

EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

REPORT 2/2016



Real-time evaluation of the Government of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative

Literature review and programme theory

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Executive Summary

SUMMARY

This report presents findings of a baseline for a new wave of real time evaluation of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) commissioned by NORAD. Two studies have been conducted following an extensive literature review covering 300 documents, a series of in-depth workshops, and interviews. These two studies tell us:

- REDD+ is vital to a holistic approach to tackling climate change. The literature on the subject is extensive but closer analysis reveals that there are gaps in understanding, in particular regarding effectiveness of measurement, reporting and verification and the relational aspect of national and jurisdictional approaches and governance that need to be addressed to enhance REDD+ effectiveness.
- Norway's investment in REDD+ is substantial and there is growing evidence of success. Past evaluations highlighted the importance of assessing whether NICFI has developed an adequate theory of change emerging from past evaluations and underpinning the

programme of diverse initiatives. The studies show that the change model for NICFI-REDD+ is still somewhat unelaborated at the critical level of national agreements.

- Both studies point to the need for specific further research and evaluation. The authors have made recommendations for subsequent work. These include studies of how to:
 - > enhance effectiveness through building on coordination between upfront funding to forestry and forest governance versus results based programmes of the donors;
 - > integrate safeguards in systems for measurement, reporting and verification. Further research seems warranted;
 - > build capacity in local and national institutions to develop relevant REDD+ investment portfolios where lack of institutional capacity constitutes barriers to successful and timely implementation of incentives for reduced deforestation;

- > conduct an action research study of REDD+ in Indonesia;
- > carry out a cross cutting study of the key factors which enable results based payments to work in the context of REDD+. This should include how to set up financial mechanisms and develop programme portfolios; and
- > conduct a study of the extent to which a 'recipient' versus a 'co-investor' paradigm might suit current and future NICFI focus areas.

THE CONTEXT OF REDD+ AND NICFI

The Government of Norway aims to become carbon neutral by 2050 (GoN, 2016). To achieve this ambitious goal Norway has committed to reducing GHG emissions by 40% below 1990 industrial GHG levels by 2030, and as part of a bold global climate agreement in which other industrialized nations also make serious commitments. In particular, the Budget Proposal (2015-16) presented to the Norwegian Parliament sets out the means by which this target will be achieved:

- Norway shall by 2020 cut greenhouse gases by the equivalent of 30 per cent of 1990 emissions; and
- It shall support efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, consistent with sustainable development.

Climate change mitigation requires efforts to reduce emissions and increase removals of greenhouse gases. The Norwegian Government's efforts on climate change are focused

on national climate policy and international work on negotiations for a new climate agreement. It also lends strong support to the wider efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, quota purchases, short term drivers of climate change, and other priority areas to trigger climate efforts internationally. In addition, the results area encompasses the income dimension of international climate finance and climate adaptation.

It is recognised that in order to foster action on climate change through efforts to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) in developing countries, it is necessary to establish a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and to invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development.

As part of Norway's ambitious goals to tackle climate change, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg launched Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) at COP13 in 2007 in Bali. NICFI developed from the 2008 Climate

Compromise, which was extended in 2012. NICFI's goal is to achieve cost-effective, early and measurable emission reductions through conservation of tropical forests. Up to three billion Norwegian kroner (over US\$ 500 million) has been pledged annually to support REDD+ efforts both internationally and at the country level - the largest single undertaking within Norwegian development cooperation and paving the way for Norway to be the biggest donor nation globally to REDD+.

NICFI has three core objectives:

- To work towards the inclusion of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in a new international climate regime;
- To take early action to achieve cost-effective and verifiable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
- To promote the conservation of natural forests to maintain their carbon storage capacity.

These core objectives aim to contribute to Norwegian climate policy objectives. As NICFI is funded through the Norwegian aid budget, a further key objective of NICFI is to contribute to the achievement of the general objectives of Norwegian development policy.

THE STUDIES AND THEIR PURPOSE

To date, there have been five evaluations of NICFI. The most recent findings (NORAD, 2014) presented a number of recommendations for improvements in NICFI's role and strategy, management and operational and financial processes. They included the need to consider how to enhance a dynamic, strategic and results-based framework for NICFI (NORAD, 2014).

Since 2007 a substantial body of literature has been published that documents technical aspects of REDD+ implementation (such as project design), as well as evaluations of the mechanism's effectiveness. This emerging literature, which includes peer-reviewed research, implementation and funding agency documentation, NGO critiques and grey literature, is vast and, within Google Scholar alone, accounts for more

than 5,000 entries. While there is also a plethora of literature on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the report recognises the limitations of these literatures in terms of their direct relevance to REDD+. Lessons learned from FLEGT and CDM are pertinent to the issue of leakage (displacement), though in relation to REDD+ it encompasses a different scale.

The first project commissioned under a new framework agreement on real-time evaluation of NICFI that entered into force in July 2015 called for two separate but closely connected studies:

- **Study A** – to review and summarise research relevant to REDD+ and identify the gaps where more research/evaluation is needed.
- **Study B** – to consider the program theory/theories behind NICFI/REDD+ and assess the extent to which the current intervention theories and design of NICFI show the conditions necessary, as stated in previous

studies, to achieve its objectives. This includes an assessment of the degree to which the program/intervention theory or theories are built on available research based knowledge and includes findings from study A.

The two studies were conducted in a way that allowed for a targeted literature review to identify ways in which NICFI could improve and capitalise on emerging best practices and knowledge. It was also critical that the two studies helped to establish a clear purpose and understanding of NICFI's objectives in relation to REDD+ as this will enable a more focused and results-based approach to subsequent evaluations.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The studies adopted a political economy lens. Political economy is the study of how political decisions impact the choice of economic policies and measures, especially with regards to conflicts and political institutions¹. The principle of political economy, though often overlooked in REDD+ studies, is an important element in assessing the contributions of REDD+ funding to changing governance and management. The studies assumed the importance of political economy as overarching, with land and natural resources a key focus, and thus REDD+ was viewed as a political, as well as a technical issue.

For the purposes of study A the literature review considered research presented in both peer reviewed published journals and grey literature. The literature review covered over 300 documents, which were filtered based on the titles, abstracts and key words to identify a long list consisting of 189 peer reviewed documents and 187 pieces of grey literature. This long

list was filtered further to identify key documents that cover both conceptual and empirical findings to determine the performance of REDD+ and whether REDD+ contributed to governance, economic or environmental improvements. The review sought to identify gaps and inform study B to assess who benefits, how, where, when and in what way from REDD+. The literature review captured the majority of relevant peer reviewed publications and grey literature that are available in English.

Study B drew on key informant interviews, project documentation and a stakeholder workshop with NICFI and on literature, documentation and the outcomes of study A. It explored specific agreements, guidelines, reviews and evaluations related to multi-lateral and bilateral NICFI-REDD+ initiatives conducted over the past 8 years and included a preliminary review of literature on results based payments. Study B traced the development and evolution of the theories of change underpinning NICFI-REDD+ using both foundational documents as well as theories of change provided by NICFI.

FINDINGS

Study A identified key findings from the literature:

- Progress is evident in planning, coordination and demonstration activities, with community-based monitoring clearly on the rise and promoted as a cost-effective way of measuring and monitoring carbon;
- Land tenure is a key topic in REDD+ but has not seen much pragmatic change across REDD+ countries. Tenure reforms (could) be the silver bullet for REDD+ to happen;
- Benefits sharing mechanisms are also pending clarification in many countries with regards to how funds or facilities are structured effectively. The literature shows that payments are currently made to individuals, communities and other rights holders via cash or development projects;
- Safeguards, including what safeguards exist, how they are implemented and how they are monitored, are one of the least well-covered areas in the literature reviewed;

¹ Alesina, A.F. (2007:3) "Political Economy," NBER Reporter, pp. 1-5

- Though REDD+ is said to have focused unduly on carbon and channelled lots of finance into MRV systems, in practice the issue of avoiding leakage and ensuring permanence are less well examined in the literature. Tracking of expenditure from REDD+ initiatives requires further verification.

Study B traced the development and evolution of the theories of change underpinning NICFI-REDD+ using both foundational documents as well as explicitly labelled theories of change provided by NICFI.

A ‘strawman’ model of the NICFI-REDD+ programme theory was developed through the document review and consultations conducted as part of a September workshop. This model included elements related to program management as well as impact theory and was used as a framework to examine evaluation report findings, review observations, consultation comments and literature review findings related to key NICFI-REDD+ programme elements. It was also used as a framework to analyse desired results from NICFI-REDD+,

and the relevant assumptions and influencing factors surrounding them.

CONCLUSIONS

Study A identifies that there is a significant grey and peer-reviewed literature with many studies on projects emerging in the last 2-3 years. The reviews of readiness processes demonstrate **progress in planning, coordination, and demonstration activities**. However, there are challenges in relation to tenure, MRV, financing, benefit-sharing systems, policies and laws and institution building. There are also challenges to **increasing effectiveness** in targeting fundamental issues such as the drivers of deforestation and there is as yet limited evidence to show REDD+ has substantially changed behavioural trajectories.

In relation to the topics investigated (governance, technical, finance, social, transferable lessons), it can be concluded that governance and social challenges literature dominate REDD+. The literature gives a strong message in this regard. **Technical issues focus on measurement, reporting and verification** and while

there is a significant literature on this, at the same time the **literature points to challenges and gaps in knowledge** on these issues.

While there are transferable lessons that REDD+ can draw from other PES, CDM and FLEG-T schemes, there are limits to the extent to which these other schemes can inform future trajectories of REDD+.

Despite the challenges, **REDD+ has heightened global discussions on issues** such as community tenure, rights and forest benefits sharing, which some NGOs and communities have been pushing for many years without much success. There is increased focus and attention on the need to improve the organization of land use sectors across REDD+ countries. Some REDD+ projects have also managed to **increase efficiency** by training villagers, communities and indigenous peoples in the use of technology for monitoring and measuring carbon, thereby reducing costs and deepening community understanding of carbon’s relationship to forest and ecosystem service conservation. Examples of best practice include Guyana (see Box 1 p.28).

In terms of the equity with which REDD+ operates, whether it is its financial outcomes or its distribution, the study found that **knowledge and participation are key to its success**. In addition, there is a need to balance costs and benefits so that there is value for money in achieving the needed emission reductions for addressing climate change.

Study B identified the important elements of NICFI-REDD+ multilateral and bilateral initiatives, then built on existing work to suggest a more structured and comprehensive ‘straw man’ framework which logically incorporated and connected key elements based on foundational NICFI documents. Conclusions related to Study B’s key objectives are as follows:

Programme Theory: While NICFI has made a good start at describing a theory of change or programme theory, the change model for NICFI-REDD+ is still somewhat unelaborated at the critical level of national agreements. This makes sense due to the highly variable nature of the initiatives and the stated need to do theories of change at a country level.

Some further elaboration would have been useful to get at the essence of what the intended sequencing of activities and results is intended to involve. Part of study B’s efforts were devoted to elaborating a ‘straw man’ model to integrate multi-lateral and bilateral efforts for further refinement.

Contextual understanding regarding political economy factors effecting a transformation to results based payments (RBP): Documents, consultations and the related literature suggest that the appropriate factors to allow results based payments to work, especially in a transition from a non-conditional or minimally conditional aid context to a more precise pay for performance context, are rare and difficult to change in the limited time periods which have characterized NICFI REDD+. NICFI REDD+’s limited time periods are due in part to the short horizon that NICFI has had as a time-limited project rather than as a long-term initiative. The evidence to date also suggests that in some cases a results based payments approach as currently understood and configured for NICFI-REDD+ may not suit the context and conditions of some countries and situations.

Funding Paradigm - the opportunity to move from a situation of hands-off funder to co-investor as a driving ‘mental model’:

Documents, consultations and the literature suggest that various factors relating to constructive engagement and inclusiveness have been an issue for NICFI REDD+ in the past. Part of this may be attributed to the inclusion of intermediaries in what is a complicated delivery process. Part of this may also be a result of an approach which focuses on a pay for performance ‘compliance’ paradigm as opposed to a co-investment paradigm, which might more closely include consideration of potential partner self-interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Study A has evidence to recommend the following:

Recommendation 1 - To conduct studies on how to enhance effectiveness through building on coordination between different components of the donors and the REDD+ system, and to track investments and outcomes for both environment and social systems. In this regard, studying partnerships and how they can be developed through engagement of the private sector through commodity chains networks and roundtables would be important. As part of this, the research could look toward models of effective bilateral partnerships such as those developed with/in Brazil, and in particular identify what Brazil has that other countries have not yet developed. Brazil could potentially take a lead in capacity building, along with other REDD+ countries, and share that learning as a way to build leadership across REDD+ partnerships.

Recommendation 2 - To focus further studies on how to better safeguard

and enhance measurement, reporting and verification systems by enhancing tools and technologies, combined with efforts to provide training and capacity building at different scales (local monitoring, national accounting systems, international institutions). A core component of this would be to assess expenditure from REDD+ initiatives distinguishing between MRV investments as a possible high one-time cost, versus MRV being a high cost for the whole lifespan of a partnership. There seems to be less attention and fewer resources devoted to MRV and other ‘technical’ issues than one would expect, however. We propose further study on tracking and finance for various components of REDD+ linked to Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 3 - To conduct further study on governance, safeguards and the role of political ownership in the REDD+ countries, paying attention to indigenous and local community land rights, benefits sharing and the role of local institutions. For assessment, lessons learned could be sought from the establishment of REDD+ funds

that create transformational change and share benefits. For this, extended interviews could be conducted among a broad cross-section of REDD+ experts, country negotiators and NICFI staff. For this it will also be important to better understand how REDD+ can be used to create incentives to create local, green economies with local benefits. In addition, further evidence should be sought on the ground on how to increase efficiency through supporting community-based monitoring systems in direct partnerships with communities and community-based associations. These efforts can continue to build equitable engagement of local communities, women and other vulnerable groups.

The findings from Study B lead to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 4 - To conduct an action-research study of REDD+ in Indonesia. Conduct an action-research/learning type of study which would develop and validate the programme theory for the bilateral agreement with Indonesia. The study would examine in detail the various aspects and segments of

the phased approach, including the program management, the level of hands-on activity experienced and, if in retrospect deemed necessary, the engagement of various parties and groups including the private sector, civil society and women as part of gender equity concerns. The study would trace the logic and actual progress through the phases and would include consideration of the key factors and conditions (including political economy) that have affected desired goals. The results of this study would include insights and potentially adjusted criteria for REDD+ project selection, negotiation of Letters of Intent and assistance agreements.

Recommendation 5 - To carry out a cross cutting study of the key factors which enable Results Based Payments to work in the context of REDD+ types of initiatives.

The involves a ‘realist’ synthesis or comprehensive systematic review of the various applications of RBPs in REDD+ and other similar efforts to establish what key success factors are involved in making results based payments work and for whom. The study would involve an extensive early refinement, third party study selection, and re-

view process. It would also involve consultations with key informants knowledgeable about results based payments as they have been implemented across a number of categories. The scope of the study could include consideration the nature and use of intermediaries in delivery.

Recommendation 6 - Study of the extent to which a ‘recipient’ versus a ‘co-investor’ paradigm might appropriately suit current and future NICFI focus areas. A question has been raised as to whether there is an inherent bias in delivery arrangements made at multi-lateral and bilateral government levels towards a “funder-recipient” relationship as compared to a co-investment (some might say ‘partner’) model where all stakeholders see themselves in the mission together. Related to the above, conduct a study of whether, how and to what extent current and past NICFI-REDD+ initiatives have been characterized by stakeholders as co-investments as opposed to ‘performance contract’ agreements as well as a systematic review and/ or a ‘practice survey’ of the various applications of results based payments (funding) in REDD+ and other co-investment support designs to

determine the key factors that make them work. The scope of the study could include consideration of different designs and management arrangements (including the level of hands-on funder involvement, the nature and use of intermediaries in delivery, the nature and type of private sector, civil society and other groups’ roles involvement in the RBP program delivery etc.) and their relationships to results.

Recommendation 7 - To conduct an international collaborative study of REDD+. Given that the study found that key REDD+ delivery agents like UNREDD and FCPF appear to have somewhat unelaborated programme theories related to REDD+ and the important mechanisms and results chains involved in its delivery, it would be interesting for NICFI to consider the support of an international review and workshop involving senior staff of the main REDD+ initiatives. This review and workshop could consider the various theories of change related to REDD+ more critically, elaborating on the approach started by this study. Such an initiative could be part of one or more of the studies suggested above.

1. Introduction

1.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) was launched in 2007 with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions resulting from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is an effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development.² REDD+ goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.³ Through NICFI, up to three billion Norwegian kroner has since been pledged annually to support REDD+ efforts both internationally and at the country level. This initiative is the largest single undertaking within Norwegian development cooperation. Norway is also the biggest donor nation globally to REDD+. Norway reaffirmed its commitment to climate

² <http://www.un-redd.org/aboutredd>

³ Ibid

change and REDD+ in the Budget Proposal (2015-16) to the Norwegian Parliament (Storting).

