, and to initiate dialogues with all stakeholders. This process will include consultations and a review of UN-REDD to date. The post-2025 strategy will be crucial to underpin national efforts for the 2030 goal of halting global deforestation.

This will enable UN-REDD to continue delivering ambitious and lasting transformations in the land and forest sector, building on the experience, trust, and traction that it has gained at the global, regional and country level over the past 15 years.

Annex 1: Impact Stories

Empowering community forest-based enterprises to safeguard the mangrove forests of the Ayeyarwady delta

Ma Zin Mar Lwin, a member of War Kone Community Forest Group, holding mature mud crabs prepared for the local market.

Pyapon Township, in the Ayeyarwady region of Myanmar, is positioned at the intersection of land and water routes, with most of its population engaged in agricultural and aquacultural activities. The primary economic focus revolves around the production of rice, fermented fish, dried fish, and other aquatic products, which are then transported and sold in Yangon.

Due to its proximity to the sea, Pyapon faces a constant risk of floods, tsunamis, and storms. Notably, the region endured the devastating impacts of Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and another powerful storm in 2011. Nargis especially heightened people's awareness of the crucial role played by local mangrove forests. However, the lack of knowledge about safeguarding these coastal ecosystems, while also supporting livelihoods remains a challenge.

"Forests are our lifeline. They shielded us from the Nargis cyclone," said U Hla Tun, the chairman of 3 Ba Wa Thit (Lay Kyaw) Community Forest User Group. "Despite some destruction caused by the cyclone, it's crucial for us to protect our community forest by replanting."

Daw Aye Aye Tun, Treasurer from Lay Kyaw Community Forest Group, participating in the training on crab fattening.

Since 2021, the UN-REDD Myanmar Mangrove Initiative has been assisting forest dependent communities in the Ayeyarwady Delta with solutions that safeguard mangroves, while also enhancing livelihoods. A collaborative project between FAO, UNDP, and UNEP, the initiative has supported several training programs that focused on mangrove restoration, conservation and sustainable management, as well as facilitating community forestry certification and the development of business plans for Community Forest-based Enterprises (CFEs), such as crab farming.

Representatives of Community Forest User Groups, along with MERN staff and UN-REDD Myanmar Mangrove Initiative staff, during the crab fattening session at the training venue in Tel Pin Seik village, Pyapon Township.

Supporting CFEs such as crab farming with funding and technical assistance has been crucial in ensuring enhanced livelihoods without compromising community forests and mangroves. In 2023, training on crab farming was provided by the Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN), with the support of the UN-REDD Myanmar Mangrove Initiative, to ensure a systematic understanding of farming techniques and monitoring procedures to prevent damage.

In U Hla Tun's community, eight acres have been set aside for crab farming as part of UN-REDD Myanmar Mangrove Initiative. Similarly, War Kone village has initiated crab farming on five acres.

Ma Zin Mar Lwin, a member of the War Kone CFUG, initially attempted crab farming independently, but encountered insurmountable challenges due to a lack of technical support and knowledge. She has now received training and technical support from the initiative, an opportunity that has strengthened her determination to pursue crab farming as a sustainable income source.

"The enterprise is not only good for my community, but also for my son's education," said Ma Zin Mar Lwin. "I will support my son's education as much as I can, which is why I decided to engage in crab farming to supplement our income."

Overall, many community members in the Ayeyarwady Delta have shown enthusiasm about starting CFEs, with many now actively pursuing certification with support from the UN-REDD Myanmar Mangrove Initiative.

Ma Zin Mar Lwin, a member of War Kone Community Forest Group joining training on CFEs.

How social forestry and private investments can save Indonesia's forests

Two decades ago, the Wawowae community in Flores, a picturesque island of mountains, forests and lakes in Indonesia, made a solemn vow.

"We gathered on top of a hill, and made a promise not to harm the forests that sustain us**,"** recalls Nikolaus Moka, a village elder.

The ritual, known as "Ri'i", forbids villagers from cutting down trees and is one of many customary practices in Indonesia that treat natural spaces as sacred. Anyone breaking the rules in Wawowae faces sanctions, and, it is believed, a curse.

For Moka, it was necessary to perform Ri'i, given that most of Wawowae's 1,680 inhabitants are farmers who depend on healthy land to cultivate their Arabica coffee.

"In this village, the relationship between people and nature is very close," he explains. "Humans and nature must be in harmony and in this village, we have all agreed to protect nature."

