Climate & Development Knowledge Network

INSIDE STORIES on climate compatible development

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Key messages

- Climate change adaptation is the highest policy priority for Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Therefore, it is difficult for smaller PICs to justify the costs of developing 'readiness' to participate in international mitigation mechanisms.
- Although REDD+ is often considered primarily as a mitigation mechanism, it can also help build countries' resilience to the effects of climate change.
- In PICs, programmes such as REDD+ may provide financial and other benefits that strongly support climate compatible development – thereby justifying the high costs of achieving 'REDD+ readiness'.
- Forest conservation in PICs can be viewed as a climate change adaptation effort, supported by both adaptation and mitigation funding channels and technical expertise. This dual role of forests is being recognised in REDD+ initiatives at the national and regional scale in the Pacific.
- With funding and technical support from the international community, even small countries can make significant progress in creating policies and strategies for REDD+.

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Going after adaptation co-benefits: A REDD+ programme in Fiji

The focus of climate change policy and planning in Fiji is on adaptation. This is to be expected: small island developing states (SIDS) are especially vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme weather events. The international community accepts this, and international government and donor institutions have focused their support for SIDS in the Pacific on adaptation.

The *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks and sustainable management of forests* (REDD+) programme has emerged in international climate change negotiations as a mitigation measure, primarily. Attention has been focused on countries with large forests at risk. Complex international processes address the issue of 'REDD-readiness' – the policy, governance and technical preparations countries must undertake to participate in this international mechanism. These time-consuming and resource-intensive readiness processes carry a high 'entry price'. One major study[2] found that the potential costs of readiness interventions to allow a single country to participate in REDD+ ranged from US$14 million to US$92 million over 5 years. The cost is often prohibitive for small countries.

It is notable, therefore, that Fiji has an advanced REDD+ policy and planning process. Why bother? Why would donor agencies consider this a wise use of their support resources? The case of Fiji helps to break down the notion that REDD+ is mainly about mitigation. It shows that the REDD+ financing instrument can have a much more universal application.

Viewing REDD+ through an adaptation lens

From its inception, the Fiji REDD+ programme has existed within an adaptation context. The principal donor is the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), working under the German-Pacific Programme *Adaptation to Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region* in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). Thus, the Fiji REDD+ programme has been set in a broader context than what might be typical of REDD+ policy work in larger, more heavily forested tropical countries. The programme has

CDKN helps developing countries to design and deliver climate compatible development. When decision-makers in government, business and civil society speak to us about their aims and needs, they often ask about 'best practice' in other countries or, indeed, mistakes to avoid. What are the leading innovations in integrating climate change planning with economic growth strategies and poverty reduction? What are the biggest challenges faced along the way: institutional, financial, political, technical? This paper is one of a series of policy briefs that explore the 'Inside stories on climate compatible development': briefing papers that aim to answer these questions.

strong links to Fiji's work on adaptation and enhanced resilience, as well as to long-held national goals for the sustainable management of forests. Indeed, this has been a critical way to capture ownership of the plan by Fiji's core planning and finance agencies.

This approach to REDD+ has been championed by forest management experts in SPC and by the most senior officials in the Fiji Department of Forestry. These champions recognised that important synergies between climate change adaptation and mitigation can be used to maximise the financing opportunities for building and maintaining resilient forested landscapes.

Forests and climate change threats in Pacific Island Countries

Forests and trees play an important role in climate change adaptation and resilience in PICs (Table 1). Many activities that reduce or avoid forest-sector greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and/or enhance forest-sector GHG removals will also contribute to climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable land management, and biodiversity conservation benefits to the countries and communities undertaking those activities. Sustainable management of forests has therefore been an integral component of climate change adaptation in Fiji.

Fiji's forest sector

Fiji has forest covering 1.1 million hectares, representing 61% of the country's land mass. Of the total forested area, 85% is natural, while plantations of mahogany and pine, plus some coconut, make up the remaining 15%. There has been conversion of closed native forest (canopy cover 40–100%) to open native forest (canopy cover 10–40%) at a rate of 7,300 hectares per year over from 1991 to 2007.[3] Fiji is heavily reliant on agriculture for local food security and export; agriculture is thus the major driver of deforestation and forest degradation, followed by human settlement. Moreover, forestry

The REDD+ policy will contribute to Fiji managing its forest resources sustainably and mitigate climate change. It will also protect and enhance the ecosystem services provided by forests, including the provision of clean water, wild edible plants, fertile soil and sources of livelihood.