1.2 CONTEXT OF REAL-TIME EVALUATION

NORAD (2014) noted that, up to 2020, NICFI is managing a substantial part of Norwegian development cooperation funds. It is therefore important to make objective information available to decision makers and the public on progress and performance of REDD+. The approach of a real-time evaluation is meant to facilitate early stage assessment and feedback which in turn allows NICFI to learn and, where necessary, to change trajectory in a timely manner as well as to provide information to a fast moving international REDD+ community.

To date, there have been five real-time evaluations of NICFI commissioned by NORAD's Evaluation Department:

- NORAD (2011) Contributions to a Global REDD+ Regime 2007-2010, Evaluation Report 18/2010;

- NORAD (2011) Contributions to National REDD+ Processes 2007-2010 (Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo-DRC, Guyana, Indonesia and Tanzania), Evaluation Report 12/2010;
- NORAD (2012) Lessons Learned from Support to Civil Society Organisations, Evaluation Report 5/2012;
- NORAD (2013) Contribution to REDD+ Measurement, Reporting and Verification, Evaluation Report 5/2013;
- NORAD (2014) Synthesising Report 3/2014.

The findings from the latest evaluation (NORAD, 2014) provide a number of important and potentially transformative conclusions and recommendations for improvements in NICFI's role and strategy, management and operational and financial processes, including the need to develop a theory of change (NORAD, 2014). One 'stand out' finding of this evaluation was of how to enhance a dynamic, strategic and results-based framework for NICFI:

“[...] the current lack of a dynamic, strategic, results-based framework for NICFI hinders the development of shared priorities for coherent decision making” (NORAD, 2014). Despite this particular challenge, NICFI has contributed to transformative actions to address climate change arguably through REDD+ (NORAD, 2014), including in the support of/for:

Countries’ improved national level processes, whereby NICFI forged a required advance on early action to achieve cost-effective and verifiable emission reduction and generated useful lessons that have been transferred to the UNFCCC level and shaped discussions and process for REDD+. Examples include developed national MRV systems for Guyana and Brazil, establishing institutional frameworks, design systems for REDD+ in Indonesia, and supporting nesting of projects into the national level in Tanzania.

Civil society endorsement from NICFI has led to a more targeted focus and increase on certain issues like Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), safeguards and Indigenous Peoples rights. An example being the push in Indonesia, which

led to a constitutional court decision in support of Indigenous People’s rights.

NICFI support for multilateral institutions has led to an engagement of many more countries to voluntarily participate in REDD+ and REDD+ readiness, which increases the potential of emission reductions from forests to address climate change.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDIES

The real-time evaluation of Norway’s International Climate and Forest Initiative (2007-2013) (NORAD, 2014) recommended the assessment of existing evaluation documents and literature to establish the progress made on REDD+ and REDD+ countries and, in particular, to identify *gaps in knowledge* as a basis for an assessment to inform NICFI policy and strategy. The outcomes of the past NICFI evaluation also highlighted the relevance of political economy to better understand the theory of change brought about by REDD+ investments.

This is the first call-off under the framework agreement on real-time evaluation of NICFI that entered into force in July 2015. The full terms

of reference (TOR) are provided in Annex 1. This TOR covers two separate, but closely connected studies:

- A review of research relevant for REDD+. The study summarizes existing research, and identifies the gaps where more research/evaluation is needed. (Study A)
- A study of the program theory/theories behind NICFI/REDD+ and assessing to what extent the current intervention theories and design of NICFI is optimal in order to achieve its objectives, including a directed literature review of an area known as results based payments (Study B).

The work specifically aims:

“To identify issues to be addressed in subsequent evaluations, as well as support the identification and development of evaluation methods/frameworks to be used in subsequent evaluations under the framework agreement.”

A key list of overarching research questions is presented below.

- What are the challenges with the implementation of REDD+ and how can REDD+ be improved?
- Where and what are the islands of excellence in REDD+ and transferable lessons for REDD+ and Results Based Payment approaches?
- To what degree is the program/intervention theories built on available research based knowledge?
- What do previous real-time evaluations tell us of the NICFI programme theory/theory of change?

1.4 INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience of this report includes the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment (which hosts the NICFI Secretariat), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD) who play

supporting roles related to foreign policy and disbursement of funds, as well as the Norwegian Parliament, institutions, organisations, the general public in Norway, partner governments and other relevant stakeholders.

1.5 NICFI'S AIM AND APPROACH

A key factor both for NICFI and other programmes on REDD+ is support for political ownership at the national level, in the REDD-country. NICFI places central importance on national political ownership as the basis for implementing REDD-activities and programmes. This is closely linked to the political economy of REDD+. NICFI believes that unless there is high-level political support for a strategy for transformation from deforestation to economic activities that do not build on deforestation, REDD+ is unlikely to succeed in the longer term. NICFI is a key contributor to REDD+ finance both via bilateral and multi-lateral investments. It practices a hands-off approach policy that allows the freedom for multi-lateral institutions funded by it to make their own decisions and develop their processes and practices.

Despite the advantage of this approach, with respect to REDD+, a potential shortfall is the multi-lateral organisations increasing the countries they support when the existing ones had very slow progress with REDD+ and required more attention.

NICFI shows the crucial importance it places on national political ownership as the basis for implementing REDD-activities and programmes. Funds from NICFI have motivated processes already in place (e.g. Brazil and its national reforms to tackle deforestation) rather than an economic incentive to kick-start a process that the receiving country may not initially be interested in or expressed a commitment to tackling the problem. Delivering the funds as promised and on time to partner countries, has increased the political will and commitment of the REDD+ countries that Norway is involved with.

The objectives of NICFI (as reported by NORAD, 2014 pg.6) are to:

- Work towards the inclusion of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in a new international climate regime;
- Take early action to achieve cost-effective and verifiable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
- Promote the conservation of natural forests to maintain their carbon storage capacity, and promote Norway's overall development goals.
- Funds are provided to partners (NORAD, 2014) through:
- The United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations to support REDD+ progress
- Multilateral REDD+ Institutions (such as Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, Forest Investment Program, UN-REDD-Programme) supported to engage REDD+ countries and

donors, for results based payments prior to a post-Kyoto agreement

- Bilateral country partnerships for demonstration
- Support for civil society organisations to generate knowledge, advocacy, and enable implementation

NORAD (2014) shows 10.3 billion NOK (US \$ 1.7 billion) of NICFI funding was disbursed since 2008 with Brazil receiving 44% of all funds disbursed (NOK 4.6 billion,), then FCPF and UN-REDD Programme around 11% each (NOK 1.2 and NOK 1.1 billion respectively) and 9% to civil society (NOK 1 billion). This accounts for 75% of all major disbursements. Regarding pledged support Brazil, Indonesia and Guyana make up the largest portions of the 19.8 billion NOK (US\$ 3.3 billion), followed by civil society.

1.6 THEORY OF CHANGE AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Theory of Change has been described by practitioners⁴ as:

"Essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or 'filling in' what has been described as the 'missing middle' between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes or behavioural results) that must be in place (and how these relate to one another causally) for the goals to occur. These are all mapped out in an outcomes or result framework."

⁴ See <http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change>

OECD DAC defines a result⁵ as:

“The output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention”

NORAD (2014) identified that while NICFI has been successful in making relatively explicit its budget propositions, submissions to UNFCCC and the bilateral agreements, there has been no documented ‘theory of change’ to clarify why specific interventions have been selected or their expected impacts. The ways that NICFI has considered impact to date has been through activities, such as UN level development of submissions, knowledge generation and consensus building, research, offline workshops and funding meetings and through support for multilateral development of a framework for REDD+ readiness and for results based payments.

In bilateral partnerships NICFI has demonstrated REDD+ working across the forest transition curve, and its support to civil society has ena-

bled knowledge generation, pilots and facilitation of REDD+ implementation. Underpinning its theory of change is that reducing emissions from REDD+ is effective in terms of costs, ease and speed; results based payments are a good way to motivate countries to engage with REDD+, pilot activities and results based payments encourage countries to engage, and funds are enabling. While it is difficult to measure impact, this report hopes to highlight some areas in which the body of research is informing NICFI’s actions and how these actions are being optimized in practice.

⁵ See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/2754804.pdf>

2. Study A: Review of research relevant for REDD+

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Real-Time Evaluation of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (2007-2013) (NORAD, 2014) recommended the assessment of existing evaluation documents and literature to establish the progress made on REDD+ and in REDD+ countries. Study A therefore sets out to identify generic gaps in knowledge as a basis for an assessment to inform NICFI policy and strategy, particularly in those countries where NICFI and other donors have been implementing REDD+. The outcomes of the past NICFI evaluation also highlighted the relevance of political economy to better understand the theory of change brought about by REDD+ investments.

2.2 STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Study A aims to identify gaps and opportunities as well as links to study B in particular and future programming of NICFI in general. The following questions are addressed in study A:

- What can available research tell us about progress on REDD+?

- What can be improved with the implementation of REDD+?

- What works for REDD+?

The overarching objective is to examine the literature to determine the performance of REDD+ and whether there is evidence in the literature that REDD+ contributes to systemic governance, economic and/or environmental improvements. More succinctly, the review seeks to identify gaps to inform study B regarding who benefits, how, where, when and in what way to assess the programme theory for NICFI.

Study A is set out in the following manner. Section 2.3 outlines definitions and the approach to Study A framework, and hypothesis and methodology with a discussion of limitations. Section 2.4 presents the results from peer-reviewed literature and grey literature. Section 2.5 comprises an analysis of the findings and section 2.6 sets out some conclusions. More detailed information on the list of institutions and persons consulted, question guide, methodology and abstracts are contained in Annexes 2, 3, 4, and 5.

2.3 GUIDING DEFINITIONS AND FRAMEWORK

Definitions

According to Decision 4/CP.15, the UNFCCC recognizes the importance of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. This study approaches the systematic review using the definition as set out in section 1.1 of the report. The study recognizes that implementing countries and project proponents as the case may be, will pursue or prioritise particular elements of the five REDD+ activities depending on the specific drivers of degradation and forest loss.

Framework

A political economy lens (the study of how political decisions impact the choice of economic policies and measures, especially with regards to conflicts and political institutions)⁶ and a 3E framework (equity, efficiency and effectiveness)⁷, served as the analytical approach in critically assessing the literature (see Table 1). The principle of political economy, though often overlooked in analyses of REDD+, is considered an important element in assessing the contributions of REDD+ funding to changing governance and management of tropical deforestation and providing important development, environmental and livelihood co-benefits (NORAD, 2014). The study assumes the importance of political economy as overarching, with land and natural resources a key focus, and thus views REDD+ as a political; as well as a technical issue.

There are three points of rationale for the selection of the 3E framework. Firstly, it is a well-established framework within the literature and has been widely applied in evaluations of sustainability projects and programs, including REDD+ (e.g. Dyer et al. 2012). Secondly, the 3E framework uniquely offers a qualitative lens on the literature and the umbrella to evaluate useful and practical conclusions on the progress and quality of REDD+. Thirdly, the framework maps well onto evaluation criteria of relevance to policy makers, offering a systematic and coherent approach. The framework helps to assess the available research on progress and quality of progress made on REDD+, particularly with regard to addressing issues of additionality, leakage, permanence, measurement, reporting and verification (MRV), participation, land tenure, benefits sharing, financing, private sector, gender, environment-poverty, "hands-off approach", and Results-Based Finance.

Past reviews that draw on the 3E framework have focused narrowly on, for example, tracing the causal chains of trade-off between public

and private costs and benefits of programmes (Dyer et al. 2012), or linkages between two relational aspects of REDD+, e.g. links between payments and tenure on REDD+ successes and failures (Barbier and Tesfaw, 2012), or focuses on one dimension of the 3Es such as effectiveness of REDD+ policy design in Cameroon (Mbatu, 2015) or equity in REDD+ (Rantala et al. 2015; Cattaneo et al. 2010). Other studies focus on a specific scale; for instance Purnomo et al. (2013) examine 3Es against a spatially explicit model of a case study (Jambi) in Indonesia. Study A is more broadly encompassing, focusing on assessing whether or not NICFI's programme theory of change has been coherent with the necessary or sufficient conditions for success as indicated in the literature within the terms of effectiveness (whether the REDD+ aims and objectives are met; this includes emission reduction, poverty reduction), efficiency (what outputs of REDD+ at time and cost including quality), and equity (governance performance of REDD+ which encompasses institutions and processes, benefit distribution, risks, participation and safeguards).

6 Alesina, A.F. (2007:3) "Political Economy," NBER Reporter, pp. 1-5

7 Barbier, E.B., and Tesfaw, A.T., (2012) Can REDD+ Save the Forest? The Role of Payments and Tenure. *Forests* 3, 881-895.

The hypothesis driving study A (and Study B) is that the most successful outcomes of REDD+ programmes, projects or investments to date are dependent on who benefits, how, where, and when they play out.

From the perspective of 3Es, study A seeks to establish:

- What is the current status of REDD+?
- How efficient, effective and equitable is REDD+ performance?
- Do these ‘new’ initiatives work in terms of bringing about change in social, political and ecological sustainability? How are they ‘new’? What is different about REDD+?

Research Design/ Research Methods

Existing reviews of REDD+ literature such as Barbier and Tesfaw (2012) demonstrate how easy it is to overlook the need to present a clear and visible methodology. Study A draws on an adapted systematic review approach (Pickering and Byrne, 2014, see Annex 4 for further detail)

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF THE WORKING DEFINITION OF 3E FRAMEWORK

Term	Working Definition
Effectiveness	Achieving the purpose and sub objectives such as emissions reductions, environmental protection, poverty and development co-benefits and behavioural change
Efficiency	Quality of outputs with respect to time and costs (least waste- value for money). Also evaluating physical outputs.
Equity	Benefit distribution, risks, process, participation, governance and safeguards including roles and responsibilities

to aid the systematic and transparent presentation of the literature reviewed on the progress made on REDD+ and REDD+ countries where NICFI and other donors have been implementing REDD+, as a basis for an assessment of knowledge gaps. Our research design employed analytical methods including quantitative (simple techniques to illustrate data) and qualitative approaches to infer meaning to the data analysis. Key characteristics of a systematic review include: clear inclusion/exclusion criteria, explicit search strategy, and categorisation and analysis of included studies.

The findings presented in this report are based on an estimated 10% sample of the overall

literature on REDD+ and are guided by outcomes from meetings with NICFI staff in the kick-off meeting in Norway (25-26 August, 2015) and informed by informant interviews (n=14) (Annex 2). The interviews informed the literature review in terms of a) where there are overlaps in priority areas and b) how they correlate with the literature and knowledge gaps identified. The process of drawing out relevant literature benefited from search terms incorporated largely from the study B workshop (see Section 3), and the NICFI kick-off meeting (full list of key terms and combinations used are contained in Annex 4), and to a lesser extent from informant interviews. Based on the adoption of a ‘snowball’ approach, key inform-

ants also suggested readings and authors that were crosschecked against the broader search criteria. The interviews played a limited role in the study, which explicitly adopted an overarching systematic approach to gain a robust and representative sample of the REDD+ literature available.

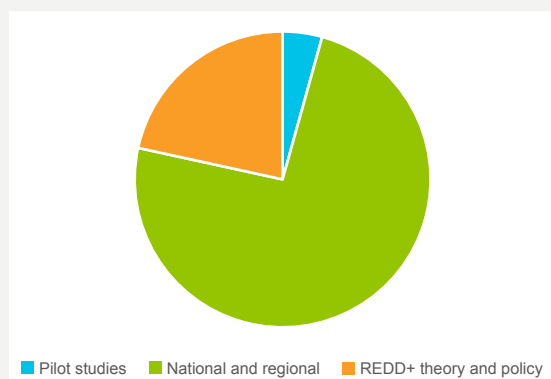
We ended up with a total sample of 189 peer-reviewed papers and 187 papers from the grey literature. We assessed the quality of the body of literature as moderate to high research quality according to DFID principles of research quality (DFID, 2014). With an estimated equal number of papers of moderate quality, the peer-reviewed literature was categorised to determine the relative size of the body of evidence using a matrix developed around key topics and criteria included in the ToR (e.g. governance, technical, finance, social, transferable lessons). The matrix was populated based on preliminary reviews of abstracts. The result was a visual and numerical appreciation of topics covered in the literature and especially noting where the gaps are (see Annex 4 for a detailed account of study A methodology and matrix). To give a sense of the rela-

tive size of the body of evidence, we found that the literature clustered around the following key issues: Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV); governance issues such as participation, land tenure, benefits distribution, financing and poverty, with a particular focus in the literature on additionality, leakage, permanence and gender; Results Based Finance (RBF), private sector and ‘hands-off’ approach. We categorized both peer reviewed and grey literature according to whether they focused empirically on REDD+ conditions and impacts at pilot project level or whether they had a national or regional focus. In addition, a group of publications also had a pure policy or theoretical focus. We consequently filtered the clustered literature into three research types:

- i) Project/programmes of empirical nature (majority peer-reviewed);
- ii) National level empirical oriented and case and country comparisons (majority grey literature and some peer-reviewed);
- iii) Policy and theoretical studies.

