

# Policy Brief

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## *Executive Summary*

Guinea-Bissau is organizing and preparing the launch of a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, conservation and sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) readiness process. The REDD+ mechanism can directly support the country's low-carbon development strategy delineated in *Terra Ranka*<sup>1</sup> while advancing the climate change adaptation and mitigation agenda. If implemented, a National REDD+ Strategy could strengthen coordination and organization, contributing to improved forest governance in the country, also fostering the emergence of a sustainable financing approach for forest and biodiversity conservation directly supporting the priorities identified in the INDC.

An inter-ministerial REDD+ Working Group (RWG) was created on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015 (*Despacho SEA 08/2015*) by the government with a mandate to drive the initial steps and produce a multi-stakeholder Roadmap for REDD+. This group, technically assisted in a participatory format by the World Bank and the FAO, concluded preparation of the Roadmap on June, 2016. The document presents a gap analysis for four REDD+ components (Safeguards, Governance, MR&V and Strategy) and an Action Plan listing the activities, instruments and procedures the country must develop to initiate the REDD+ readiness process. The next steps to be taken are the official validation of the Roadmap and the registration of the country in the UN-REDD+ platform (<http://redd.unfccc.int/>). After validation, the required activities and their priorities can be presented to the donor community to find financial resources for initiating the implementation of the action plan.

Recommendations presented by the Policy Brief are organized in two sets. One relates to the broader context for REDD+ and its relation to national aspects, and another is linked to the specific steps that are needed to attain a successful REDD+ process according to UNFCCC requirements. This document is structured in four sections: (i) Introduction and Context, (ii) Approaches and Results, (iii) Conclusions and (iv) Recommendations.

## *Introduction and Context*

Guinea-Bissau formally initiated preparatory steps towards putting in place a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, conservation and sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) readiness (REDD+) Program<sup>2</sup> in April 2014 when it was

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<sup>1</sup> Guinea Bissau 2025: Plan Strategique et Operationnel 2015-2025 (Terra Ranka)

<sup>2</sup> Recognizing the importance of forests for mitigation in the global climate change negotiations, the REDD+ concept has been developed as a means of creating incentives for more sustainable forest management. REDD+ means reducing emissions from

accepted with observer status under the UN-REDD<sup>3</sup> and FCPF<sup>4</sup> programs. Subsequently, the Government created an inter-ministerial REDD+ Working Group (RWG) on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015 (*Despacho SEA 08/2015*) with a mandate to produce a participatory Roadmap for initiating the REDD+ readiness process. The launch of activities and the announcement of the decision to prepare the country for REDD+ took place on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 in a special public event that was disseminated through the media.

REDD+ Readiness is a process whereby the country makes explicit efforts to build the legal, institutional and operational capacity necessary to be prepared to engage in the global REDD+ mechanism. Since its creation, the RWG has been serving as a cross-sector governmental vehicle to organize, demonstrate, and produce the elements necessary to assess the country's needs for achieving that goal. The initial objectives of the RWG were to: (i) produce the Roadmap guiding the initial steps of a REDD+ readiness preparation; (ii) facilitate a participatory and awareness-raising process for identifying stakeholders and defining institutional arrangements; (iii) develop an action plan for identifying and prioritizing necessary activities; and (iv) provide a REDD+ demonstration through a pilot project in the Cantanhez and Cacheu Protected Areas for demonstrating possibilities.

Based on the REDD+ Roadmap and on the subsequent implementation of the initial readiness activities, including the governance improvements identified and the establishment of a simplified Reference Forest Level (FREL), the country could fulfill the basic requirements to be listed in the UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform and start to showcase its national REDD+ efforts. This would be an important milestone to exhibit to donors and parties of the convention willing to support REDD+, that Guinea-Bissau is on the right track to reduce its forest carbon emissions and demonstrate performance.

The organization and developments for REDD+ directly support the country's climate change adaptation and mitigation agenda, strongly contributing to the national low-carbon development strategy delineated in *Terra Ranka*<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, by supporting crucial developments in the LULUCF<sup>5</sup> sector and strengthening coordination, organization and sustainable financing in the country, REDD+ is a direct contributor to the priorities identified in the INDC and other national plans. Additionally, the sustainable management of forests is expected to deliver other co-benefits and economic returns to parallel sectors such as tourism, agro-industry, planning and energy, further inducing a positive cycle for financial sustainability in the long-run.

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deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, the sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. REDD+ aims to create financial incentives for developing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from forest lands. REDD+ "readiness" relates to a country's efforts to build the legal, institutional and operational capacity to be prepared to engage in a global REDD+ mechanism. (<http://www.un-redd.org/FAQs/tabid/586/Default.aspx>). Development of a national REDD+ program is typically seen as a three phase process: (i) readiness preparation; (ii) investment and implementation; and (iii) results-based payments.

<sup>3</sup> UN-REDD: [www.unredd.net](http://www.unredd.net)

<sup>4</sup> Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF): <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Land Use, Land Use Change and Forest (LULUCF)

## *Approaches and results*

To facilitate the steps for the production of the REDD+ Roadmap and to technically assist the RWG in its mandate, the World Bank<sup>6</sup> and FAO<sup>7</sup> provided technical assistance and capacity building, both remotely and through a series of workshops in 2015 and 2016. Additionally, this assistance aimed at facilitating the coordination among international agencies (mainly the World Bank, FAO, and UNDP) and at framing the developments proposed in the REDD+ Roadmap within existing African Sub-Regional initiatives.