Throughout Indonesia, traditional customs, practices and rituals like Ri'i, that belong to the country's myriad ethnic groups and local communities, are deeply intertwined with ongoing efforts to protect the environment and its vital ecosystems, especially in the face of deforestation.

Following high deforestation rates, which led to the loss of 3 million hectares of forests between 2009 and 2015, numbers started to decline from 2016, partly due to government policies such as a moratorium on clearing primary forests and peatlands. Between 2021-2022, the Indonesian government reported forest loss at 104,032 hectares. However, deforestation remains a threat, mostly driven by global demand for palm oil and other commodities, as well as the need to create jobs.

Empowering community forestry

In 2016, the Indonesian government pledged to transfer 12.7 million hectares of state land to local communities within five years, in recognition of the vital role local communities play in environmental protection. By 2022, local communities had been granted land title to 4.7 million hectares of forests, an initiative that aims to cut carbon emissions and nurture biodiversity by slowing deforestation.

"Local communities are the best guardians of their forests. They have a deep understanding of the ecosystems they call home and a vested interest in managing them sustainably*,"* says Musdhalifah Machmud, Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture at the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. "When local communities have secure access to forest land and resources, they are most likely to protect them for future generations."

The village of Gunung Salihan in Sumatra shows what community-led forest management can achieve. Threatened by the expansion of palm plantations, the community rallied together to apply for 'hutan desa' or village forest status, thereby securing legal rights to protect and manage their forest. Village forests make up one of five social forestry schemes in Indonesia.

Villagers now patrol their forest weekly to prevent illegal activities such as logging and encroachment. "If there are threats, we can now ask for assistance from the government," says Darmus, head of the village forest management committee for Gunung Salihan.

Private investments are key

Besides social forestry schemes like the village forest model, private investments form part of Indonesia's Forest and Other Land Use (FOLU) Net Sink 2030 strategy, an ambitious plan to turn forests into a net carbon sink by 2030.

"Private investment is important because if you ask local people to look after the forest, they need resources to develop alternative livelihoods," says Bambang Arifatmi, National Coordinator of the UN-REDD Programme in Indonesia, a flagship partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to support efforts to cut emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

In Sumatra, a community-based enterprise, Alam Siak Lestari, is investing in new ways for people on the island to make a sustainable living. By reflooding canals previously dug to drain peatlands, the enterprise created snakehead fish farms. The fish are not just harvested for food, but also to make albumin and other proteins that can be used in medicine. The by-products are used in animal feed and fertilizer.

"Alam Siak Lestari's investment opened up employment opportunities for our community," says Said Asnawi, a fish farmer from Bunsur Village.

Towards a future of shared benefits

In Indonesia, the UN-REDD Programme has been providing technical assistance to the government to ensure that forest protection and management efforts deliver social and economic dividends. UN-REDD also helps countries access funding for sustainable forestry, and works to ensure local and national initiatives align with good practices.

"We are already seeing the benefits from Indonesia's strengthened policies and practices to manage deforestation as outlined in our FOLU Net Sink 2030 strategy," says Lakshmi Dhewanthi, Director General of Climate Change at the Ministry of Environment and Forests in Indonesia. "Deforestation rates are decreasing, and we have been attracting financing both domestically and internationally."

But for Indonesia, winning the fight against deforestation means ensuring incentives for other countries to protect their forests as well. "Five dollars a tonne is not enough to incentivize countries to keep forests standing," Dhewanthi says. "We need to set the right price for carbon."

Indonesia has been making significant progress in curbing peatland fires through restoring peatlands and reducing deforestation over the past four years. Its experience shows the important role social forestry and private investments can play in fighting deforestation and keeping forests intact to combat climate change. This progressive model, which could be replicated in other parts of Asia and beyond, reflects a broader commitment to collaborative and sustainable forest management.

Financing conservation and community development in DRC

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) boasts 152 million hectares of rainforest, including the Congo Basin, one of the largest carbon sinks in the world. These lands are not only crucial for the 40 million Congolese, but they also play a pivotal role in regulating the Earth's climate and supporting global biodiversity.