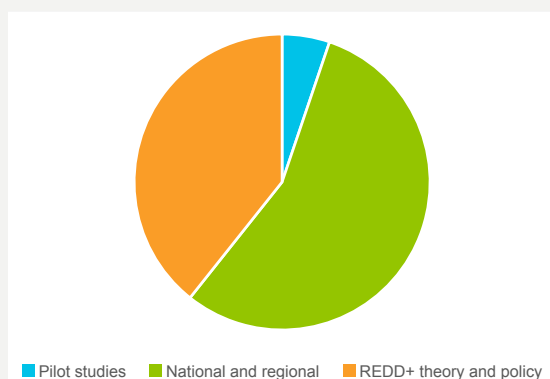
In general, documentations and reviews of impacts of REDD+ on the ground are still few both in grey and peer reviewed literature (Figures 1 and 2). There are, however, a few exceptions; the CIFOR global study being one of them (Angelsen et al 2012; Sills et al 2014; Sunderlin et al 2014). The results also indicate a higher degree of policy focus in the grey literature, which is probably explained by the normative role of the institutions behind many of these publications.

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF PEER REVIEWED LITERATURE BY CATEGORIES



A random sample (one in ten) of 25% sub-sample of peer-reviewed and 10% of grey literature was reviewed in full, quality assessed, and captured into a database to gather evidence on effectiveness (aims and objectives met, emissions reductions, poverty alleviation, permanence and leakage.), efficiency (outputs of REDD+ are met through physical outputs, MRV, financing), and equity (governance, including private sector partnerships, safeguards, participation, land use, benefit sharing, gender,

FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF GREY LITERATURE BY CATEGORIES



results based financing). For this report, the database summarising both quantitative and qualitative findings, was subjected to deeper analysis within the 3E framework. An annotated bibliography of the peer reviewed and grey literature can be found in Annex 5 of this report.

Limitations

Limitations to Study A include the following:

- Time constraint for a full Campbell Systematic Review:** The approach does not adhere strictly to the Campbell Collaboration: but Study A draws on a systematic review approach because it uses transparent procedures to find, evaluate and synthesize the literature. This approach allows for a robust evaluation of the evidence and aims to minimise a subjective interpretation of the literature.
- Sampling strategy for interviews:** the justification for selection of interviews was by gender, geography, and expertise and snowballing (referral by key informants) as a way to begin to identify key gaps in knowledge and to identify and to corroborate which issues, key-words to include and what sources of evidence exist that were not published in the peer review literature. Still, these experts are a sub-sample of some of the most informed in the field of REDD+.

- **Amount and varying quality of literature:**

Given that there are extensive bodies of literature, for example a Google search for REDD+ and governance resulted in thousands of hits, we had to limit the categories of search terms and schemes and select key search term combinations that would bound the study. We identified five of the leading organisations on REDD+ on which to focus the grey literature search including webpages of Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), World Resources Institute (WRI), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Proforest, and Norad/NICFI.

2.4 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

Overview

The findings from the peer-reviewed and grey literature are presented in terms of an overview of quantitative results from the literature and in qualitative narrative of key findings.

The peer-reviewed literature (189 papers) is clustered predominantly around MRV, governance issues such as participation, land tenure, benefits distribution, financing and poverty with less attention to issues such as additionality, leakage and permanence and on gender, RBF, private sector and ‘hands-off’ approach in both the peer-reviewed and grey literature. The peer-reviewed literature was grouped under three classifications for this review with 165 on ‘project/programmes’ of empirical nature and ‘national and regional’ empirically- oriented and case and country comparisons; and 24 on policy and theoretical literature.

The grey literature (187 papers) were predominantly on governance (85), including on financing, corruption, poverty reduction, benefit-distrib-

ution, drivers of deforestation and degradation, etc. A number of publications were also on technical aspects of MRV and Reference Emission Level /Reference Levels (35), but about half of these were of a theoretical character. Four grey literature publications were on RBF. But as with the peer-reviewed literature, in our sample we found no publications on additionality, leakage and permanence, gender, and ‘hands-off’ approach. Also the grey literature fell into three classifications: ‘project and programmes’, ‘national and regional activities’, including literature relating to ‘transferable lessons’ of similar schemes, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) and other benefit-distribution mechanisms of a similar character, and policy and theoretical studies. In general, a substantial share of the grey literature was more of a general or theoretical character (68).

Patterns and Temporal Distribution

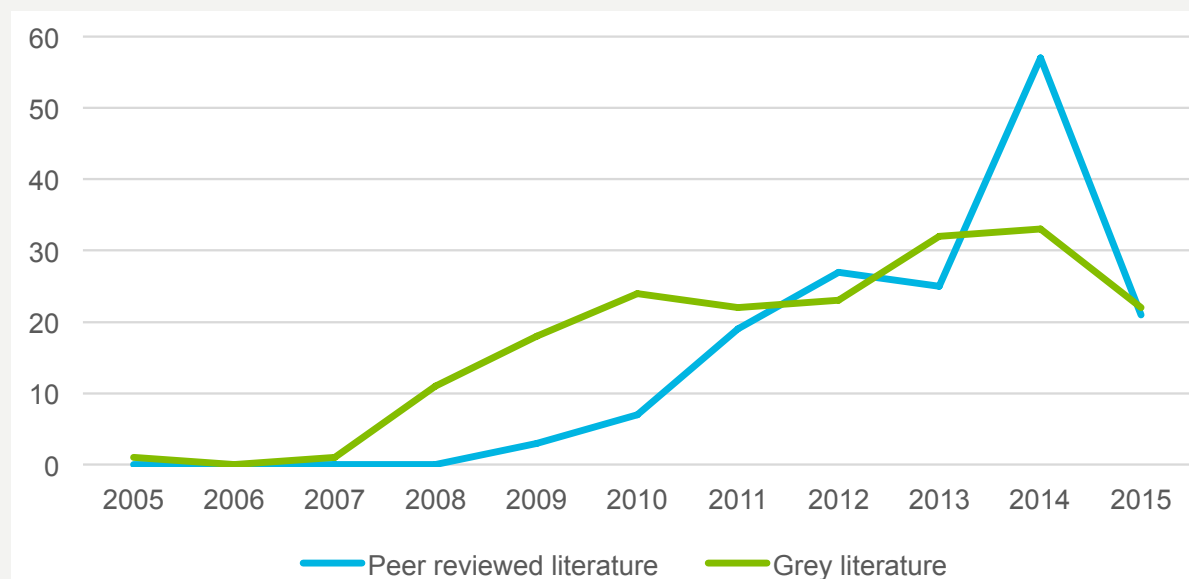
We examined in the sample the temporal distribution of the literature sourced. The number of REDD+ publications has steadily increased, from 1 registered publication in 2007 to a total

of 90 peer reviewed and grey literature publications in 2014. The volume of peer-reviewed literature has increased in relative terms as compared with the grey literature, which probably can be explained by the inherited inertness of the peer review publication regime. It was clear that publications on REDD+ have been on the increase over the years despite dips in certain years. It is important to note that the data for 2015 only covers the first 10 months of the year. See Figure 3 for the number of publications per year. This graph demonstrates that the size of the body of literature is growing consistently. It will be important to continue to assess the quality of this body of literature.

Geographical spread

We captured data from the sample on the continents and countries that are covered within the various REDD+ scholarship sourced for both grey and peer-reviewed literature. With grey literature (Figure 4) Asia was clearly in the lead (n=45) with Africa next with 31 papers. For the peer reviewed literature, publications from Africa were predominant (n=37) followed closely by Asia (n=34) and Latin America

FIGURE 3: TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF REDD+ LITERATURE



(n=30) (Figure 5). Some publications had more than one entry as they touched on different geographical areas and these were classified as 'global'. Key research institutions such as CIFOR being based in Asia can likely explain the different focus of the grey literature on Asia. The findings also demonstrates there is significant geographical focus on the countries where

NICFI engaging in implementing REDD+. There is a gap in the grey literature of comparisons/meta-studies of REDD+ and overall on Oceania (e.g. Papua New Guinea). However, overall it appears that there is a convincing body of evidence on the likely efficacy of NIFCI's work both globally and in the context of REDD+ countries.

FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF GREY LITERATURE BY CONTINENT

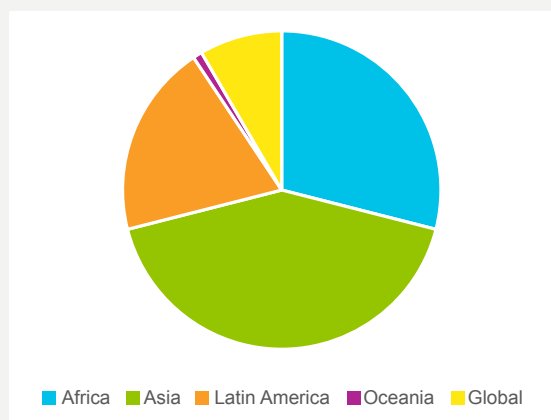


FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF PEER REVIEWED LITERATURE BY CONTINENT

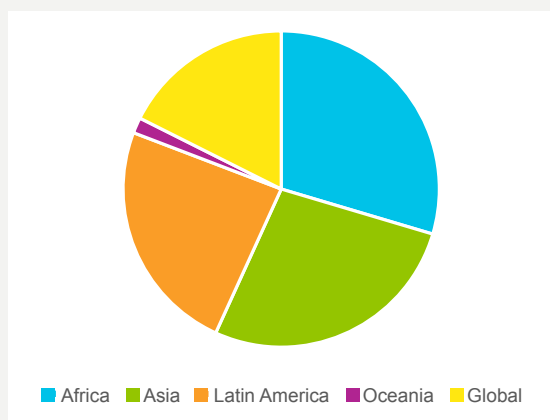


FIGURE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF GREY LITERATURE BY TOPIC

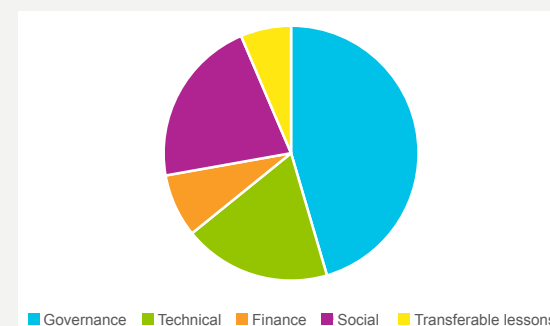
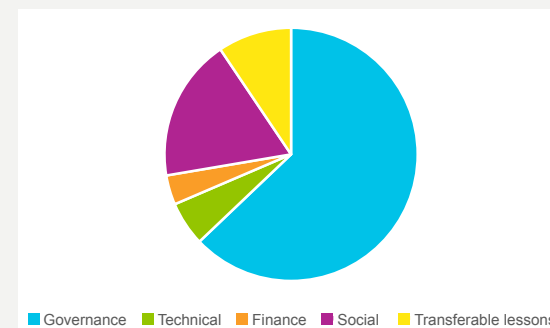


FIGURE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF PEER REVIEWED LITERATURE BY TOPIC



Main topics

In summary, the main topics of focus in both the grey (fig.6) and peer literature (fig.7) are governance, followed by social and technical aspects. This correlates with the outcomes of the matrix assessment and the interviews, which focused heavily on governance opportunities and challenges as an underpinning core to how to better implement REDD+. The contrast maybe a dominant perception of the tech-

nical carbon and MRV dimensions of REDD+ having a too dominant position in the REDD+ debate/discourse. The analyses demonstrate that within the REDD+ research this might not reflect the reality, since the bulk of REDD+ literature is within REDD+ governance. The findings also suggest that there is a consistency in the body of studies that point to convergence on topic areas.

2.5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Effectiveness

Effectiveness relates to **achieving the set objectives** (purpose), such as emissions reductions, environmental protection, poverty alleviation and development of co-benefits and behavioural change from REDD+.

Effectiveness of objectives – Globally, studies demonstrate that there is significant focus on the objective of Emissions Reductions (ER). There is less focus in the literature on environmental protection and poverty reduction or behavioural change in the context of REDD+. This is in line with REDD+ objective to the purpose of emission reductions. Norway's REDD+ initiative, as well as the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, is based on emission reductions being the primary purpose.

Experiences from large-scale forest PES in Vietnam also demonstrate a limited understanding of the meaning of the concept of PES amongst local communities. This is a major challenge for the effectiveness of such performance-based

schemes (Yang et al 2015). Environmental benefits of PES in Vietnam are also unclear (as is also the case in many other places), which raises the question of effectiveness of the set objectives and measures in terms of solving the issues at stake. The relevance for NICFI's REDD+ initiatives lies in the extent and in the cases in which action on the ground involves PES schemes. In many countries, REDD+ is similar to PES scheme, still that only involves the national transaction (payment for verified national emissions reductions), whereas means to achieve these emissions are any policies and measures that would lead to a sustainable development with particular focus on drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

Several studies have increased the global understanding of the role of peatlands in the global carbon cycle, and hence the special importance of such land for the effectiveness of REDD+ (e.g. Anshari 2010; Murdiyarto 2010; Comeau 2013). All of these studies are from Indonesia.

Cross-sectoral coordination and policy coherence – This is a major challenge for

effective REDD+ design and implementation. This issue is raised in many case studies from, for example, Indonesia, Mozambique, and Peru. The absence of the agricultural sector in REDD+ was for example identified as particularly critical in Peru (but is probably not limited to Peru) (Piu and Menton 2014); other essential areas that are also drivers of deforestation outside of the forest sector are energy and local economy and these sectors need to be included in terms of financial planning. This issue corroborates with key informant interviews where it was suggested that the coordination between different actors could be enhanced to create more effective engagement at inter-ministerial levels around REDD+ finance. Expectations of REDD+ in terms of public financial management and the competence of delivery of outcomes could draw further lessons about the experiences of overseas development assistance.

Additionality, **permanence and leakage** – With respect to the grey literature, there are few studies focusing on the key challenges of additionality, permanence and displacement in REDD+. This has been a major challenge

in the CDM mechanism (see e.g. Yananoshita and Amano 2011), and was early identified as potential challenges with REDD+ as well (See e.g. CIFOR 2008). Few studies, however, exist on what have been the experiences in relation to REDD+. The exception here are some studies on the displacement of regional timber trade in the Mekong region (e.g. Meyfroidt and Lambin 2009; Meyfroidt, Rudel, Lambin 2010). In the peer-reviewed literature, it was evident that reliance on existing community forest management institutions and mechanisms created an enabling environment for additionality to be achieved (Hayes & Persha 2010). However, since the institutions were already effective at forest protection, this implies that payments for additionality will be minimal relative to forests that are facing acute deforestation and degradation. Changing the source of community energy demand, promoting enrichment plantation (i.e. introducing seedlings into existing natural or managed forest stands) and raising awareness on forest fire management were the strategies adopted by some projects to ensure additionality. With respect to permanence, some projects employed MODIS for forest fires alert signals.

In Nepal, leakage plots were established and monitored by Community Forest User Groups (CFUG). Any resultant leakage was subtracted from the inventories taken; CFUG command and control actions including patrolling forests; bans on animal grazing; and tightening user rules in harvesting forest products. For additionality and permanence there was a case of total ban on tree felling and formation of fire patrols in the forests. In a different project, providing efficient kilns to charcoal makers was the means within which the project sought to reduce leakage and establishing woodlots for charcoal production (Fisher et al 2011). In Tanzania, the use and management of forests at landscape level, is discussed by Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG) as a way forward. From a theoretical standpoint, it is assumed that market access impacts the extent to which leakage arises. It also emerged from key informant interviews that there is still limited knowledge on environmental safeguards that ensure permanence and avoid leakage.

A complex and unresolved issue regarding permanence is the matter of whether state owned

land/forests, turned into conservation areas, are the best guarantee to stop deforestation or whether community lands are the most effective. The literature, with studies from Brazil (CIFOR) and Tanzania suggest that permanence can also be enhanced by the legal recognition of rights of villagers to therefore defend lands. To address permanence, the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG) is integrating REDD+ into traditional land use planning and participatory forest management. They are also introducing new agricultural technologies to improve livelihoods and in order to move farmers away from shifting cultivation. In addition, they are working to establish village land registries that will streamline and formalise rights over village forest areas.

Efficiency

Efficiency relates to quality of outputs with respect to time and costs (least waste-value for money). The most important outputs of REDD+ are the forest area of adequate quality and emissions reductions.

Balancing costs and results – The case of **Tanzania** demonstrates that there is a trade-off

between the costs and the provision of high quality data (Hojas-Gascon et al 2015). Here there is a lack of clear forest definition and forest data. This was also raised by a key informant who suggested that the way resources and time are allocated to know how a forest should be defined are a key concern to efficiency of REDD+. One expert maintained that including all tree cover inside and outside state forests in the way emissions reductions are accounted for, would be a helpful way to overcome the complexity associated with the headlock in definition of forests.