A series of five workshops served as a capacity building platform creating momentum for cross-sector participation and awareness raising about REDD+ in several public institutions. The RWG (see Annex for composition) was organized in four thematic sub-groups: (1) Forest Reference Level/Measuring Reporting and Verification (FRL/MRV); (2) Strategies; (3) Safeguards; and (4) Governance. Each sub-group gathered thematic information, discussed contents and produced written material for the development of the REDD+ Roadmap. The workshops were checkpoints for assessing the work already developed; for evaluating the progress of the entire REDD+ Roadmap; for deciding adjustments and subsequent steps, and for providing further technical guidance on the requisites of REDD+. The development of the Action Plan occurred based on the gap analysis produced, the mapping of current national strategies and of stakeholders; and knowledge of the existing legal framework, institutions and their competences and attributions.

At this stage, the main results are the following: (i) the development of a REDD+ Readiness Roadmap for Guinea-Bissau, including an Action Plan with structured, prioritized and costed activities; (ii) the design of a proposal for institutional arrangements adequate for the governance of REDD+; (iii) the preparation of a consultation plan for the REDD+ Roadmap ready to be applied; and (iv) the establishment of a functioning and technically capable cross-sector ministerial working group.

## *Conclusions*

The REDD+ Roadmap and the Action Plan identify the priorities and developments needed for REDD+ readiness with an associated estimated budget for each activity. In addition to paving the way towards participation in the global REDD+ mechanism, the activities and instruments to be developed, mainly related to land use management and integrated planning, will support many other aligned strategies and activities beyond REDD+. Moreover, they will contribute to the convergence of efforts around a critical low-carbon development path for Guinea-Bissau.

On the other hand, the main challenges identified are the serious difficulties in organization and staff capacity at central level; the lack of transparency and information sharing amongst governmental bodies; the insufficient accountability and fiduciary procedures; the dominance of a silo-based

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<sup>6</sup> GEF regional project: Demonstrating and Monitoring Carbon, Environmental and Socio-Economic Co-Benefits of REDD, Carbon and SLM activities in SSA

<sup>7</sup> FAO TCP/GBS/3502 Technical support project for the development of actions towards the implementation of the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) for Guinea-Bissau in the context of REDD+

governance model that isolates the several economic sectors from one another; and a very low human and technical capacity at central level.

## *Recommendations*

There are two sets of recommendations that can be derived at this point. One relates to the broader context for REDD+ and its relation to national aspects, and another is linked to the specific steps that are needed to attain a successful REDD+ process according to UNFCCC requirements. The recommendations are addressed in detail in the Action Plan included in the REDD+ Roadmap.

### *Contextual recommendations*

- A. Build an enabling governance for REDD+: The development of adequate institutional arrangements and the integration of legal frameworks for REDD+ will be paramount to support a landscape approach to land use decisions based on a low-carbon development pathway;
- B. Build human and institutional capacity: The public administration of Guinea-Bissau is largely inadequately staffed. There is insufficient technical capacity and lack of renovation of adequately prepared civil servants. It is important to involve a wider set of technical staff in the UNFCCC programs and events and to promote their participation in capacity building activities related to REDD+ (e.g. UN-REDD+ Academy). Additionally, the involvement of adequate staff elements and technical expertise in the delegations to the COPs is important.
- C. Improve the understanding of the REDD+ process at political level: There is a strong need to sensitize the political realm on REDD+ so that decision makers fully understand the advantages and the risks associated with the application of the REDD+ mechanism in the country and are able to mainstream it in a cross-sector policy approach.
- D. Increase knowledge and information and develop land use planning, management and tools: Poor organization and lack of harmonized information on land use, together with the inexistence of efficient monitoring systems is one of the main indirect causes of deforestation and forest degradation.

### *Recommendations for specific REDD+- readiness steps*

- A. Create and operationalize a capable REDD+ Unit: Key priority for the success of REDD+ in Guinea-Bissau is the establishment of a permanent structure capable of managing the process, organizing the necessary information, guiding activities and developments associated with related projects, and delivering the necessary REDD+ Components. This unit must be led by a full-time chair, capable of managing the unit and efficiently interfacing with the political sphere;
- B. Validate the Roadmap and obtain political endorsement: The conclusion of the technical work developed by the RWG now requires that the results be publicly presented and validated;
- C. Produce a national deforestation and emissions baseline: This activity, which can be leveraged by previous studies, is the first priority of the Action Plan and will provide objective evidence of the national deforestation and emission rates in the last decade. It can be performed and concluded swiftly, allowing the initial submission of the country in the UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform;
- D. Fill information gaps to conclude the National REDD+ Strategy: the gap analysis performed in the REDD+ Roadmap demonstrates that Guiné-Bissau lacks important information to move forward with

the National REDD+ Strategy, in particular, there is no previous experience in a National Safeguards System, climate finance or a national monitoring system (MRV). The Action Plan indicates the main tasks to be concluded prior to the development and validation of the National REDD+ Strategy;

- E. Secure financing to implement the REDD+ components: The several components and activities envisioned in the Action Plan can be presented to the donor community to find financial resources for implementation. This could happen even before validation of the Roadmap. The breakdown of costs provides the indicative budget for the development of the necessary REDD+ components, in particular, the MRV system, the establishment of a robust FRL/FREL, the communication and consultation activities, and the institutional and legal framework. .