DRC is the second largest country in Africa, with the fourth largest population. It has immense forests and water resources, fertile soils, ample rainfall, and enormous stores of copper, cobalt, coltan, diamonds, gold, other base metals, and oil. Forests cover 67 percent of the country, but the country faces a pressing concern: deforestation is escalating at an approximate rate of 0.33 percent per annum, driven primarily by agricultural expansion to meet the needs of a growing population. DRC urgently needs sustainable forest management practices and financial support to ensure the long-term viability and well-being of DRC's forests and population.

Recognising the gravity of these challenges and the urgency to address them, the UN-REDD Programme has been instrumental in supporting DRC in its efforts to reduce deforestation and promote sustainable forest management. Through technical assistance, UN-REDD is supporting the country in strengthening the country's Warsaw framework and implementation of related measures as part of its REDD+ strategy. This is aimed at preserving the integrity of DRC's forests, but also enabling access to results-based financing from high integrity emissions reductions. Moreover, UN-REDD is supporting the country in ensuring consistency across sectoral policies, as well as strengthening the contribution of the forest sector in the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), as part of its National Climate Action plan.

Since 2009, DRC has committed to reducing forest loss through REDD+. The country has developed a comprehensive National REDD+ Strategy and Investment Plan and has been proactive in establishing monitoring systems and submitting emissions data to international bodies like the UNFCCC. One of the notable achievements of these efforts is the establishment of the National REDD+ Fund, which serves as a vehicle for channeling financial resources into forest conservation initiatives.

"DRC has secured Results-based Payments both at the project level and at the jurisdictional level, further incentivizing forest protection and sustainable land use practices, although more effort is needed to bring greater incentives for enhanced impacts," said Mami Rasamoelina, UN-REDD Africa Technical Coordinator.

The impact of these payments extends beyond environmental conservation. Diversified income opportunities have emerged for Indigenous peoples and local communities, contributing to poverty alleviation and economic resilience. Moreover, the gradual adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices has enhanced food security.

"Forests are an important source of livelihoods to us; they provide fertile soils and rains for us to cultivate food crops, feed our families and sell to earn a living. Without forests our livelihoods would be compromised," said Anzima Magonde, a cocoa farmer in Kisangani.

Looking ahead, the UN-REDD Programme continues to play a pivotal role in fostering partnerships and capacity building initiatives to support DRC's ambition in the climate change field. Technical assistance, provided in collaboration with national counterparts like CN-REDD and FONAREDD, aims to strengthen multi-sectoral coordination and facilitate the development of proper results-based financing schemes via carbon markets. UN-REDD continues to promote access to economic and

technical resources to ensure the social contract and well-being of the population while keeping forests standing.

The preservation of the Congo Basin's forests is not just a matter of local or regional concern; it is of global significance. These forests are vital for mitigating climate change, preserving biodiversity, and supporting sustainable development. As such, coordinated efforts are needed from governments, international organizations, and individuals to ensure their continued protection and stewardship.

Chile harnessing UN-REDD and GCF synergies for climate action and conservation

Under Chile's National Forest Corporation's leadership, and with UN-REDD's strategic support, Chile remains a front-runner in transforming its forest sector. A broad range of REDD+ measures of action are already being implemented on the ground, from afforestation and revegetation to ecological and post-fire forest restoration, forest fire prevention, forest management and strengthening Chile's wood energy program. A paradigm shift in how the country perceives and manages its forest resources is occurring, away from traditional forestry practices towards a more holistic and integrated approach. This new approach focuses on reducing the vulnerability of rural populations and their livelihoods, as well as reducing emissions from degradation and deforestation. However, ensuring long-term effectiveness and financial sustainability to achieve the country's NDC commitments remains both a challenge and a priority.

In 2023, through the implementation of its National Strategy for Climate Change and Vegetative Resources (ENCCRV), Chile has advanced to the third phase of Results-based Payments (PBR) within the framework of the REDD+ pilot program of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). This financing represents a fundamental role in the fulfillment of Chile's environmental goals and objectives, providing financial resources used in territorial implementation actions through the Benefit Sharing Plan (BSP), in addition to contributing to the maintenance and improvement of the governance of REDD+ in Chile.

Similarly, technical backstopping through the UN-REDD Programme continues to play a crucial role in demonstrating further mitigation outcomes achieved through the implementation of the ENCCRV. With UN-REDD's technical support, Chile has led the development of its the second summary of safeguards information (SOI) and has continued to improve its Safeguards Information System (SIS), with the aim of improving accessibility and understanding for the various stakeholders. Likewise, with UN-REDD's support, Chile continues to strengthen its institutional capacities on forest monitoring and MRV, including through fit-for-purpose tools and methodologies necessary for ensuring the environmental integrity of mitigation results.