Studies from **Zambia and Vietnam** demonstrate that Community Based Monitoring (CBM) is a low cost, and if implemented correctly, an efficient way of providing on-the ground data of forest cover change (CIFOR 2014; Pratihast et al 2012; Palmer Fry 2011). In some pilots the literature shows that where communities are engaged, the outputs in terms of co-benefits include the outcomes of improved community forest governance. Some projects have demonstrated change in source of community energy supply, which has led to carbon sequestration.

REDD+ should take advantage and integrate community forest management institutions that are working well as this prevents the channeling of new resources into new institutions and processes. In other words, REDD+ designs have implications for social cohesion of communities.

Capacity building – Lack of enforcement capacities is commonly identified across all REDD+ countries including Brazil. Many countries, such as for example Vietnam (Vietnam Forest Protection and Development Fund 2014) and Cameroon (Assemble-Mvondo et al 2015), had previously existing benefit distribution systems that could be of value and built upon when establishing and introducing REDD+. This can increase the efficiency of REDD+ of implementation and investments. In the interviews, some experts also highlighted the need to find cost-effective ways to establish, implement, monitor and to build local capacity in REDD+.

This suggests that community involvement in REDD+ may be essential to achieve quality of outputs and finance is currently insufficient in supporting capacities across REDD+ countries. Nevertheless more efficient means may

be a partnership approach with the private sector. The literature looks at supply chains and networks, such as the Roundtable on Soy as an efficient way to include the private sector in partnerships e.g. in Brazil (Nepstad et al. 2013). ProForest and others have also been doing work on supply chains for certification of palm oil. There may also be scope for linking carbon to commodities such as cocoa. For example, in Ghana the work of the Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC) initiatives are working on efforts to build cocoa-carbon landscapes linking into local livelihoods with cocoa producers. Linking in the private sector through commodities may be a way to incentivize them to engage with carbon investments as seen in one report on capacity training of Asumura cocoa stakeholders in PES initiatives in Ghana (NORAD, 2013). In Colombia, the World Bank BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (ISFLP) also supports a large-scale scheme for reduced emissions from sustainable landscapes, where the links between farmers and private sector and developing sustainable supply chains of key commodities are key in achieving this objective. Capacity gaps have also been identified

in the literature around knowledge and information required for developing robust judicial and legal systems for REDD+. Capacity is also required for developing safeguards on the ground.

Measurement, Reporting and Verification

– Studies and publications on MRV range from the global, regional, national to local levels. Estimates of the potential of avoided global carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation demonstrate the potential of REDD+ as a low cost and competitive option as compared with other sectors (Kinderman et al. 2008). The NICFI 2011-2015 Real Time Evaluation of MRV processes demonstrate that efficiency of support varies. Guyana and to a certain degree also Democratic Republic of Congo are examples of successful support to building up a national MRV system. On the other hand, progress in Tanzania has been slow despite that it is the country that by far has received the most support for building up a national system (NORAD, 2013). Studies also reveal the global potential and importance of reducing emissions from peatlands, which is demonstrat-

ed in particular by the situation in Indonesia (e.g. Anshari 2010; Comeau 2013). In addition the literature shows the importance of regional initiatives for mapping the state of the forest, e.g. in the Congo-region (OFAC).

In cases where there is need for ground-truthing of national level data, several studies demonstrate that when villagers and locals have been receiving training in monitoring and measuring of carbon, this is as cost-efficient as when this is carried out by professionals. This is seen across **Nepal, Vietnam** and **Zambia** (Shrestha et al 2014; CIFOR 2014; Pratihast et al 2012). Processes have proved useful in deepening community understanding and knowledge, and the data that is generated is shared with the national REDD+ authorities. Communities are used to collecting data via ground-truthing and GPS. In the case of **Guyana**, data collected by communities was also used to monitor safeguards and Safeguard Information Systems in the future (Butt et al 2015). A study by Fry (2011) confirms the advantages of community based monitoring, in terms of reduced costs, enhanced ownership and institutional strength of design.

In order to make MRV practical and cost-efficient, it is prudent to commence with tackling the current key challenges. These include a need for flexibility in the system, capacity building, and improved national level systems (Mora et al 2012). A flexible system would advance learning and incorporation of lessons from experiences including the establishment of reference levels. Creating a flexible system would mean ensuring a stepwise approach that is neither too crude nor too sophisticated. Examples can be taken from countries like Brazil, which have a good carbon measurement system and Indonesia, which is investing in national carbon accounting. Ethiopia is also chalking success in practical and low-cost MRV (Bekele et al 2015). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has clear guidelines set out for MRV yet the knowledge and understanding of these guidelines can be limited among those national level authorities responsible for REDD+. Efforts to strengthen MRV may also be supported by investing in locally-available technology and GPS with training and use of interested local forest community members/Indigenous Peoples for data collection on the ground. Analysing and interpreting the

data would continue to be performed by those with necessary scientific capacity. The added value of community based monitoring integrated into a national system is the deepening ownership of the process. In the words of one interviewee: "Community-based monitoring seems to be an efficient and fairly accurate tool" and evidenced by a recent study that demonstrated successful efforts by local citizens to monitor natural resources, which found that citizens accomplished the task as effectively as trained scientists (Danielsen et al., 2014; Shrestha et al., 2014). Community monitoring and measurement of carbon and other benefits could also promote and further strengthen decentralized approaches to forest management (Vijge and Gupta 2014).

With respect to cost-effectiveness, exploring the reliance on open source data e.g. that made freely available by organisations such as Global Forest Watch, Google and Google Earth and FAO, would reduce the huge investments required for setting up MRV systems in REDD+ countries. This is, however, workable only if the guidelines

BOX 1: EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

Taking lessons from Guyana's process, strong commitment and political will are essential in developing a national MRV system. Much of this will and commitment is visible through the clearly defined and effective institutional arrangements and the stipulation of clear legal provisions on MRV including legal mandates to build stakeholder capacity at all levels for MRV in Guyana. Stakeholder capacity building by UN-REDD and NICFI funding has also helped progress MRV systems in DRC and Tanzania. While Indonesia has also received a great deal of funds for MRV from NICFI just as Guyana, its lack of a clear MRV institutional arrangements and enabling legal environment has stifled the national MRV system.

Further to building the stakeholder capacity for MRV, the process of knowledge sharing and exchange has proven to be critical within the Guyana and DRC national MRV processes. To facilitate such knowledge exchange, a multi-stakeholder approach is desired via MRV system steering committees. These committees and other governmental staff in charge of MRV should also have platforms available for engaging experts via international partnerships to deepen capacities. Such partnerships with international experts have proved very useful in Vietnam's approach to building a national monitoring system. The recorded benefits include the introduction of new and advanced technology as facilitated by NICFI and FAO in certain countries like DRC and Guyana (NORAD, 2013).

for MRV systems are designed to require minimum standards but that are not overly ambitious and complicated. In addition, the data sources and process should be transparent and public.

Instigating a 'learning by doing' approach in Vietnam and Indonesia has proved a valuable way of designing a national monitoring system (Sugardiman, 2012; Pham, 2012). Complementary

to this process is keeping the documentary evidence of the process on what worked and what did not work.

Equity

Equity refers to benefit distribution, risks, process, participation, governance and safeguards including roles and responsibilities.

REDD+ Governance – International research institutions, such as CIFOR, have provided valuable assessments, using the 3E framework, of REDD+ implementation at country level (e.g. Sills et al 2014). 3E assessments of readiness processes in different countries demonstrate that carbon effectiveness is highly taken into consideration, while cost-benefit efficiency considerations in many cases have been given less attention considering the poor governance contexts. Governance aspects and especially land tenure seem to be a commonly shared factor of concern in much of the REDD+ grey literature. The CIFOR review of subnational activities indicates that the lack of (global) funding (and prospects for) and the disadvantageous economics of REDD+ in many places hamper conditional livelihood payments. In the peer-reviewed literature gaps are identified around beneficiary mechanism designs, what payments mean for community cohesion, issues of safeguards and how they are implemented and monitored, and how to scale up community based monitoring.

Studies that came out from the grey literature review (CIFOR) show that media reviews are used as proxies for studying the REDD+ agenda and discourse, to see where emphasis is put in public discussions in different contexts. It appears that public awareness about REDD+, in many countries is relatively low exemplified by the cases of Peru, Nepal, Tanzania, Indonesia and Vietnam (Alvarez et 2014; Kweka 2013; Khatri 2012; Santoso, 2012). This may have significant relevance to the political ownership at the national level, in the REDD-country, where continued public and national level buy-in for REDD+ is necessary. Articles are few, but are in general optimistic about the idea of REDD+. Equity and effectiveness were the most important topics in the national discourse around REDD+. There is less focus on efficiency and negative issues, such as leakage, land tenure, and indigenous peoples' concerns. The situation is somehow different in the Indonesian case, where media attention is more controversial and critical, possibly explained by the stakes of REDD+ being higher (Santoso 2012). Several papers focus on the importance of the role of forests in linking mitigation meas-

ures with adaptation. Forests are key in many places in terms of regulating the hydrological cycle, for protection in extreme weather situations, and for livelihoods. Analyses of the drivers and political economy of deforestation and degradation show, however, that there is a wide gap between discourse and practice (e.g. Milne and Adams 2012).

REDD+ Leaders – There is a real mix of key leaders in REDD+ across the literature examined. The government agencies are mostly in control of REDD+ and lead on policies, whilst most projects are implemented by private parties (conservation NGOs, carbon investors, universities, research organizations) but also in collaboration with government in some instances. Communities are engaged in various means but more at project levels than policy level discussions. Communities are however strongest when they already have platforms that are part of a functional local forest institution such as in Nepal (Paudel et al 2013) or they have formed a body, group or association to engage in the REDD+ process. It is worthy to note that some community groupings as seen

in Tanzania's case of MUHIMA (association of 13 villages) are not as strong in engaging in practice as on paper. Most of the project leaders are organizations that were already working within the forest conservation space (Mustahlahti et al 2013).

Clarifying rights to land and carbon – Land tenure in general, and lack of respect of customary land rights and unclarified carbon rights in particular, have been identified in the literature as major issues for REDD+ implementation and benefit distribution. Land tenure has received significant attention within the REDD+ arena, but scholarship still portrays that there is much left to do in the area of clarifying and securing tenure and carbon rights. REDD+ is not a silver bullet but potentially it can be seen as a catalyst to push land reform. The literature suggests that secure tenure is an important imperative for improving effectiveness of REDD+. While tenure could be a beneficial outcome of REDD+ depending on how the financial mechanisms are established within the National REDD+ architecture tenure also has implications with respect to procedural equity. In some countries such as

Nepal, there are policy dilemmas as different legal frameworks confer rights around use and management of forests to different stakeholders. In some instances, people in communities without tenure such as migrant settlers have very little awareness and knowledge of REDD+ as they are deemed to be without rights and therefore excluded from the process. This even happens in certain communities that have local institutions set up to represent the members of the community. Studies from Latin America demonstrate that there could be lessons to be learned from Community Forest Management (CFM) in formalizing property rights to forest resources as a precondition for REDD+ (Cronkleton, Bray and Medina 2011). Nevertheless a more pragmatic perspective could suggest that the processes of reduction of emissions and rights to security will have to take place in parallel.

Managing risks – The study has taken a national/jurisdictional approach as an important principle. Still, dilemmas emerge at sub-national approaches around concrete implementation and piloting of REDD+ that are a risk to consider for national or jurisdictional entry point. For ex-

ample, the case of BioCarbon Fund in Colombia, the risk of people moving into the area/region is relevant. Similar issues pertain to many of the proposals submitted for ERPA approval under the FCPF carbon fund. Comparative studies of REDD+ pilots demonstrate that governance risks often are high in pilot areas, including issues of tenure insecurity, corruption, transparency, and local conflicts. Lack of participation is another factor raised in much of the literature. There is often a trade-off between carbon effectiveness and other co-benefits, such as poverty reduction and equity in benefit sharing. The risk of REDD+ becoming a perverse incentive has been raised, e.g. in the case of Indonesia. This could be in the form of people moving into areas for compensation. With respect to risks, elite capture, corruption, funds mismanagement and governments overriding rights and claiming benefits over carbon rights. Given that REDD+ is fashioned around a payment system, the unpredictability of land use makes it uncertain and risky venture that REDD+ may be discontinued by local communities once payments cease. The sustainability of REDD+ rests on being able to change behaviours and ways of human-forests

interactions, which at the moment is lacking in evidence from literature. Risks noted in studies are usually associated with communities or the environment.

Few studies on safeguards – Given the recent emergence of the issue of safeguards the literature is relatively limited. Nevertheless, countries such as Vietnam have made some progress in developing guidelines for Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) implementation, and Indonesia on developing MRV systems for safeguard implementation, but little documentation exists on countries' (and projects') progress in developing and implementing REDD+ safeguards. However studies mentioned the importance of safeguarding community livelihoods and rights and participation especially of marginalized and vulnerable groups. In Ecuador, UN-REDD was not offering financial support until the participation of local and Indigenes was ensured. Ecuador was therefore looking to contextualize the REDD+ Social and Environmental Safeguards (Krause et al 2013). How safeguards are implemented and monitoring of safeguards are still under-examined areas, except mention of

using audits in Nepal, and annual community accounts statement reviews in the case of Ecuador.

Policies and strategies – The Forestry Acts of most countries form a basis on REDD+ functioning. It is the case that countries can use reviews of the national Forestry Act to be more in line with REDD+ outcomes as a delivery under Phase 1 or Phase 2 in national agreements, but do not necessarily choose to do so. In addition, countries have or are developing REDD+ strategies facilitated by funding from the Forest Carbon Partnership Fund, UN-REDD and via bilateral partnerships. Countries like Indonesia with much more severe forest destruction have instituted other means to halt forest destruction in the interim, such as the forest and peat moratorium, which was a separate Government of Indonesia policy measure. Policies and strategies are nationally driven in the instances of bilateral arrangements with Norway based on the hands-off approach policy to development. Despite the advantages of such an approach, it raises the question of whether it gives developing countries the leeway to be less committed

to the REDD+ process; as witnessed with Indonesia.

Benefits – The literature examined had no detailed descriptions of how benefits sharing systems were designed. It was clear that projects adopted systems that differed from one place to another. The benefits sharing system in some cases was designed to pay those who contribute to carbon enhancement and in other instances was based on performance, though not certified emissions. In Ecuador for instance, communities were expected to have community investment plans pre-approved for benefits to be channelled into its execution. In other places like N'hambita in Mozambique, despite the payments going to individuals, a percentage was placed in a Community Trust Fund. The design of the benefits sharing system is still complex for many countries. What is clear is that the mechanism needs to consider all stakeholders to be affected by REDD+ even if they are migrant settlers without rights in order to avoid creating a socio-economic inequity amongst community members.

Beneficiaries range from community members who participate in the forest carbon project and save carbon, those who put in efforts to conserve natural ecosystems and in few mentions, the whole community as was showcased in Ecuador. Forms of benefits showed in literature are cash or a financing of a social, development or poverty-eradication related activity like in Nepal. Most studies are silent on who manages the benefits.

Experiences from benefit-distribution in other sectors, such as wildlife management and other forms of PES, demonstrate risks of high transaction costs, elite capture and recentralization of power. These are experiences that also are relevant for REDD+ development and implementation. Recentralization of power in forest management has been observed both in relation to REDD+ activities and similar incentive-based schemes, such as PES. Triangulation of approaches (not only cash, but also infrastructure development, social services, etc.) has in the case of PES in Vietnam proved to be important for promoting equity in benefit sharing. Several studies recommend stronger links between

REDD+ and climate change adaptation, as forests in many places are key for household adaptation and livelihoods (e.g. Pramova et al 2015; Pavageau et al 2014; Kengoum et al 2013).

Participation – NGOs have been key in pushing for space for communities and their organizations to engage in REDD+ implementation. However, in some cases, after accessing the space, the lack of capacity, finance and complexity of REDD+ limits meaningful engagement. There is an example of one NGO who advocated for space and was handed over the FPIC element, but due to inexperience and limited knowledge, failed to execute FPIC in the real meaning of its elements set out under UNDRIP. Global studies of perceptions of REDD+ governance as compared with CDM, demonstrate that REDD+ in general outperforms CDM. This counts particularly on issues of equality and ‘problem solving’, but also on transparency and democracy (Maraseni, T. N., & Cadman, T. 2015). REDD+ processes are also perceived at international level to be inclusive, but that not enough resources have been made available to develop meaningful participation processes.

A case study from Vietnam also demonstrates that there is limited room for participation in REDD+ processes nationally. In order to develop higher degrees of ‘inclusiveness’, a shift from top-down to more participatory processes is needed. More surprisingly, a study demonstrated that informants from the South in general valued the governance quality of REDD+ higher than those from the North, challenging predominant North-South divide perceptions in relation to climate change in general and REDD+ in particular.

The concept of equity is used and interpreted in different ways by different actors in different contexts. There is a problematic aspect to the fact that equity inherently is linked to economic compensation, while it is difficult to replace knowledge, skills and identities related to resource use (Rantala et al 2015).