Viliame Naupoto, Fiji Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forests

Table 1. Potential role of forests in addressing climate change threats to Pacific Island Countries

Climate change threats	Risks to PICs	Role of forests
A stronger El Niño climate pattern with more frequent and more intense El Niño events.	Can increase the risk of drought with consequences for water security and food security.	• Protect hydrological cycle through increased water retention in terrestrial soils • Maintain local precipitation rates • Reduce sunlight penetration to soil • Moderate evapotranspiration • Favourably influence latent heat to sensible heat ratios, thereby cooling the land surface • Slow and elevate winds, reducing evapotranspiration from soils • (Of agroforestry systems) – use deeper soil water resources while providing forest-related ecosystem services.
Increased cyclone intensity	Can increase the risk of cyclone damage to island infrastructures from storm damage, flooding and storm surges.	• Reduce the impact of rain on soils and surface erosion • Protect the soil mantle from landslide damage • Stabilise and protect stream banks during flooding events • (Of mangrove systems) – Protect coastlines from storm damage.
Sea level rise	Can increase threats to coastal infrastructures and low-lying agricultural systems	• (Of mangrove systems) – Act as a buffer between sea and land, reducing the effects of erosion.
Shifts in the distribution of annual precipitation to more intense rainfall events	Can increase the risk of flash flooding, runoff and drying of soil	• (Through increased water storage in hinterland soils) – Enable more consistent stream flows that can deliver irrigation water to low-lying agricultural lands throughout the growing season.

Adapted from Weaver (2011)

is considered a 'growth sector' in the economy, and tree extraction and downstream processing are promoted, further encouraging deforestation.

However, Fiji has ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity, and it supports the concept of sustainable forest management (SFM) advocated by the United Nations Forum on Forests. The Government of Fiji is promoting SFM in its forestry policy, including the REDD+ programme. Importantly, the Government hopes that new finance streams that may be available under REDD+ will help it 'turn the corner' on forest degradation, as SFM practices that would maintain forests in a closed-canopy state have not been commercially successful.

History of the Fiji REDD+ programme

Key outcomes to date

The Fiji REDD+ programme was launched in 2009. It is a three-step-programme: 1. Policy and scoping; 2. Detailed planning; and 3. Implementation. To date, Step 1 has been completed and Step 2 is well advanced on technical elements.

In broad terms, these steps involve both policy-related and technical aspects of a national REDD+ Readiness programme. The first step was to develop a National REDD+ Policy. This falls under the National Forest Policy 2007 and contributes to the national goal of sustainable forest management. The REDD+ Policy provides Cabinet-level support, the overarching policy context and the mandate for the REDD+ programme. In particular, it helped set up the programme from an adaptation perspective. Box 1 outlines the key elements of the REDD+ Policy, which sets the framework for the development of REDD+ activities in Fiji.

Following the launch of the REDD+ Policy, work began on Step 2, the National REDD+ Strategic Action Plan. This detailed strategy required a holistic approach and had to address the reality of Fiji's poor technical capacities for undertaking GHG inventories, forest change monitoring and forest inventories.[4] The REDD+ Strategy Framework, completed in January 2011, elaborates eight elements within the Action Plan: scale, scope, measuring, reporting and verification (MRV), financing, distribution, governance, capacity development, and international policy engagement. It sets out 30 key tasks[5] that align with the 10 key elements of the REDD+ Policy and that could be incorporated into the National REDD+ Strategy.

Fiji is still working on the technical 'readiness' tasks of the National REDD+ Strategy and has yet to design the finance and business implementation rollout model. So the economic potential for REDD+ at the national, regional and landowner levels remains unclear. However, while the official REDD+ programme has not reached Step 3, one pilot project has started to implement REDD+ in Fiji. The non-governmental organisation (NGO) Live & Learn is developing an Improved Forest Management project under the voluntary Plan Vivo standard. Such projects will be crucial to provide the 'seeing-is-believing' proof to regional landowners that REDD+ can deliver its promised benefits. While representatives of such groups have taken part in national workshops, landowners must witness REDD+ working in their own communities for a national REDD+ programme to succeed in changing practice.