In 2023, Chile successfully completed the technical assessment of its updated Forest Emissions Reference level, expanding to include 99.9 percent of national forest coverage and expanding to cover 12 regions. Moreover, taking a step further to improve its MRV system, with UN-REDD's support, Chile has started working on methodological improvements for a new FREL. This will ultimately strengthen the environmental integrity of Chile´s NDC sectoral commitments and allow the integration of forest carbon projects under a national accounting framework, while enabling the country to meet access and reporting requirements under diverse forest carbon financing opportunities.

[During the first half of 2023, CONAF carried out an in-depth evaluation of both site intervention pilot projects and the first cycle of the BSP.](#) The assessment resulted in a diversity of lessons learned, including the determination of real implementation costs, bottlenecks, identification of simplified actions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the MDAs to safeguard efficient use of public resources. With the support of the +Bosques project, CONAF is working on a multi-pronged approach to ensure the long-term effectiveness and financial sustainability of its ENCCRV and BSP**.** This includes long-term agreements with contractors, allowing cost-efficient, on-the-ground implementation of the BSP through site intervention projects, and fostering opportunities for integrated landscape interventions. It also includes harnessing co-financing with the *Reforestemos Foundation*, among others, a flagship initiative based on crowdfunding donations to implement restoration and other management activities. All these experiences will be used in the revision of a financial sustainability strategy for the ENCCRV, with UN-REDD support, throughout 2024. These

revisions will be made with a view to providing CONAF with a financial and resource mobilisation strategy to achieve Chile's sectoral NDC commitments.

In 2023, Chile actively engaged in three significant international forums aimed at enhancing forest conservation and climate finance initiatives, with the support of UN-REDD, including:

1. **Regional Forum on Climate Finance for Forests in Costa Rica**: Eight countries analysed the landscape of climate finance, celebrated achievements, identified challenges, and discussed the future of results-based financing for forests.

2. **Promoting Financing with Social and Environmental Integrity for Forests in Panama**: This event focused on sharing experiences to foster social and environmental integrity in climate and forest programmes.

3. **Regional Workshop to Strengthen Capacities in Estimating Forest Degradation**: Representatives from seven countries exchanged methodologies and experiences on monitoring forest degradation.

In 2024, the UN-REDD programme, through the Learning Lab for LAC, will address key issues identified in these knowledge exchanges, including updates on the current state of climate and forest finance and discussing how to improve the social and economic impacts of benefit distribution systems.

Unlocking climate finance: Ghana's Measurement Reporting and Verification success

Ghana's recent submission of forest-related emissions reductions to ART-TREES marks a significant milestone, positioning it as the first African nation, and the third globally, to achieve this feat. This accomplishment is underpinned by a concerted effort to enhance the quality of forest data and refine Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV), essential for meeting ART-TREES standards and unlocking critical climate finance.

The journey towards this achievement began in 2008 when Ghana joined the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), laying the groundwork for subsequent initiatives. In November, 2016, Ghana submitted its Emission Reduction Program Document, followed by the presentation of its initial National Forest Reference Level to the UNFCCC in 2017. At that juncture, the accuracy of deforestation assessments emerged as a pivotal criterion for inclusion in the Carbon Fund (CF) pipeline, necessitating enhancements in data quality.

FAO's technical support under the UN-REDD Programme proved instrumental in bolstering Ghana's data accuracy. Leveraging a stratified systematic grid approach for sample-based assessments, and utilizing FAO's Collect Earth tool - part of the Open Foris initiative, Ghana made significant strides in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

This improved data framework facilitated the submission of Ghana's first CF Monitoring Report in 2021, showcasing assessed emissions reductions. Subsequently, following a rigorous validation and verification process, Ghana was awarded Ghana $4.86 million by the Carbon Fund in 2022 for reducing 972 thousand tCO2.

Furthermore, Ghana's Cocoa Forest REDD+ Program (GCFRP) stands out as the world's pioneering commodity-based emissions reductions initiative at a jurisdictional scale. Notably, 69 percent of the Emission Reduction payments from this program are directed towards farmer groups and local communities, emphasising inclusive and sustainable practices.

In the pursuit of data quality enhancement for ART-TREES submissions, Ghana embarked on additional measures, implementing robust quality assurance and control mechanisms alongside cutting-edge AI techniques for an ensemble approach.