Transferable lessons – Lessons from PES projects globally demonstrate the challenges of competing with the opportunity costs of highly profitable land use practices. Importantly also, such performance based activities also need to carefully take into account all costs and who

incurs them, such as transaction and implementation costs. High levels of carbon sequestration can be achieved via improved community forest management; with requisite training, communities are reliable sources of carbon inventory; it is possible to strive for more equitable benefits sharing by considering not only performance payments but also social needs. Co-benefits are also an essential part of a REDD+ process that can involve more communities into the REDD+ implementation. National monitoring systems can benefit from community monitoring via the type of data that can be gathered and the costs involved. The role of community forest monitoring must be formally defined and laid out. Implementing REDD+ at a national scale means capacity of government; civil society, local communities and other actors need to be built. REDD+ architecture that is multi-scalar needs to be designed and well spelt out. Socio-economic enhancement is critical to successful REDD+. Studies suggest that there is value and efficiency in using locals/indigenous stakeholders in REDD+ work. Undertaking large scale carbon estimates must include standard protocol that combines the satellite technology

with ground-truthing with communities. Community learning networks can play an important role in capacity building programs to enable knowledge and information sharing at the local level on community based monitoring.

3. Study B: Study of program theory/theories behind REDD+

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The final report of the first phase of Real-time Evaluations for NICFI (NORAD, 2014) noted that the major constraint on NICFI management, prejudicing internal programme coherence and synergies, and hindering decision-making was that: “[n]either a formally documented Theory of Change beyond an overarching narrative description, nor an associated results-based reporting framework has been developed...”. The report strongly recommended that these be developed, as a matter of priority.

In early 2015, NICFI prepared a strategic framework and a zero-deforestation theory of change (see Annex 6) and a simplified version (Figure 9) along with a narrative theory of change which was included in its 2015-16 budget submission.⁸

⁸ See 2015-16 Budget Submission. This narrative is broadly the same as the one included in NICFI's original budget proposal of 2008-09.

This chapter reviews NICFI REDD+ programme theory in the light of NICFI project and real time evaluation documents, interviews with key informants and the REDD+ literature with a view to fulfilling the following objectives:

- Clarify and elaborate upon the existing strategic framework and theories of change of NICFI, and those available for other REDD+ interventions
- Assess to what extent the existing theories of change and design of NICFI show the conditions necessary as described in previous studies, for achieving its stated objectives
- Assess the extent to which the theories of change and strategic framework have been informed by currently available information from research and implementation experience (*This includes findings from study A*)

Given the nature of REDD+ as a type of PES or Results-Based Payment (RBP), selected literature and key informant opinion on RBPs were also reviewed to explore the extent to which

it was reasonable to assume that RBPs would work in the context of REDD+. Observations are included in the text and a summary of the literature review is provided in Annex 7.

3.2 APPROACH

The preliminary meeting for these studies, held in Oslo in August 2015, made it clear that NICFI staff were already responding to the final recommendations of the first round of real-time evaluations (NORAD, 2014), and engaged in working up a theory of change and strategic framework for NICFI's REDD+ initiatives. Drafts and schematics had already been produced, and a theory of change was explicitly included in the budget proposal to the Ministry of Finance for 2015-16. Ownership of this work was firmly situated with NICFI and the approach of the study team was to help facilitate their processes.

This study thus began with a one-day Programme Theory Development Workshop for NICFI staff (15 September 2015), in which principles of programme theory and notions of programming “spheres of influence” were introduced and methodologies related to results chains explained and practised. The idea was to provide NICFI staff with a “lens and language” for describing their programme. The study team committed to reviewing the existing generalized NICFI programme theory and then to developing a “straw-man” version of it, based on the principles of programme theory discussed to provide NICFI staff with “something to think with”. Both are presented in Section 3.4 (Findings).

The approach taken for developing the “straw man” was to define programme theory⁹ so as to encompass the management approach to NICFI, as well as the essence of its change theory as drawn from available materials. This means that the results logic involved in setting up multi-

⁹ See the expressed need for the so-called Theory of change to ‘also cover’ the management approach to achieve NICFI objectives (see Real Time Evaluation 2014 op cite pg99). This suggests that what is being called for is actually a Programme Theory which has a broader scope than the traditional ‘theory of change’ – see Methodology section.

lateral and bilateral NICFI delivery arrangements will be included in the theory discussion – along with the core change theory related to influencing behaviours vis-à-vis RBPs and the ultimate linkage of these behaviours to overall development and emission reduction goals.¹⁰

The limitations to this effort included the following:

- The relatively complicated multi-party delivery of NICFI and REDD+ meant that consideration of both the theory of change and management arrangements would involve multiple results chains.
- The fairly recent and generally stated theory of change and strategic framework were not accompanied by an elaboration on the connection among key NICFI activities, outcome goals and objectives. Documents were also not explicit about the involvement of key parties including multi-lateral agreement signatories, other funding agencies, intermedi-

¹⁰ See Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004) who describe program theory as consisting of three main components: 1) the organizational plan 2) The service utilization plan and 3) the impact theory. The ‘straw-man’ model constructed for this study encompasses all three of these components.

ary groups in delivery (e.g. the UNDP, UNREDD, FCPF) national governments involved in binational agreements, civil society, the private sector and various other groups. Much of the work has to speculate on the details of how groups were intended to operate in the context of various bilateral efforts.

- Following from the above, the design of NICFI to support key groups was purposefully decentralized which led to relatively inconsistent record keeping with regard to documents supporting each initiative.
- The time allocated to the study was extremely limited, given the complexity and magnitude of the REDD+ investment, and the challenges in identifying and obtaining key documents.

In order to address these limitations the basic programme theory and results logic narrative presented are ones that can be adapted and adopted over time at all organizational levels. It is presented in modular form so that some elements can be switched ‘in’ or ‘out’ depending

on the circumstances.¹¹ Rather than an attempt to develop a definitive NICFI REDD+ programme logic, the team has constructed a somewhat more general model in segments to serve as a framework to link findings, assumptions and key factors affecting success. Additional segments could be added to examine any particular theme, or stakeholder group - as NICFI started with its Zero Deforestation pathways Theory of Change (see Annex 6) – such as small holders, or private sector actors. The intention is also to refine and adjust the model for each bilateral agreement and possibly even at a project (e.g. provincial pilot) level.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this section was to establish a basic programme theory for NICFI -REDD+ drawing on foundational documents like the strategic framework (January 2015), and narrative in the Zero Deforestation Theory of Change graphic (see Annex 6), the 2015-16

11 Note that in the full model there are three development phases – as per the 2009 REDD Options Assessment report recommendation. In order to address the reality of Brazil or Guyana for example some of the phases could be dropped from the overall framework to accommodate those unique situations.

budget request, other programme documents, based on this, and review of other documents such as UNFCCC and COP records for multi-lateral agreements, the 2009 REDD Options assessment, letters of intent and other refining documents for bilateral agreements and various other evaluations and reviews. Following one of the recommendations set out in the 2014 real-time evaluation (recommendation 2), the programme theory includes programme management arrangements as well as a theory of change (behavioural change expectations and assumptions). The overall conclusion from this effort was that the NICFI REDD+ initiative can be presented as a series of results chains¹² related to multilateral negotiations and intermediary support linked to three phases of REDD+ agreed at COP 16 in Cancun (and according to Angelsen (2013) best illustrated in NICFI's country partnership with Indonesia). The broad context for the programme theory includes the

12 Results chains have been described by the UNDP as the causal sequence for a development intervention that stipulates the necessary sequence to achieve desired objectives – beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes, impacts and feedback. In some agencies, reach is part of the results chain. It is based on a theory of change, including underlying assumptions. The version used here is derived from Montague, Bennett and Mayne as described in <http://www.pmn.net/library/results-chains-3/>

BOX 2: THE OBJECTIVES OF NICFI

*Overarching Development Objective:
Contribute to Norway's development objectives
of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.*

The Three Core Objectives of NICFI:

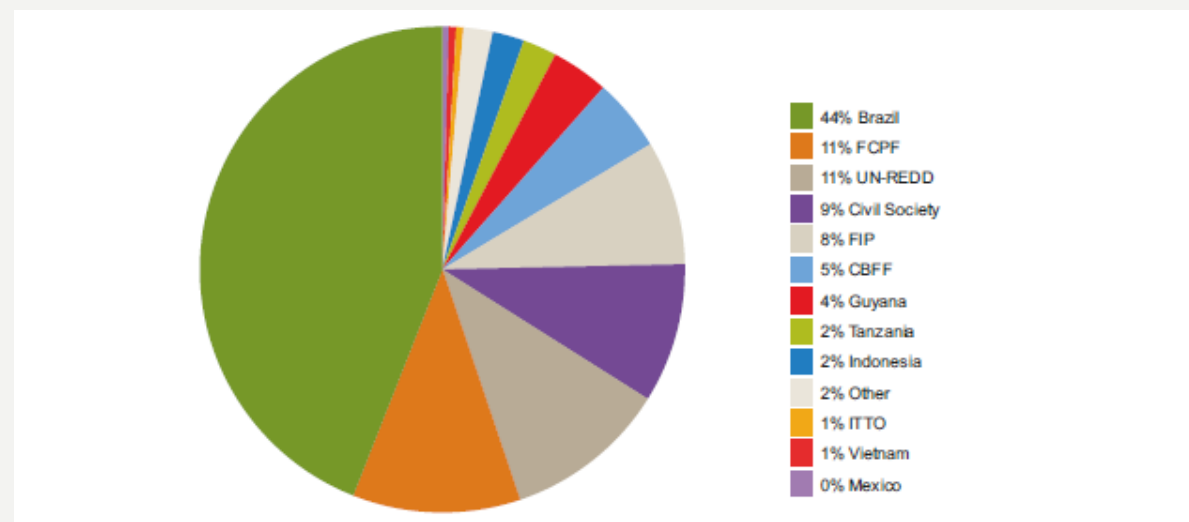
- To work towards the inclusion of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in a new international climate regime;
- To take early action to achieve cost-effective and verifiable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
- To promote the conservation of natural forests to maintain their carbon storage capacity.

overarching development objective and three core objectives of NICFI and the four work channels of the NICFI programme. Figure 8 shows the allocation of funding.

BOX 3: FOUR IMPLEMENTATION CHANNELS OF NICFI

- Activities focused on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations (inter-alia development of submissions; knowledge generation by supported initiatives and processes; consensus building research; offline workshops; funding of meetings) have been undertaken to encourage progress on the REDD+ elements of the UNFCCC negotiations (3%)
- Multilateral REDD+ Institutions (Congo Basin Forest Fund; Forest Carbon Partnership Facility; Forest Investment Program; UN-REDD Programme) are supported in order to engage REDD+ countries and other donors; establish an international architecture and framework for REDD+ readiness; and pilot RBP through multilateral market-based mechanisms (36%)
- Bilateral country partnerships provide an opportunity to demonstrate how REDD+ might work in a range of countries at different places along the forest transition curve (52%);
- Support to civil society organisations to generate needed knowledge; advocacy (international and political); piloting; and facilitate / enable implementation (9%). It should be noted that civil society plays an important role in implementation channels 1, 2 and 3 above.

FIGURE 8: NICFI DISBURSEMENTS 2008-2013 (NORAD, 2014)



3.4 FINDINGS

NICFI Strategic Framework 2015

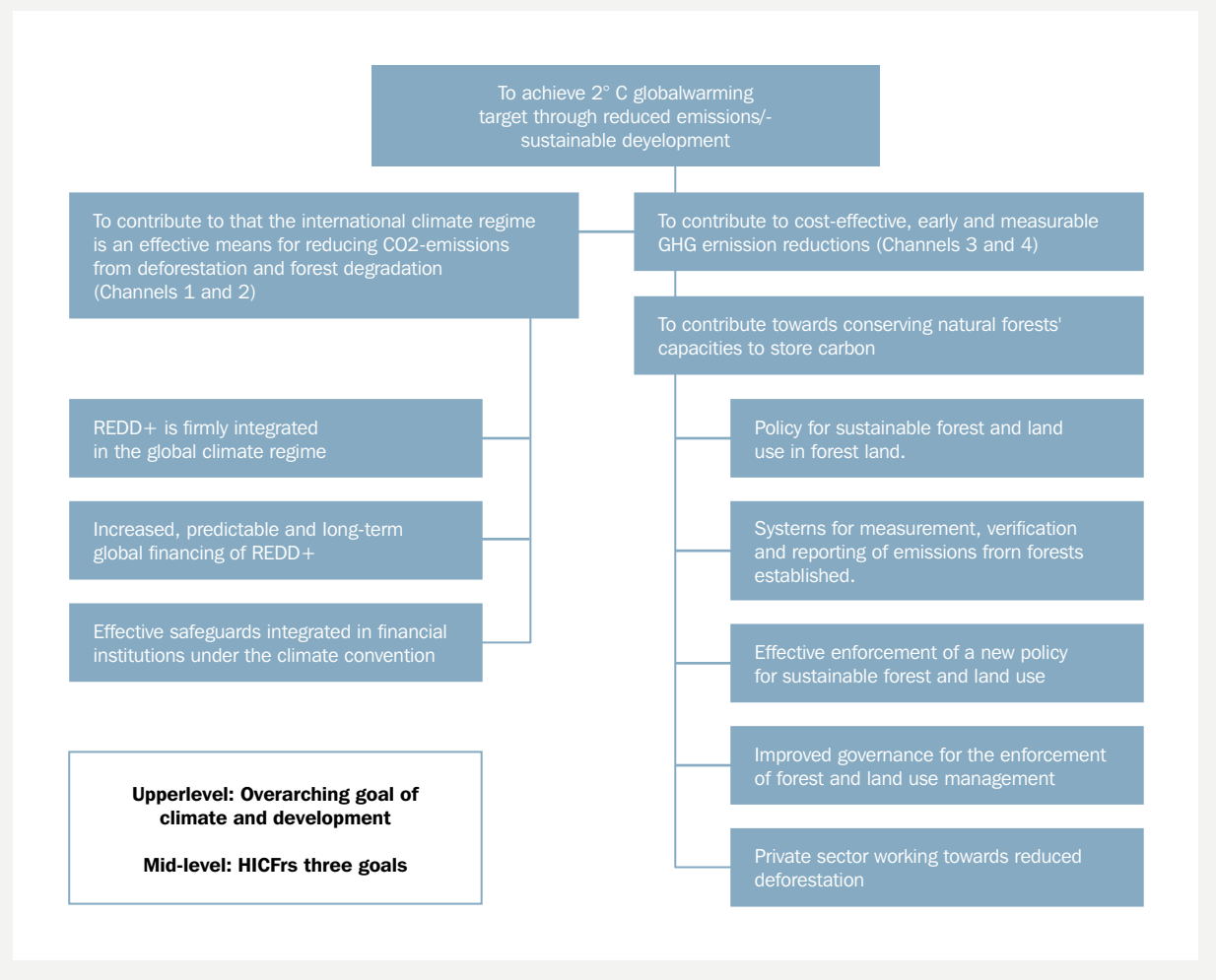
The strategic framework for NICFI and accompanying narrative included in the Budget Proposition for 2015-16, and the original budget NICFI narrative from 2008-09 were reviewed as the main sources for the present programme theory for this study. The strategic framework is presented in Figure 9.

The figure distils the overall objectives for NICFI into sustainable development and emissions reductions, and then sets out a series of eight 'milestones' or outputs leading to the objectives, which can be seen as related to the implementation channels noted above.

The strategic framework and accompanying narrative have the following strengths:

- It places the initiative within the larger picture of the UN strategy to slow global warming.
- The narrative discusses the ‘theory of the problem’ before discussing the logic of the activities and an expected sequence of results. In this way the discussion is put in the appropriate context. The theory states that there is market failure in that the forest’s actual value is not reflected in market transactions. It describes another failure as governance. Recent work on the New Climate Economy also notes a movement from market failure to policy failure. The mention of these two market failures is a very useful starting point to examine the theory of the NICFI REDD+ programming.
- The discussion notes a variety of strategies or actions to address the governance and market ‘failures’ which may be invoked.
- The piece suggests a framework in which to relate the results logic and theory of change.

FIGURE 9: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR NICFI (SOURCE: 2015-16 NICFI BUDGET PROPOSAL)



On the other hand, the theory of change, as expressed, faces a number of challenges and exhibits some opportunities for improvement, for example:

- The change model is somewhat unelaborated. This makes sense in some respects, because the nature of the initiatives is highly variable and the theories of change need to be elaborated at a country level. Nevertheless, some further elaboration would have been useful to understand what the intended sequencing of activities and results is supposed to involve. For example, there are elements of capacity-building which could have benefited from elaboration, especially given the findings of both the general literature and previous reviews and evaluations.¹³
- The main change mechanisms are not fully described. The narrative provides a list of possible ‘fundamental’ actions to change the economy and politics of national governments

¹³ Both the 2014 Real-Time evaluation and specific reviews such as the independent Gaia review of the Indonesian agreement in 2013 suggest that a lack of capacity has been a major barrier to progress.

to reduce deforestation, including “Financial incentives, such as payments for verified REDD”, and “Demand from the market for commodities produced without deforestation.” However, information is lacking on how these may be implemented (e.g. how will market demand be changed?) or why the mechanisms are expected to work. For example, given the situations faced in the various countries and communities, why should paying for results work? How does it make up for the market and/or governance failures? How is it expected to work in different contexts and conditions?