Outcome-focused multi-stakeholder process

Structured multi-day workshops have played a major role in the Fiji REDD+ process. Achieving the National REDD+ Policy took a substantial 2-year effort over 2009/10, involving two major national workshops and detailed efforts by international experts working with Fiji forestry and environment officials.

The initial 5-day workshop aimed to build capacity through policy and technical training. Indigenous landowners and participants from different ministries, local and international NGOs, the private sector and regional agencies were trained in various strategic and technical aspects of REDD+. Together they elaborated a draft REDD+ policy and road map. Ongoing consultations in the following year culminated in a line-by-line negotiation and refinement of a

Multi-stakeholder processes in Fiji have been excellent in my view. By having a training element followed by a structured process of making informed decisions from transparent options, these consultation processes avoid becoming just wishful talk shops.

Dr Sean Weaver, lead international technical expert for the Fiji REDD+ programme

Box 1: The 10 elements of the Fiji REDD+ Policy

1. SAFEGUARDS
The following will be ensured for all REDD+ initiatives and projects in Fiji:

i. protection of and respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples (as stated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and other international instruments)
ii. full and effective participation of indigenous people and other relevant stakeholders
iii. equitable distribution of benefits to rights owners
iv. consideration of gender issues in all phases of decision-making and implementation
v. no conversion of natural forests, but will reward the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and will enhance other social and environmental benefits
vi. that these initiatives and projects complement and are consistent with the objectives of the Fiji Sustainable Economic and Empowerment Development Strategy and relevant international conventions and agreements.

2. SCALE OF IMPLEMENTATION
A 'hybrid' scale approach, enabling both national and sub-national or project-scale activities where appropriate, will be adopted. There will be both national- and project-level engagement with REDD+ financing instruments to maximise opportunities and minimise costs. Project-based or sub-national implementation and monitoring will be linked to the national scale forest carbon measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) system and to the national reference level, to facilitate higher-level quality assurance for any project-scale activities.

3. SCOPE OF REDD+ ACTIVITIES
The following activities are eligible for inclusion in a national/sub-national/project-scale Fiji REDD+ initiative:

i. reducing emissions from deforestation via forest protection and improved forest management
ii. reducing emissions from degradation via forest protection and improved forest management
iii. afforestation/reforestation
iv. forest/energy sector linkages (biomass electricity generation)
v. forest/agriculture linkages (biomass residue/biochar)
vi. combination linking afforestation/reforestation with REDD+.

4. FINANCING OF REDD+
REDD+ initiatives will be open to all available financing instruments from both market-based and fund-based sources.

5. GOVERNANCE
Through the Fiji REDD+ programme, a transparent multi-stakeholder governance structure will be developed. The governance structure will be capable of:

i. ensuring the participation and consultation of all relevant stakeholders in REDD+ activities
ii. delivering efficient and effective decisions
iii. enhancing donor and buyer confidence
iv. using existing structures and, where possible, modifying them to suit the implementation of the Fiji REDD+ programme
v. standing up to an independent, external, expert third-party review.

6. MEASURING, REPORTING AND VERIFICATION
The Fiji REDD+ programme will establish a forest carbon MRV capability in line with the latest international good practice guidelines and guidance arising from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change under the recognition that:

i. eligibility for participation in international carbon and climate-related financial instruments is dependent on establishing and maintaining an MRV system and capability for the forest sector at the national and sub-national scale
ii. such an MRV capability will provide benefits to other aspects of forest sector monitoring.

7. PILOT PROJECTS
The Fiji REDD+ programme will benefit from 'learning by doing' and will therefore include pilot projects designed to assist in building capability in the design and implementation of REDD+ activities.

8. ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION
Effective engagement with regard to international policy and technical issues at the UNFCCC and other relevant international/regional forums, agencies and countries will be strengthened. The Fiji REDD+ programme will put in place an effective communication and awareness strategy capable of ensuring an efficient, effective and transparent flow of information:

i. among people at the national level (government, industry and non-governmental organisations), local communities, landowners and other stakeholders
ii. between and within government departments and statutory bodies
iii. among national and international bodies and forums to enable more effective international policy and technical engagement.