Support to Ghana for data and MRV improvements was initiated by FAO within the framework of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), and continued under various initiatives including the UN-REDD Programme and the Accelerating Innovative Monitoring for Forests (AIM4Forests) program, funded by the UK and Northern Ireland.

Specifically, UN-REDD's support encompassed comprehensive MRV activities, including data collection, reporting enhancements, and adherence to ART-TREES standards. Legal support was extended to revise and fortify existing high intervention area frameworks to align with ART-TREES requisites. Moreover, collaborative efforts were undertaken to design a robust NFI for Ghana, laying the foundation for improved emission factor assessments and compliance with ART-TREES guidelines.

"FAO's technical support has built capacity in our country to meet high-integrity MRV requirements for new carbon accounting standards like ART-TREES," said Roselyn Fosuah Adjei, Ghana's REDD+ coordinator. Due to efforts in improving data quality for monitoring and reporting, Ghana has become the first country to sign an Emission Reduction Purchase Agreement with a view to supply the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest finance (LEAF) coalition (requiring TREES emissions reductions). In total, 11.9 mln tCO_2 of TREES credits were presented for the period 2017-2021, of

which 90 percent was from reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and 10 percent was from increased removals from restoration. The emissions reductions payments can finance Ghana's continued efforts to combat deforestation and restore forests in the country.

The synergy between technological innovation, institutional support, and international cooperation underscores Ghana's strides in unlocking climate finance and advancing sustainable forest management practices. As Ghana continues on this trajectory, the pivotal role of UN-REDD and allied stakeholders remains paramount in catalysing further progress towards climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

UN-REDD's Forest Dialogues: catalysing action for sustainable forest management and conservation

"We are stuck in a loop of broken promises. Climate ambition remains insufficient. Forests alone can contribute with 4 gigatonnes of emissions reductions to tackle the climate crisis. That's why we need to be doing everything, everywhere all at once," said Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, at the latest event in a year of Forest Dialogues.

In 2023, the UN-REDD Programme took bold steps to address the pressing need for sustainable forest management in the face of escalating climate change. Through a series of Forest Dialogues, UN-REDD provided pivotal platforms for knowledge exchange, advocacy, collaboration, and strategic planning among diverse stakeholders.

Over the course of the year, UN-REDD convened more than 14,000 individuals from various sectors, including governments, Indigenous peoples and local communities, academia, civil society, and the private sector. These gatherings, held alongside key climate and environmental events like the Amazon Summit, Regional Climate Weeks, and COP28, fostered substantive discussions on critical issues related to forest conservation and climate action.

The different dialogue spaces focused on trying to find solutions to the challenges of forest preservation. Across oceans and mountain ranges, the challenges are similar and include the need to increase carbon pricing and financing, the need for technology to monitor vast territories, the need for robust safeguards systems, and for women, Indigenous peoples and local communities to participate in decision-making.

"Integrity is what ensures the existence of the carbon credit," said Raul Protazio Romao, Deputy Secretary of Environment of Para, Brazil, at one of the dialogues. This is key, because in terms of forests, integrity protects and gives value.

"The price of forest carbon is still too low. We need to set the price right," said Lakshmi Dhewanthi, DG Climate Change Ministry of Environment and Forests in Indonesia.

"If we get the price right, then we are in a better position to finance forest conservation and reap rewards from forests," said Gyanendra Kumar Mishra, Head, Development Cooperation Coordination Section in Nepal.

"Benefits must be shared equitably and really reflect the needs of communities. Achieved results risk compromise if communities do not benefit fairly from forest conservation efforts," said Guy Ipange, National REDD+ Focal point of DRC.

"Without forests, there are no Indigenous people and without Indigenous people, there are no forests," said Mr. José Uva Ríos from Costa Rica.

The ongoing **#SaveForestsNow** campaign further amplified UN-REDD's message through social media, reaching approximately 90,000 people and generating over half a million impressions. This digital engagement underscored the growing global concern for sustainable forest management and highlighted stakeholders' readiness to take action.

The massive pick up on social media was also reflected by the interest of traditional media, such as Fortune and France24, which on several occasions during the year reported on UN-REDD's calls to action.