- The discussion does not elaborate on assumptions and key factors needed to allow the strategies to work.
- The discussion would benefit from an elaboration of the institutional arrangements and processes of implementation as well as the broader elements of the theory of change. While the theory of change narrative in the 2015-16 budget proposal lists fundamental actions and provides some details of financing

arrangements and potential fund structures elsewhere in the document, it remains unclear how these will be delivered. The budget proposal mentions that in response to recommendations in the NORAD (2014) real time evaluation, they will fund special envoys to select countries in order to increase NICFI ‘presence’, but it is not stated what particular weaknesses are being addressed and how the new resources are intended to improve delivery.

In summary, the existing depictions of NICFI's theory of change would benefit from more structured elaborations of the key results pathways expectations and processes involved in the programme – moving from the multi-lateral to the bilateral level. In this way, NICFI can be seen as a set of results chains, ultimately delivering the programme's dual goals of emissions reductions and sustainable development/poverty alleviation. Figure 10 provides a “straw man” depiction of this multi-stage theory. In the course of subsequent studies, this can be expected to be revised and elaborated on and complemented by an enhanced narrative and the discussion of important assumptions, factors and conditions. (A draft narrative and some key observed factors are suggested for each results chain in the following sections).

In Figure 10, the left hand column presents the seven steps in each results chain, and these are colour coded, reflecting NICFI's different spheres of influence:

- Control (green): i) NICFI inputs and ii) activities
- Direct influence (red): iii) engagement, iv) reaction v) capacities
- Indirect influence (purple): vi) behaviour/ practice changes
- Final outcome (blue) vii) benefit/result

Seven related and interlinked “results chains” are shown on the right:

- Establishing the multi-lateral international agreement on REDD+ (UNFCCC)
- Supporting intermediaries (e.g. UN-REDD, FCPF)
- Negotiating and building trust amongst key stakeholders in partner countries
- Phase 1 of REDD+: Readiness – enabling technologies, strategies and policies
- Phase 2 of REDD+: Transformation – implementation of key reforms
- Phase 3 of REDD+: Result-Based Payments for Emission Reductions
- Diffusion of successful practice to additional countries and regions

Many questions remain regarding the NICFI programme theory and thus the potential effectiveness of implementation on the ground. During the Programme Theory Workshop, the NICFI team identified five topics they felt required more in-depth analysis and consideration:¹⁴

- **Private sector:** The importance of the private sector as a stakeholder in REDD+ has been increasingly realised since the start of NICFI. Cultural relationships between what NICFI can do and how private sector can respond. In particular, what does it take to get big investors to change their behaviour and put money in the right place?
- **Gender:** Gender has been poorly integrated in most REDD+ strategies and programmes. A recent review of gender equality in NICFI (Fokus 2014) will provide material for considering gender through the lens of theories of change.

¹⁴ Initial NICFI review has not suggested changes to these topics, however it has been noted that the role of civil society should feature prominently in each of them.

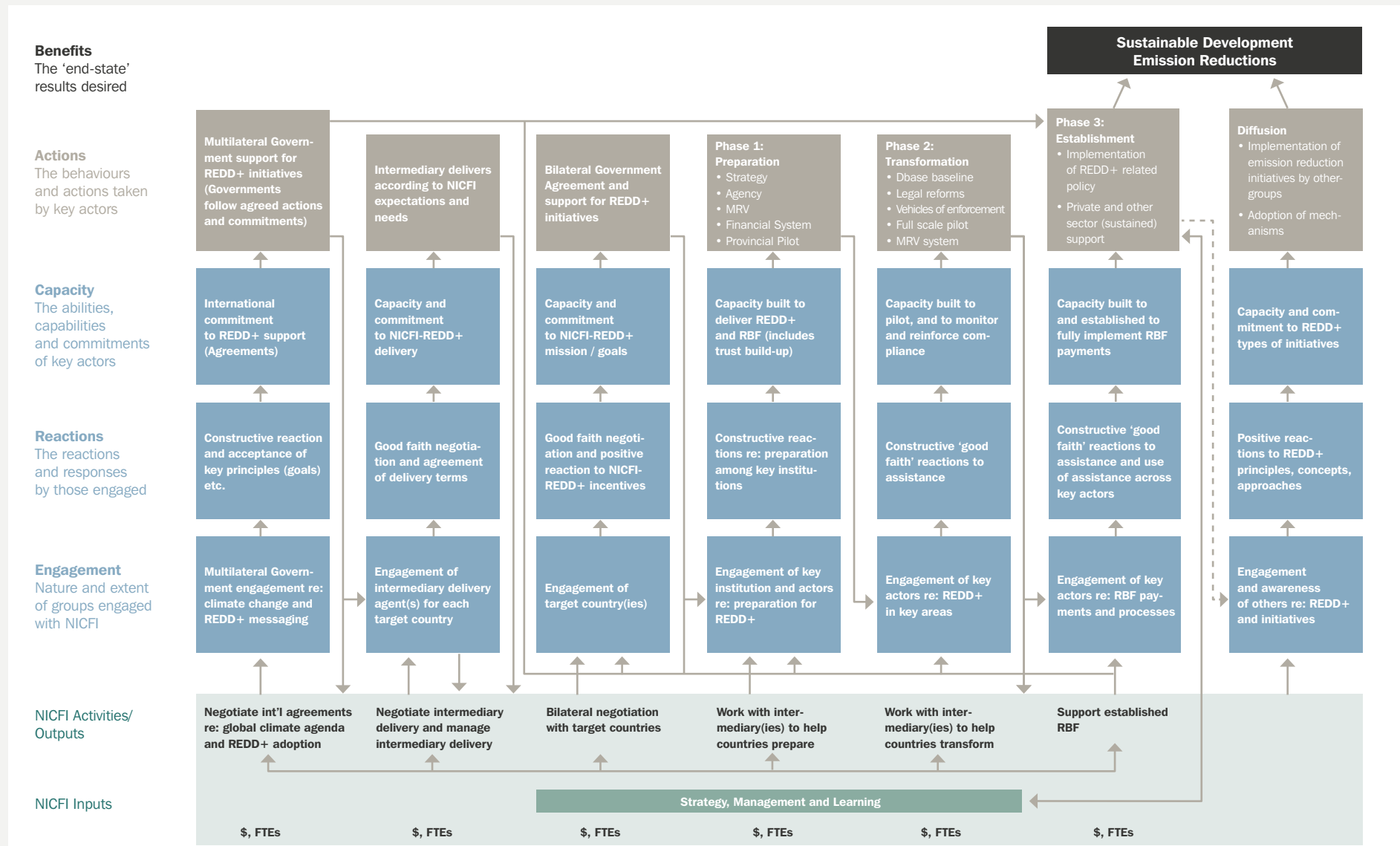
- **Tensions and synergies between NICFI's two objectives:** sustainable development/ poverty reduction and emissions reductions. It will be important to look at partner countries' priorities regarding emission reductions and poverty eradication/ economic growth.
- **NICFI's "hands-off" approach.** What can be achieved with the "hands off" approach and what requires "hands on"? What is the optimal mix?
- **Results Based Financing** (or Results Based Payments):
 - > Attribution – (how) do RBPs translate into REDD+ decision making? What are some key factors?
 - > Why have some countries not made it to implementation? What have been the important barriers?
 - > Given countries never make it to that final phase of RBPs, how does one undertake the long-term reform work needed in such countries?

- > Are there inherent elements of RBF-RBP (e.g. top-down accountability and management requirements) that may work against the cooperative engagement, take-up of and commitment to RBF in certain countries and communities?

Questions 1, 4 and 5 above are discussed explicitly in the next section vis-à-vis various results chains. All questions will be considered in relation to future study topics.

The figures and discussion following Figure 10 include – for each results chain - a description, observations, assumptions and factors affecting the success of the results chain as well as implications for future study. The same core question was considered for all chains - both separately and as a whole: *What works (to what extent), for whom, in what conditions and why?*

FIGURE 10: NICFI-REDD+ 'STRAWMAN' IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY ELEMENT OF PROGRAMME THEORY BASED BROADLY ON THE INDONESIA CASE*



*Note this strawman model has been developed using preliminary information and is intended for illustration only. The intent is that a model of this type will be developed with an accompanying narrative and the discussion of important assumptions, factors and conditions influencing success as part of the completion of Study B. Note that even upon completion there will likely be the need for constant review, revision and update.

Reconstructed Theory of Change for NICFI

This section presents a discussion of our draft reconstruction of a theory of change for NICFI. The body of this is broken down into the seven results chains comprising the overall strategic framework. For each, a description of the main steps is provided, followed by some observations from global REDD+ experience on how the chain works, and reflections on the implications of those observations. This modular approach is preceded by some reflections on the overall programme theory for NICFI.

Overall

The literature, NICFI documents and key informant consultations suggest that some broad contextual factors can be seen as affecting, and having had effect on, the overall programme theory for NICFI/REDD+. A number of these are listed below:

- Many of the steps in the results chains for REDD+ are beyond the control or sphere of direct influence of the NICFI programme. The NICFI 2015-16 budget proposal notes that RBPs are to be made based on verified emission reductions using a ‘robust’ system to measure and verify results. The theory of change also states that appropriate actions must be determined by national countries “themselves”, leaving the recipient largely free to find its own implementation solutions. This is reinforced by NICFI’s “hands-off” approach, which intentionally engages a minimum of staff, both in Oslo and in the partner countries, in order to promote ownership and minimise programme administration costs. However this approach reduces NICFI’s capacity to monitor developments and exert

“direct and indirect influence” on the ground. The rationale for the hands-off strategy is that it respects the sovereignty of partner countries. However, given that REDD+ engages a broad range of stakeholders nationally and is not exclusively a government initiative, and that typically other REDD+ donors are active in any one country, this rationale is not particularly strong and a more hands-on approach could be considered. Specific results chain observations further address this notion (see chains 2 and 3).

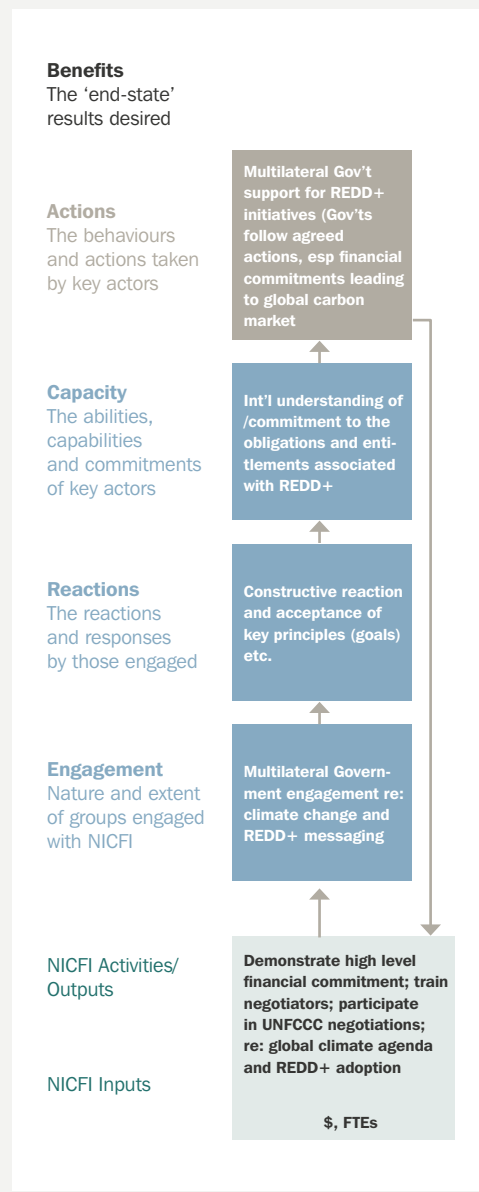
- The need to address market and governance failures – i.e. that current incentives mean forest land is better converted to other uses and that current institutional oversight for promoting REDD+ related reforms may be in the hands of those with a vested interest in “business as usual”.
- The assumption that at a global level, the mitigation of climate change is essential to sustainable development – thus action on REDD+ automatically fulfils Norway’s development objectives. However, at the local level,

this may be too abstract. Although NICFI supports local development-oriented activities through its civil society funding scheme, no intervention pathways directly promote NICFI's development objectives. Despite the apparent "aid-ification of REDD+" (see below), there is a worrying tendency to equate "social safeguards", that are predicated on "do no harm" and require only weak compliance, with actual development outcomes.

- Failure to establish a functional carbon market has led to the "Aid-ification" of REDD+. ¹⁵ This may influence the ability of NICFI phased initiatives to transition from relatively unconditional funding to conditional funding (see observations in results chains 1 and 5).

¹⁵ <http://blog.cifor.org/9583/the-aid-ification-of-redd-how-its-changed-and-why-it-matters?fnl=en>

FIGURE 11: MULTI-LATERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR REDD+



Description:

This results chain relates to the establishment of an international climate regime that incorporates REDD+ as a key instrument of climate change mitigation and provides for its sufficient, long-term and predictable funding. NICFI's main input has been its headline financial commitment of NOK 3 billion per year which is expected to catalyse commitments from other countries. NICFI also provides training to negotiators from Norway and partner countries. The UNFCCC COPs, SBSTAs and other events provide the main fora for engagement, and broad-based Annex 1 and Non-Annex 1 country participation is expected. There is an expectation that all countries will constructively engage and accept key common principles and approaches and make substantial commitments to support REDD+ and complementary initiatives. The UNFCCC processes generate a keen understanding of the obligations and entitlements of different countries relating to REDD+, enhancing capacity and commitment to the mechanism. Annex 1 countries are expected to follow through on their commitments with supportive actions, to increase the predictable and long-term global financing of REDD+ and to ensure effective safeguards are integrated into financial institutions under the climate convention. All of this provides the framework for specific bilateral initiatives.

Observations, Assumptions, Factors, Conditions:

International negotiations are typically laden with compromise in order to generate texts acceptable to all parties, and REDD+ is no exception. Annex 1 countries are keen to get an agreement, but avoid making the emission reduction commitments that would provide a basis for sustainable carbon markets; non-Annex 1 forested countries are keen to minimise the conditions attached to any RBPs. Importantly, while multiple actors have signed on in agreement to things like COP principles and agreed phased approaches, there is little evidence of consistent follow through on these items, and there is much evidence that signatories have not lived up to their financial or emissions reductions commit-

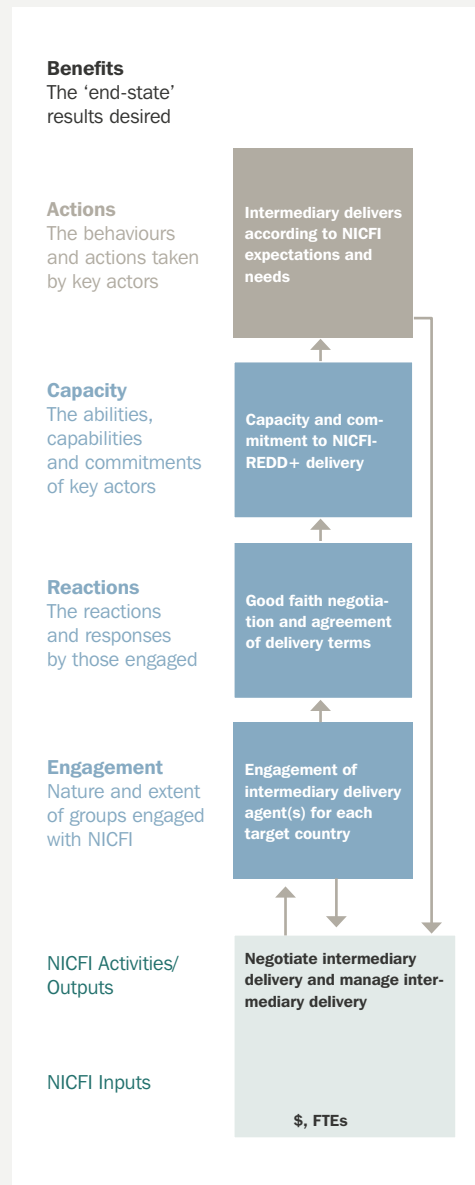
ments (see Study A). The hoped for Cap and Trade (CAT) system that would provide sustainable funding has not materialised, and meanwhile, REDD+ has evolved and become much more than simple emissions reduction, with the inclusion of numerous social and environmental objectives.

According to Angelsen (2013) and others, funding for REDD+ has not been successfully sustained in the climate change portfolio or carbon markets and now comes from multilateral and bilateral aid budgets, bringing with it multiple objectives relating to development, poverty reduction etc. It is suggested that this 'aid-ification' of REDD+ may influence the results payment 'culture' or orientation.