9. TRAINING
The Fiji REDD+ programme will develop an effective educational and training strategy capable of building policy and technical capacity.

10. RESEARCH
The Fiji REDD+ programme will undertake research, where necessary and with the approval of relevant authorities, to enable the achievement of its goals.

Source: Forestry Department, Government of Fiji (2011)

draft text for a National REDD+ Policy. Following further internal consultation and refinement by government agencies, the National REDD+ Policy was officially adopted by the Fiji Government Cabinet. Similarly, the work of breakout groups in a multi-stakeholder National REDD+ Strategy Workshop led to agreement over the set of key tasks in the REDD+ Strategy Framework.

Factors for success: Strength in numbers

Fiji's progress on REDD+ did not occur in isolation. Being part of a SPC/GIZ regional adaptation programme (subsequently renamed Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region) helped greatly. For example, the 2-day strategy workshop that nailed down the 30 key tasks came immediately after the inception workshop for the SPC/GIZ Regional REDD+ programme Climate Protection through Forest Conservation in the Pacific Islands, which involves Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.[6]

Breakout group consultations in this regional workshop generated a consensus-based mandate for how this regional programme will deliver on its key objectives. Notably, the adaptation focus approach (and support through this regional programme) has helped Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands in joining the UN-REDD+ readiness initiative.

In addition to the 'sharing and learning' benefits that arise in such regional exercises, bringing regional forestry department officials and stakeholder groups together can boost enthusiasm and ambition. Forestry departments in Pacific Islands often struggle to have their interests considered a priority and obtain funding for even basic activities such as inventories. REDD+ has provided a new 'way in' for advocates of sustainable forest management.

Implications

- **A wider vision and role for REDD+.** The international support available for REDD+ means that finance for readiness and eventual REDD+ activities can also contribute to a range of sustainable land management priorities, such as watershed protection, flood mitigation, water security, drought mitigation, mitigating land degradation, coastal forest management (including the protection and enhancement of mangroves) and biodiversity conservation. Seen in this light, the high costs of developing REDD+ readiness can become justifiable for more developing countries and donor agencies.
- **Small can be beautiful.** Most REDD+ stories that make the headlines are about countries with very large threatened forests. But while the scale of carbon savings will be small in most PICs, a well-structured REDD+ programme can provide finance and other ancillary benefits that are highly meaningful to climate compatible development.
- **Good process is key to policy adoption and strategy development.** REDD+ initiatives across the globe have shown the importance of multi-stakeholder consultation. This must not be rushed or exclude important parts of the community. REDD+ programmes in Fiji and other PICs point to the need for structured consultations that are inclusive from the outset, when countries must grapple with the tough issues like who owns the forests, what tenure systems exist, how secure is the tenure of households that depend on the forests, and how will benefits be shared. Resolving such issues will be the acid test of Fiji's process.[7]
- **International support plays a crucial role.** In the case of these REDD+ initiatives in the Pacific, GIZ and SPC have helped to fund effective multi-stakeholder processes that provide clear mandates for moving this sector forward at a pace in line with the needs, interests and capabilities of participating countries. Including international experts has accelerated progress on technically and politically complex issues.
- **The Pacific example can act as a model to other countries.** The national circumstances of PICs may be unique. However, many other developing countries that are at an earlier stage of their REDD+ thinking and readiness efforts may find PICs' experience illuminating. In particular, the framing of the elements of a REDD+ programme's policies and strategies, and the use of multi-stakeholder process to develop the initial texts can serve as examples to build upon.

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Endnotes

1. Principal consultant, Global Climate Change Consultancy. (www.GtripleC.co.nz)
2. Kojwang and Ulloa (2012)
3. Data source: Sue (2010)
4. Romijn, E. et al. (2012)
5. Elaborated in detail in Weaver, et al. (2011a)
6. See Weaver, et al. (2011b)
7. Noting, however, that in Fiji land ownership rights are generally well established historically, unlike in other PICs and many other developing countries.

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About CDKN

The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) aims to help decision-makers in developing countries design and deliver climate compatible development. We do this by providing demand-led research and technical assistance, and channelling the best available knowledge on climate change and development to support policy processes at the country level.

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