The challenges and opportunities identified during the dialogues translated into concrete actions, such as promoting continuous dialogues, technical assistance schemes and the development of reports and situation analyses. In addition, strategic partnerships with related organisations expanded the reach and accessibility of REDD+ knowledge products and activities, and supported the dissemination of critical information and best practices in forest conservation and climate mitigation efforts.

UN-REDD's Forest Dialogues are instrumental in catalysing action for sustainable forest management and conservation and will continue in the coming years. By convening diverse stakeholders, raising awareness, and fostering collaboration, the Programme continues to make significant strides towards achieving global climate and forest goals.

Indigenous voices advocate for direct investment in Indigenous climate action

In 2023, UNDP launched a training and dialogue process on climate finance for Indigenous peoples, in collaboration with UN-REDD and the UN Climate Promise. This initiative responds to the fact that although Indigenous peoples are recognised as custodians of both critical ecosystems and climate solutions – notably in tropical forests, they benefit from only one percent of international funding devoted to forest conservation and climate action.

Through a series of interviews recorded during Climate Week in New York City, Indigenous leaders from the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC) shared their perspectives on current challenges facing today's Indigenous leaders as they advocate for climate action to address urgent environmental concerns affecting their communities.

[Briseida Iglesias](), an Indigenous activist from Panama, shared insights on how climate change threatens not only their way of life, but also their cultural identity and traditional knowledge. "In our fight against climate change, we focus on sustainable practices. We engage in planting medicinal plants and trees, preserving rivers and implementing responsible waste disposal methods. Our efforts extend to educating the youth about the importance of seeking the wisdom and knowledge of our ancestors. By blending traditional practices with contemporary approaches, we strive to create a balance that ensures the well-being of our community and the environment."

[Aissatou Oumarou](), a climate activist from Chad, emphasized the critical role of Indigenous peoples, particularly women, in preserving traditional knowledge and fighting climate change on the ground: "We must regenerate and protect the bush if we are to preserve our traditional knowledge and skills that help us to adapt to and mitigate climate change. I fight to protect this environment, to protect my way of life, my culture, my knowledge – for the sake of my community."

[Sara Omi](), an Indigenous leader from Panama, emphasized the integral role of forests and the urgent need for comprehensive policies to safeguard Indigenous rights and protect the environment: "The forest represents my own life, my own existence as a woman. All the teachings from the elders, my grandparents and my mother, I keep alive. All our knowledge comes from the forest and through this close relationship, we can share the knowledge we have acquired as women. It is something very important for us, because if the forest is dying, our identity is also dying. And as women, it is important to keep it alive, to always protect it, to take care of it. It represents our daily life, our way of thinking, our way of feeling and relating to each other as women and Indigenous peoples."

Despite facing numerous challenges, including communication barriers and lack of access to resources, all three women remain resilient in their efforts to combat climate change and preserve their cultural heritage. They emphasized the importance of grassroots initiatives and the inclusion of Indigenous voices in international dialogues and negotiations. Their efforts will continue to focus on advocacy, collaboration, and the recognition of Indigenous rights and knowledge in global efforts to address climate change. Yet, they need resources and support from organizations such as the UN, and from governments and the private sector, to be able to continue this work for the benefit of all.

The UN-REDD Programme, together with the UNDP Climate Promise, will continue to host events and dialogues to decrease the barriers to direct Indigenous participation in climate finance.

Integrating women into Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCM)

Women around the world continue to be disproportionately affected by the daily realities of climate change. Although their role in the fight to combat these challenges is both crucial and irrefutable, gender gaps continue to persist in climate-focused financial flows, benefit sharing, and leadership arrangements.

This gender imbalance is evident in the emerging Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM). While some positive steps have been taken, recent research and global policy dialogues suggest the current VCM still uses varying degrees of social and environmental safeguards, with gender often being the least regarded and sometimes even omitted entirely.

In response, UN-REDD introduced a new pillar of gender support in 2023, focusing specifically on supporting the integration of gender in the VCM. After gauging interest amongst gender and women-focused networks and organizations involved in climate finance and carbon markets across Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, an online knowledge exchange and capacity-building event was hosted in June, 2023.

During the online event, participants voiced their concerns, highlighting the glaring gender disparities present within existing carbon market projects. They noted the omission of women in decision-making spaces, the varying use of qualitative gender data and indicators, and the lack of mandatory gender requirements within carbon market standards. It was also highlighted that gender disparities within land tenure and ownership were only further reinforced within related benefit-sharing schemes and decision-making processes in the VCM.