Implications:

Though a good 'idea', REDD+ has proven to be very complex, requiring huge sums of financing. Actual funds disbursed for REDD+ do not match the finance pledged by Annex 1 countries and multilateral agencies, leading to a funding deficit for establishing REDD+. Although Norway's bilateral funding commitment to partner countries is substantial, it is not sufficient to sustain REDD+ in the absence of a sustainable and predictable international funding mechanism. The linkage of NICFI-REDD multilateral initiatives with bilateral messages would appear to be an important topic for further study.

FIGURE 12: CHAIN 2: INTERMEDIARIES DELIVER SUPPORT ACCORDING TO NICFI REQUIREMENTS (STANDARDS)



Description:

Programmes such as UN-REDD and FCPF are instrumentally involved in supporting forested countries to deliver on REDD+ and to developing the international architecture for REDD+, and in some cases are supporting the delivery of bilateral programmes in targeted countries. The expectation is that there is a constructive engagement of such groups, their good faith negotiation and agreement of delivery terms, capacity and commitment to NICFI/REDD+ delivery and objectives, and that intermediaries deliver according to NICFI expectations and the needs of the mission. In addition to enabling the bilateral agreements to work, the use of intermediaries is intended to help insulate the process from corruption.

Observations, Assumptions, Factors, Conditions:

Past evaluations have not reported problems in the alignment of intermediaries with the goals of NICFI, however the 2014 Real Time evaluation notes that “while Norway has played a leading role in establishing the multi-lateral architecture to support REDD+, its hands-off approach has allowed the multilateral institutions considerable leeway in developing processes and practices.”¹⁶ The report goes on to suggest that the architecture is overly onerous and risks creating a misperception that the main beneficiaries of REDD+ are multilateral institutions, and that “the lack of documented guidance, developed and agreed to by all actors, in our view creates undue opportunities for NICFI aims to be “interpreted” on the basis of individual or departmental perspectives. A review of FCPF readiness at a country level conducted in 2011 also suggested that arrangements are missing a number of fundamental elements and lack clarity in administrative procedures. The difficulties experienced getting countries to achieve Phase 1 and 2 objectives in a timely fashion may partially reflect the fact that when differing agendas are present there

can be a risk of delivery deviation, especially when monitoring and governance decision-making may not be as routinely exercised as desirable. Recent attempts to engage key local stakeholders have been noted in Study A, which may improve the collective common agenda – though no formal reviews of this process have yet been conducted.

According to some consultations there has been a problem with intermediaries in some cases acting to centralize and serve powerful central figures.

Monitoring was noted as a weak spot by some informants, and has been noted as a consequence of the lack of results-based frameworks and theories of change by the 2014 real time evaluation. As noted above however, it would also seem probable that intermediaries used their leeway to do less than optimal monitoring in all phases. This suggests that the delivery design of working through intermediaries is missing a key requisite - strong monitoring and adjustment capacity.

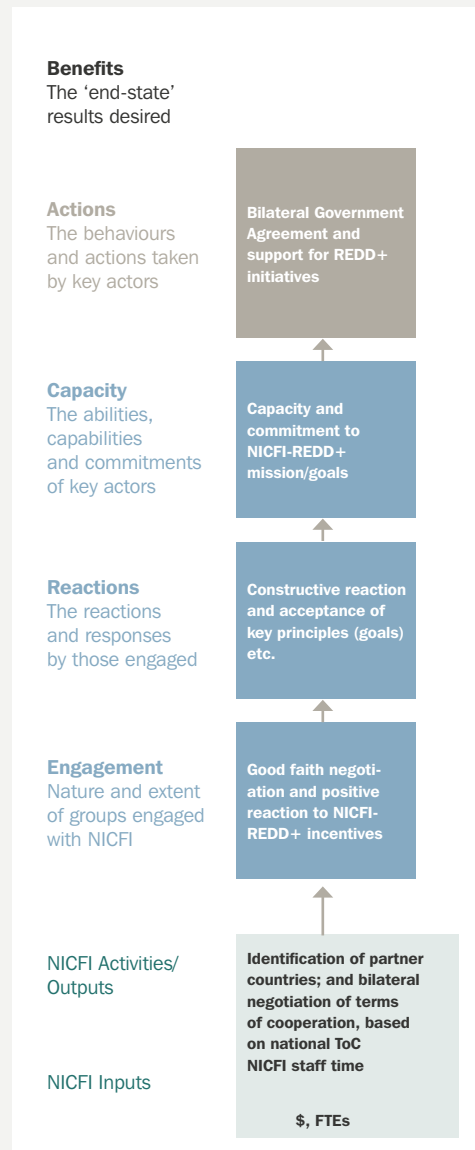
Implications:

An approach which allows a relatively flexible early engagement and delivery process to develop needs a strong M&E and compliance component to ensure the activities stay on track. Evidence from Study A suggests that community-based approaches enhance effectiveness. Likewise, it appears that true independence and clear authority to monitor and withhold payments are important.

The use of intermediaries intensifies the already “hands-off” approach of NICFI and does not seem to correspond well with the need noted by some informants for closer relationships and understanding of local conditions and needs, by NICFI and its agents in delivery.

¹⁶ See Real-Time evaluation of NICFI Synthesis Report Executive Summary page xxvii

FIGURE 13: CHAIN 3: BILATERAL GOVERNMENT AGREEMENTS AND SUPPORT FOR REDD+ INITIATIVES



Description:

NICFI identifies partner countries for REDD+ piloting and then negotiates bilateral agreements on the process and content of REDD+ actions, that will eventually lead to RBPs for emissions reductions in that country (see results chains 4-6, below). NICFI recognises that theories of change need to be developed for each partner country. The main input in this chain is NICFI staff time. Bilateral negotiations with target countries require the engagement of those country officials, their good faith negotiation and positive reaction to NICFI/REDD+ initiatives, mission and goals and finally to their capacity, commitment and support for the 'phased' process leading to RBP.

Observations, Assumptions, Factors, Conditions:

NICFI endeavoured to develop a portfolio of partner country programmes reflecting a range of national contexts for REDD+. NICFI was committed to getting partnerships with Brazil and Indonesia, as two of the biggest TRF countries with high historic rates of deforestation. Tanzania was selected based on Norway's long history of development cooperation and as an example of a tropical dry forested country. Guyana was selected as an example of a highly forested country with low deforestation rates, where REDD+ would provide incentives for them to maintain this state (Angelsen 2013).

There is a question as to whether NICFI has sufficiently deep understanding of the partner countries with which it engages and sufficient staff to elaborate a meaningful theory of change at a national level and facilitate the REDD+ process. Study A found a lack of understanding on forest management and the drivers of deforestation in DRC and Guyana. Further, Norway has no diplomatic mission in Guyana, and no history of development cooperation. With all its partner countries, there is an assumption that NICFI can operate effectively in a "hands-off" mode with only one or two staff members in country. This strategy promotes partner country "ownership" of the REDD+ project, but limits NICFI's capacity to understand and facilitate key processes.

Key informants note that in some cases there has not been an enabling legal and policy environment within which to establish

an agreement for phased capacity building payments. Institutional readiness – especially related to integrity, rule of law, property rights and institutional jurisdictions - is fundamental to the establishment of successful bilateral agreements.¹⁷

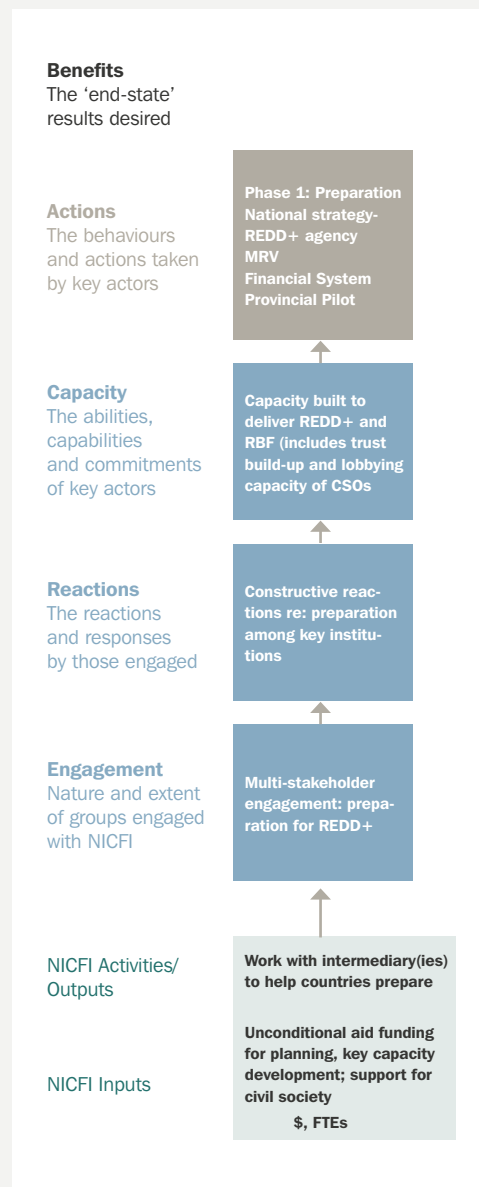
Informants and the findings of Study A also identify the need for more complete engagement and true 'buy-in' of civil society, private sector and local communities in REDD+ initiatives. For this, a "co-investment" paradigm of the pursuit of mutual self-interest among all stakeholder groups may prove more effective than one of compliance with a legal framework.

Implications:

NICFI can strengthen its approach to the selection and negotiation of new bilateral agreements. For existing partnerships, a more 'hands on' approach by NICFI management, to design, facilitate and oversee investments, may speed up progress through the three Phases discussed below, by enabling, at the outset, better contextualization of strategies, arrangements and expectations, and, in the longer term, more targeted support to progressive stakeholders and more timely identification and response to bottlenecks. This option merits further study. Study A found limited literature on the effectiveness of REDD+ partnerships – suggesting research on how to build effective bilateral partnerships from the experience of aid/development is merited. Research is also indicated on how and where a "co-investment" paradigm for mutual self-interest can play a role in NICFI REDD+ evolution. Are there certain minimum requirements that NICFI should consider when selecting and negotiating a bilateral action, which directly consider the interests of key stakeholders as 'co-investors'?

¹⁷ The review of the second deliverables of the Indonesia-Norway partnership (Gaia, 2013; 3.2) reports that the original LOI and JCN timelines were naïve given the scale of reform that was to be attempted. It suggests that the scale of reform might have been too ambitious and was "bound to challenge the absorptive capacities of some of Indonesia's key institutions". It suggests that entrenched institutional vested interests were too great (notably palm oil) and that there would be resistance from the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry who perceived that they would "lose many powers to a new REDD+ Agency" – as well as incurring redundancies (Gaia, 2013, section 3.2).

FIGURE 14: CHAIN 4: PHASE ONE “READINESS”



Description:

Phase 1 of the idealised NICFI/REDD+ process (see Angelsen et al 2009) is the “Readiness” phase, delivering strategic planning, and capacity and institution building. National REDD+ strategies are established that identify the main drivers of deforestation and how they will be addressed, including any policy and legal reforms required. A national REDD+ agency is established. Key technical approaches and capacities are built, such as for MRV, and financial control systems established. At this stage the engagement strategy is of utmost importance: main stakeholder groups and institutions, which may include public, private and civil society members, need to be mobilised to explore important issues and solutions, and constructively build capacity and commitment to deliver REDD+ and RBF. Pilot projects are established to field test these components. This chain also includes the build-up of trust and commitment. Following the successful completion of this planning phase, implementation can begin.

Observations, Assumptions, Factors, Conditions:

Evaluations and reviews suggest that the Phase 1 process has taken much longer than expected in NICFI initiatives.¹⁸ Contributory factors include stakeholder engagement, relationships, political economy, governance, technology development, and capacity.

In Indonesia, initial development of REDD+ through UN-REDD and FCPF were largely in-house MoF exercises, and the considerable experience of the EU’s FLEGT initiative in establishing multi-stakeholder fora for the negotiation of national strategies was overlooked. An extensive effort was needed to get the breadth of stakeholder engagement wanted by the international community, thus preventing elite capture and the disadvantage of forest dependent communities. Much of this

¹⁸ For example, see NORAD (2014 op cite pages 92-93) and Gaia (2013) which note that in Indonesia, as of 2013, only two of six deliverables foreseen in Phase 1 (initially for completion by 2011) had been completed by November 2013.

engagement, however, remained at national level, and capacity building and buy-in to REDD+ objectives from the districts, where the trade-offs between REDD+ and deforestation driven development take place, has been less strong, particularly in non-pilot provinces.

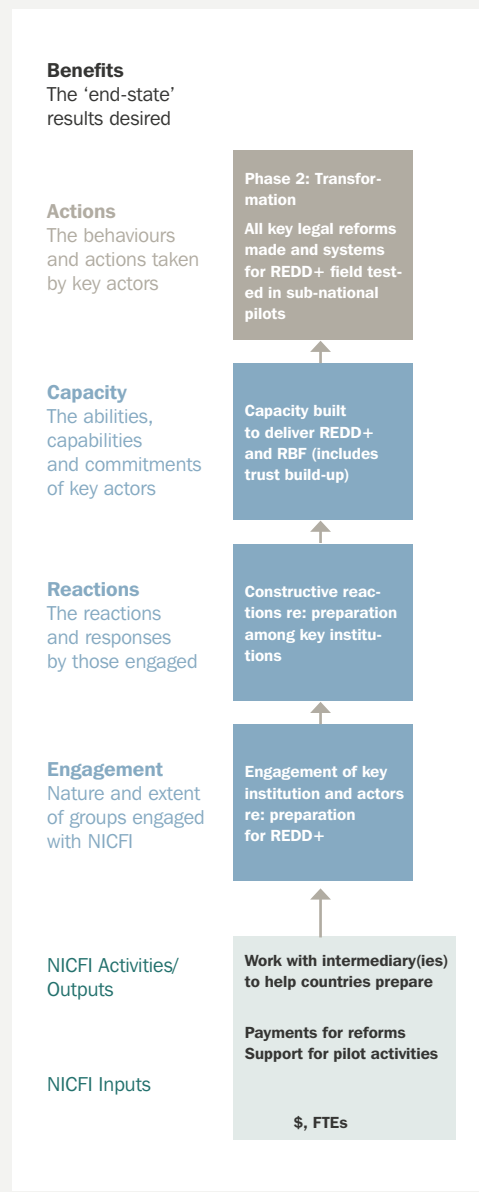
Only lately has serious attention been paid to the role of the private sector in REDD+. Study A found that the literature on private sector involvement identified supply chains and networks, such as the Roundtable on Soy, as effective ways to include the private sector in REDD+ initiatives.

The readiness of groups to adopt sophisticated MRV techniques and methods was questioned by some informants and also noted in Study A findings. It is necessary to assess capabilities (the technical readiness) and the distance to be travelled in terms of adoptions before setting up Phase 1 readiness goals and deadlines. Less sophisticated alternatives, such as community-based monitoring, are proving effective (see Fry 2011). According to Angelsen (2013), Phase 1 support is essentially provided without performance conditions, much like routine development assistance. This arrangement aligns the interests of donors eager to spend money, and recipients eager to receive money, but reluctant to reform, and may account for the unnecessary prolongation of Phase 1.

Implications:

Some issues need to be more fully considered when outlining a phased approach to the capacity building required for results-based financing for REDD+, including incentives for timely completion of Phase 1 objectives and ensuring that real engagement and change take place at sub-national levels. A study to re-think the strategies and options for conditionality in Phase 1 appears warranted.

FIGURE 15: CHAIN 5: PHASE TWO “TRANSFORMATION”



Description:

Phase 2 of NICFI is the beginning of REDD+ implementation – essentially implementing the national REDD+ strategy. It aims to get the systems that were planned and established in Phase 1, effectively up and running, in anticipation of Phase 3 RBPs. –This typically involves continuing to work with the key actors from Phase 1 at national and sub-national levels, garnering their constructive support, drawing up and passing the legal reforms, operationalizing new technologies (like MRV) and institutions. Some of the funding in Phase 2 conforms with “conditional aid”, predicated on the successful implementation of planned reforms.

Observations, Assumptions, Factors, Conditions:

Evaluations and consultations suggest that the Phase 2 process has also taken much longer than expected in NICFI initiatives – to the point where real transformation has yet to occur in any of the initiatives conducted so far. The same factors delaying Phase 1 appear to be at play, despite more conditions being attached to the support. Some informants suggested that recipients may be stringing proceedings along without a strong intent to achieve true RBP status.

Angelsen (2009) saw Phase 2 as a transition from relatively unconditional (aid-like) funding delivered in Phase 1 to conditional payments for reforms. The experience so far suggests that this has been difficult for Guyana (albeit Guyana has kept deforestation rate very low) and Indonesia. This may relate to the inherently greater challenges of Phase 2 (e.g. needing to fully institutionalize the results payments mechanism and develop enforcement measures etc.) and it may have to do with the heightened pressure for results intended as part of the Phase 2 design.