Participants stressed the need to engage women at the community level to remedy the exclusion of women in decision-making spaces and to alleviate the barriers they face in obtaining relevant knowledge for carbon market engagement.

As one participant said: "When we talk about the challenges that exist, to what extent does the woman in the rural community even *know* what is taking place in these markets? What kind of knowledge can be extended to them [...] so they can then actually speak up and demand what is entitled to them?"

Building from these indispensable insights and recommendations, UN-REDD hosted a public online dialogue in October, 2023, to share knowledge and build awareness of opportunities to enhance gender within the VCM. Panelists from Verra, Gold Standard, Plan Vivo, and the W+ Standard were joined by participants from women's organisations, governments, international NGOs, UN agencies, and representatives from carbon standards and project developers.

Discussion at this event illustrated what positive strides have been taken to integrate gender within the VCM and what still needs to be done. A key point was the need to demonstrate the business case for integrating gender into carbon projects.

As one panelist summarized, "To apply the additional criteria to look at these [gender] topics, it takes more MRV and work for project developers, so [project developers] need to understand their incentive for doing it[...]. There is a lot of work we can do on educating within the boarder [carbon] market and raising awareness on what these [gender-responsive carbon] projects mean, what they can deliver and how they can help."

UN-REDD continues to hold space for these invaluable discussions through its online and public [Community of Practice (CoP)](#) on gender and the VCM. To date, the CoP has 65 members across Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia-Pacific representing a range of governments, NGOs, women's organizations, carbon market standards and project developers.

Ecuador's innovative ProAmazonia program sets a new benchmark for conservation in the Amazon

Photo credit: ProAmazonia

In the heart of South America, Ecuador is setting a global benchmark for environmental conservation with its [ProAmazonia program](#), an inspiring example of commitment and innovation in the pursuit of preserving the Amazon rainforest. Over six years, this initiative has made significant strides towards safeguarding one of the planet's most vital ecological treasures, while also bringing transformative change to the Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon. By combining community empowerment, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development, ProAmazonia has carved out a new pathway for how countries can address the pressing challenge of deforestation, while enhancing the livelihoods of local communities.

Central to ProAmazonia's success is its profound impact on Indigenous communities. Through the program, 79,000 Indigenous peoples have seen direct benefits, while conserving an impressive 789,099 hectares and restoring over 15,000 hectares of forest and water basins.

ProAmazonia represents a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Ecological Transition, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, with substantial backing from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and with support from UNDP, as well as technical assistance from the UN-REDD Programme.

Photo credit: ProAmazonia

The program has seen an investment of approximately $53 million over six years and features a comprehensive strategy to transition to sustainable production systems, conserve and restore forests and secure financing for REDD+. Notable achievements include the development of planning tools for government, extensive training for Indigenous people and local government representatives, and the transition of over 93,000 hectares to sustainable production practices.

These efforts have not only led to significant conservation outcomes, but have also fostered national and international commercial partnerships, promoting sustainable, deforestation-free agricultural practices. ProAmazonia played a pivotal role in transforming sustainable coffee production through its partnership with UNDP and Lavazza, leading to the world's first certified deforestation-free coffee. This showcased Ecuador's innovative approach to integrating a forest-positive strategy into the heart of coffee production, while prioritising gender, community perspectives and sustainability.

Foto: Giovanny Cevallos, PROAmazonía

The collaboration not only addressed the critical challenge of deforestation linked to coffee production, but also set a new standard for sustainable practices that can be replicated globally. Ecuador's involvement went beyond environmental conservation; it leveraged the deep knowledge and involvement of local producers, ensuring that economic benefits reach grassroots levels. The national certification scheme for deforestation-free coffee, a policy innovation launched at COP27, exemplifies Ecuador's leadership in aligning economic development with climate action goals, offering a model for sustainable agricultural practices worldwide.

A significant moment in ProAmazonia's journey was the gathering hosted by the Shandia Kichwa community in Napo, marking the conclusion of the program's first phase last November. This event brought together national and international authorities, representatives of Indigenous peoples and strategic partners, celebrating the collective efforts and achievements of the program. It underscored the program's role as a call to action, reinforcing the need for continuous initiatives driving sustainable development.

15 years on: is REDD+ working? A narrative from the Lower Mekong region

In the Lower Mekong region, contrasting agricultural practices across the borders of Lao PDR and Viet Nam encapsulate the nuanced challenges and achievements of REDD+ after fifteen years of implementation.

In Lao PDR, economic pressures have led farming families to transition to cassava cultivation, attracted by low production costs and high market demand. This shift towards cassava, however, has resulted in encroachment on forest lands, presenting a stark challenge for REDD+. Despite previous engagements with REDD+ through training and sustainable agriculture resources, the urgent need for income has driven decisions that compromise forest conservation efforts. This situation underscores a critical tension within REDD+ initiatives: the challenge of aligning economic incentives with long-term environmental sustainability goals.

Conversely, Viet Nam showcases a more positive outcome, where farming families have diversified their agricultural practices, incorporating fruit trees alongside less densely planted acacia, reflecting a movement towards sustainable land use. This transition is bolstered by Viet Nam's Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES) program, working in tandem with REDD+ incentives to encourage forest protection and offer economic benefits to local communities. This integration of environmental and economic strategies highlights the potential for REDD+ to contribute positively to sustainable development.

Fifteen years have passed since REDD+ was launched in the region. REDD+ credits are being generated and paid for in countries in the Mekong region. Does this mean REDD+ is working?

The operational success of REDD+ in the Lower Mekong region is evidenced by the generation of carbon credits and the distribution of payments for emissions reductions in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. This achievement signals REDD+'s capacity as a transformative mechanism for enhancing forest conservation and supporting sustainable land management.

Infographics

What's being achieved?

	ER achieved	Carbon payments to date	Sources reviewed[2] (Projects):
Cambodia	Vintage quantity issued: 47 million	No data	VCS VERRA: • Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project (VM 0009) • Tumring REDD+ Project (VM 0009) • Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (VN0016) • Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Community Forests – Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia (VM0006)
Lao PDR	Net ERs: 3.2 million tCO2e	US$ 16 million (projected payment by May 2024)	Lao PDR's FCPF Carbon Fund Program Vintage: 1 Jan 2019 - 31 Dec 2021

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[2] May not be exhaustive.

	Vintage quantity issued: 0.2 million	No data	VCS VERRA: • Afforestation in Eucalyptus and Acacia plantations for Burapha Agroforestry Co., Ltd. (AR-ACM0003) • Mitigation of GHG: Rubber based agro-forestry system for sustainable development and poverty reduction in Pakkading, Bolikhamsay Province, Lao PDR (AR-ACM0003)
Viet Nam	Net ERs: 16.2 million tCO2e emission avoidance: 72% emission removals: 28%	US$ 42 million	Viet Nam's FCPF Carbon Fund Program Vintage: 1 Feb 2018 - 31 Dec 2019

Establishing causal links between REDD+ results and the multitude of contributing (or hindering) factors is not a simple task. But hard questions need to be asked, to learn, and to ensure a positive cycle where payments are reinvested towards the next generation of results and payments.

Critical to the effectiveness of REDD+ is the intricate balance between providing financial incentives for conservation and ensuring adequate enforcement measures against deforestation. This balance requires nuanced understanding and implementation, particularly in contexts where economic pressures drive communities towards land-use practices that threaten forest ecosystems. The challenge lies in making REDD+ payments a competitive alternative to the economic benefits derived from deforestation, necessitating comprehensive strategies that include skill development, access to reliable markets, and the integration of alternative livelihood options.

The experiences of Lao PDR and Viet Nam illuminate the varying degrees of impact achieved through REDD+, shaped by local conditions, government policies, and the level of investment. These countries' journeys reveal the significance of political commitment in realising the goals of forest conservation and sustainable development. Through tailored approaches that address the specific needs and challenges of local communities, REDD+ has the potential to foster significant environmental and economic benefits.

Looking forward, the UN-REDD Programme's initiative to facilitate knowledge exchanges between Lao PDR and Viet Nam represents a strategic effort to leverage the successes and lessons learned from Viet Nam's PFES program. This exchange aims to deepen the understanding of how integrated financial mechanisms can enhance the efficacy of REDD+ initiatives, providing a blueprint for sustainable domestic financing for forestry conservation. By drawing on Viet Nam's experiences, Lao PDR can explore new avenues to strengthen its own REDD+ outcomes.

In summary, the experiences from Lao PDR and Viet Nam provide valuable insights into REDD+'s implementation in the Lower Mekong region and illustrate the complexities of balancing economic needs with environmental conservation, and the potential for REDD+ to foster significant environmental and economic benefits.