Angelsen (2015) notes the annual “disbursement pressure” experienced by donor organisations, which may lead them to settle for less than promised by partner countries in the way of implementation of reforms, in order to get their money spent. Many partner countries have long experience with devel-

opment cooperation and are well aware of these pressures and well-practised in playing the donors.

REDD+ in Indonesia is taking place in the context of the “big-bang” post-Suharto decentralisation of 2001 which finds the central government coming to terms with a much reduced influence over developments in the districts. REDD+ thinking at national level is not necessarily well-received or used at district level. Sub-national pilots focus more on getting local MRV systems working, selling carbon credits and delivering benefits to local communities, than to the design and implementation/enforcement of key policy reforms on land-use planning, needed to address the drivers of deforestation.

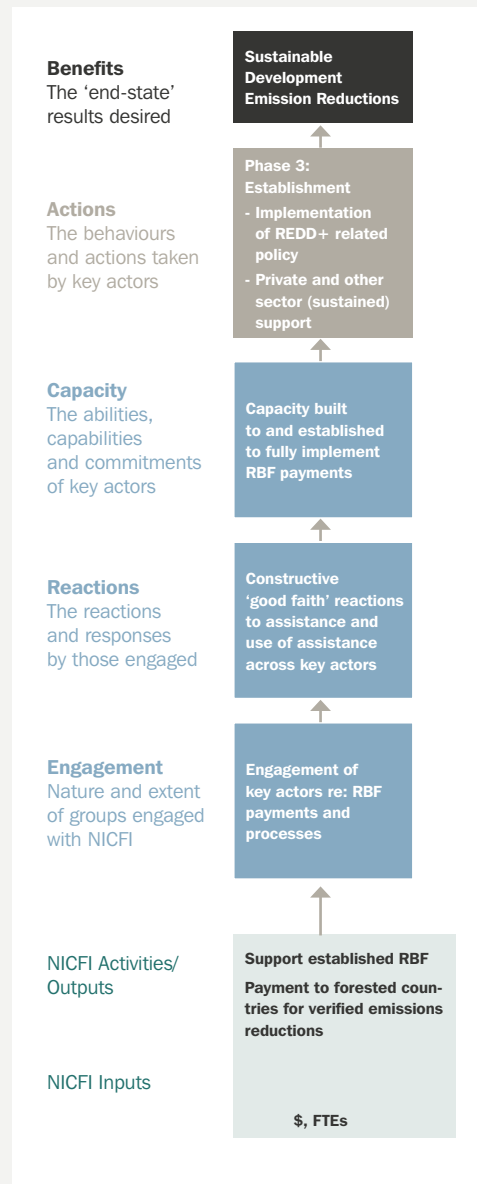
Implications:

Again, there appear to be factors that need to be more fully considered when outlining a phased approach to the institutional arrangements and capacity building required for results based financing for REDD+. There may need to be clearer, time delimited “gating” in project management to ensure that recipients are incentivised to move forward to true RBF. Another implication is that there may be a more limited range of circumstances in which RBP can be successful than originally anticipated.

Future studies could include an examination of just how hands-on NICFI should be when supporting and assessing ‘transformation’. How can the programme design enhance the process? From what has been seen to date, is Phase 2 the point at which hard realities finally hit that in some cases countries are just not going to change over to a full REDD+ focus as originally envisioned?

Further study would be useful on the extent to which sub-national pilots have adequately tested key processes needed for national level success with REDD+, including land use planning and law enforcement. What can be done to enhance the value of these pilots?

FIGURE 16: CHAIN 6: PHASE THREE “ESTABLISHMENT”: PAYMENT FOR RESULTS”¹⁹



Description:

Phase 3 of NICFI is established payment for results. At this point, the engagement of key actors and their constructive support is sustained through RBPs.

This will typically involve consolidation or integration of sub-national pilot initiatives into some kind of national system for emissions accounting, and operationalising the system for distributing benefits received at national level to local stakeholders. However, it is also possible that in the absence of significant international funding via the compliance carbon markets, the establishment phase will operate exclusively at sub-national level, through voluntary markets and other payment modalities.

Observations, Assumptions, Factors, Conditions:

A review of the literature on Results-Based Payments is provided in Annex 7. None of NICFI’s partner countries has reached this stage – though the agreement with Guyana is arguably mostly phase three since the bulk of what Norway pays for is low deforestation. In this regard Guyana has both phase 2 and phase 3 characteristics. Brazil receives payments but arguably has not gone through the phased approach (Brazil went straight to phase three), and much of the verified emissions reduction pre-dates NICFI’s engagement. Some sources suggest that most countries will never progress to a fully functioning and ‘established’ RBP system at national level. One factor is simply the increasing difficulty of measuring results as one moves along a results chain – (see Angelsen 2013; Challenge 2 performance criteria and measurement). It may be the case that inherent conditions and factors in some countries create too strong a countervailing force to the idea that paying for results will incentivise appropriate reactions.

Observations in the REDD+ literature, documents and consultations raise the question – does the external incentive really make up for market and governance failures? At the national and local levels, can forests ever compete economically with non-forest uses of the same land, even with well-functioning markets, REDD+ funding and good governance? The literature and consultations suggest that even in the best conditions there may be some question as to whether RBP is the right approach, although few alternatives have yet been articulated.

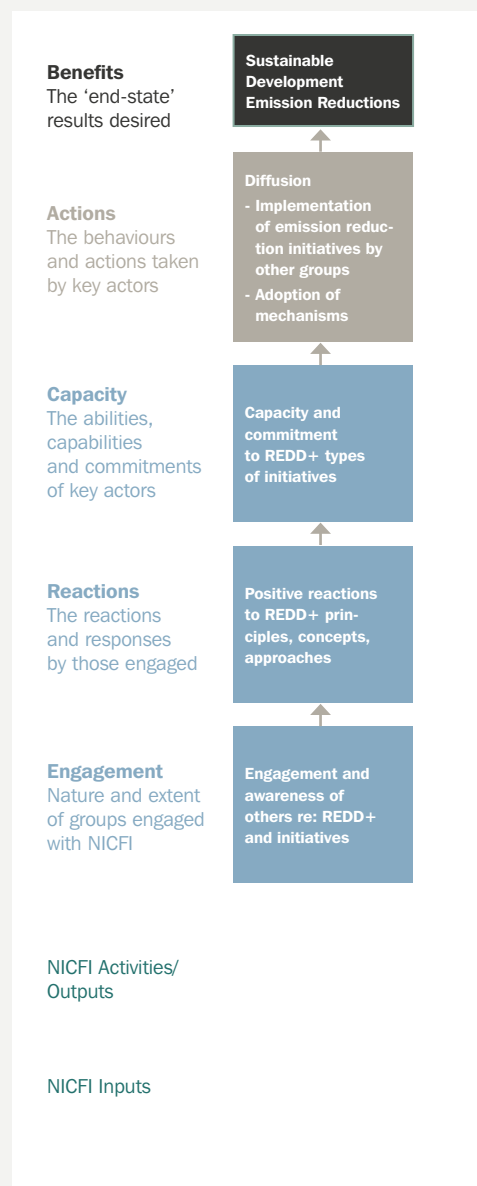
The model assumes that at the international level, funding will be sufficient to reward all participating TRF countries. On the face of it, this is unlikely. However, it is helpful that all countries will not come to Phase 3 at the same time. Hopefully, as the first countries demonstrate functioning RBPs, financial commitments from international donors will increase apace.

Implications:

Study A and the review provided in Annex 7 found a limited literature on the performance of RBPs, and several key papers were funded by Norad. There is scope for work focusing on NICFI’s experience with it, as well as the contextual factors which have shaped relative RBP success across applications.

¹⁹ See Annex 7 for a fuller discussion of Results-Based Payments

FIGURE 17: CHAIN 7: DIFFUSION



Description:

In order to achieve the ultimate benefit of sustainable emissions reductions and limit global warming to below 2° C, it is vital that REDD+ is widely supported financially by Annex 1 countries and widely implemented across forested developing countries. Thus, diffusion of NICFI initiatives is an important results chain.

One of NICFI’s planned activities for 2016 is to make groups aware of the REDD+ initiatives. While this component of awareness building leading to changed behaviours and emission reduction strategies and practices for those who may not have been recipients of results-based funding is not actively described in the official theories of change, there is an argument that leading by example and the techniques and practices which may be developed as part of the pilots and the practice changes (e.g. more efficient agricultural practices) may benefit those outside of the immediate recipient community and thus make a significant contribution to the overall goals.

Observations, Assumptions, Factors, Conditions:

It is too early to glean major changes to the practices outside of the recipient communities for NICFI funding – however there may logically be linkages and behaviours worth tracing for those not directly involved. This would logically be true where tangible innovations involving technology development transfer and applications created productivity and economic efficiency gains which improved profitability as well as sustainability for key actors in the system. (These would logically get adopted elsewhere). Another source of insight would be the voluntary carbon market.

One can observe that in the case of Brazil (‘Forest trends’ + consultation) several developments in PES have taken place which may serve as demonstrations to others.

Implications

The key implications for this results chain are that there may be key innovations that one can trace through as impacts beyond the original scope of NICFI and which create multiplier effects from the original funding through the adoption of successful practices by others. There may also be lessons to be learned in terms of the appeal of various emission reduction strategies (e.g. Brazilian tax arrangements, compensatory payments, carbon market operations and so on), options and investments. Those that have been more readily copied and implemented by others without external incentives might logically show promise as most useful going forward.

One implication for future study is that NICFI might be interested in the extent to which good practices, particularly in project aligned with the voluntary carbon market, have been influenced by pilots and/or full implementation of NICFI funded REDD+ initiatives. The results of such a study might change perceptions about which interventions are actually successful (i.e. sometimes less spectacular but easy to adopt innovations turn out to be more readily copied and diffused – creating massive overall effects.)

3.5 DISCUSSION

This discussion focuses on the three specific study objectives identified in the ToR. Each objective is discussed in turn.

i. Clarify and elaborate upon the existing strategic framework and theories of change of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), and those available for other REDD+ interventions.

The NICFI documents, evaluations and literature around REDD+ suggest that an elaborated programme theory such as that started by this study can help to conceptually connect the various activities of NICFI and the roles, relationships and results emerging from its interconnected impact pathways. Given the decentralized and divergent nature of NICFI REDD+ initiatives, it would seem appropriate to complement the generalised programme theory with a programme theory tailored to each bilateral initiative.

A review of the work of UNREDD and FCPF suggests that theories of change for REDD+ remain relatively unelaborated across most donor programmes.

ii. Assess to what extent the existing theories of change and design of NICFI show the conditions necessary, as described in previous studies, for achieving its stated objectives.

A brief review of NICFI's founding concepts and their evolution over time suggests that while some of the conditions necessary for NICFI to reach its goals are included, there is a lack of fit between other aspects of NICFI's programme theory and the desired programme goals.

The use of intermediaries for delivery, and the key actions which must accompany a 'hand-off' approach (e.g. funding arrangements, clarity of requirements and roles and responsibilities with intermediaries) appears to be an important element in the delivery of REDD+ for NICFI and there are signs that some key areas require attention.

The inherent complementarity or conflict in the evolution of REDD+ appears to be an important theme for investigation. A key question relates to whether and under what conditions the inclusion of development goals and clear recognition of diverse stakeholder needs complement or conflict with REDD+ emission reduction goals – recognizing that development plans already need to be included in REDD+ initiatives and run in parallel to deforestation measures.

A key question should be how NICFI's approach to realising Norway's overarching poverty reduction and sustainable development goals can be strengthened. Referring to the most fully elaborated programme schematic – the strategic framework of January 2015 (see Annex 6) - none of NICFI's operational goals, or the goals adopted by the Norwegian parliament include poverty alleviation or sustainable development. One notes that SDGs have now been approved by the UNGA and that Goal 15.2 will now overlap with NICFI goals.

This suggests the need to update the strategic framework. Thus, there is no logical link between NICFI actions and Norway's overarching objectives. There simply appears to be a not unreasonable assumption, that development and poverty alleviation will not be possible if NICFI's "2 degree target"²⁰ for global warming is not met. Further, the milestones identified for NICFI could all be met without reducing poverty or promoting development for poor households. Unfortunately, the formulation of social safeguards for REDD+ finally agreed under UNFCCC is predicated on "doing no harm", rather than "doing good."

iii. Assess the extent to which the theories of change and strategic framework have been informed by currently available information from research and implementation experience.

²⁰ See UNFCCC agreement for Copenhagen COP in 2009.

The existing ToC and strategic framework have been developed ex-post to describe the NICFI programme, rather than ex-ante to design it. Given that NICFI is still being implemented and its approach has not yet been systematically revised, it follows that a lot of literature has been published and implementation experience gained that are not yet reflected in the existing thinking. Importantly, the framework conditions for REDD+ have also changed (funding, added social and environmental goals, emerging importance of other sectors besides forestry – notably plantation agriculture), and these changes are also not fully reflected in the strategy.

The current strategic framework – and the programme theory developed in this paper – remain at a general level. Most research findings and implementation experience reviewed in Study A are quite location specific and context driven and will be best used to inform national and even sub-national programme theories. For REDD+ and NICFI, the most interesting and useful theories of change will be the national ones, for it is here that the assumptions, factors and conditions bear the most direct relationship with

stakeholder engagement, reactions, negotiations and the required behaviour changes. The high level multi-lateral NICFI strategic framework, such as that included in the 2015-16 budget proposal, remains useful in providing a generic scheme against which national programmes can be compared, and for highlighting broad factors and considerations.

The current NICFI-REDD+ strategy remains predicated on RBF as the main instrument/incentive for effecting deforestation-related behaviour change. The review of RBP included in this study suggests that these assumptions need to be further explored. Questions include:

- How do RBPs work in specific NICFI countries? Is it the cash incentive itself that is important, or is it the symbolic value of the payment, in asserting the importance of the climate change agenda; If the former, can the cash ever be enough to compensate for the opportunities lost? If the latter, will this “attention effect” last long enough to deliver emissions reductions?
- What kind of complementary initiatives and actions need to accompany RBP in given contexts and situations? How well can RBP be expected to work in various levels of readiness - even with a phased approach? Can the RBPs be delivered to agents whose behaviour change needs to be incentivised? How are policy makers and law enforcers at all levels motivated and incentivized to play their roles, which have historically helped propel deforestation?
- Can NICFI’s development objectives be realised, if the lion’s share of the payments goes to policy makers and industrial land-users?
- Can the benefits from REDD+ (via RBPs) be shared sufficiently fairly amongst many different forested countries under an international system, to sustain motivation to participate?

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 STUDY A: CONCLUSIONS

There is a large body of grey and peer-reviewed literature with many more studies on projects emerging in the last 2-3 years. Our sample revealed that the quality of the literature is moderate to high, and that there has been a steady increase in the literature since 2007. We found in our sample a large clustering of research around key converging topics on governance and social with less attention to other topics. Geographically, studies are mainly in Asia, with a relatively even spread across Africa and Latin America, and virtually no studies from Oceania. The review of readiness processes demonstrated **progress in planning and coordination, and in demonstration activities**. The evidence consistently suggests major challenges identified in relation to tenure, MRV as a governance issue, financing, benefit-sharing systems, policies and laws and institution building. There are also serious challenges in the effectiveness of targeting the real problems (i.e. the drivers of deforestation) and failure of REDD+ to provide a change in behavioural trajectories.

In relation to the topics (governance, technical, finance, social, transferable lessons) we conclude that **governance and social challenges literature dominate REDD+**. The literature gives a strong message in this regard. Technical issues focus on measurement, reporting and verification and while there is quite significant literature on this, at the same time the literature points to the challenges and gaps in knowledge. We conclude on transferable lessons that REDD+ can draw some lessons from other PES, CDM and FLEG-T schemes, but that there are limits to the extent that these other schemes can inform future trajectories of REDD+.

The literature also suggests that **REDD+ has heightened global discussions** on issues like community tenure, rights and forest benefits sharing, which some NGOs and communities have been pushing for over the years without much success. There has also been increased focus and attention on the need to organize land use sectors across REDD+ countries. Some REDD+ projects have also managed to train certain villagers, communities and indigenous people in the use of technology for measuring

carbon thereby deepening community understanding of the role of carbon in forest and ecosystem service conservation, whilst reducing the costs involved.

REDD+ could be made more effective.

The literature tells us that REDD+ tends to focus on emissions reductions, while ecological and social co-benefits or behavioural change is less well understood. A linked challenge for effective REDD+ design and implementation is the matter of cross-sectoral coordination and policy coherence. Indonesia provides important lessons regarding opportunities for enhancing engagement at inter-ministerial levels around REDD+ finance. Across the board there is limited evidence on leakage, permanence and additionality in the literature. Given these findings, it is possible to say with moderate to high confidence that to-date REDD+ is showing effectiveness in terms of emissions reductions, but less so in terms of ecological, social and behavioural change. Though REDD+ is said to have unduly focused on carbon and pushing lots of finance into MRV systems in practice, policy and measures, the issue of avoiding leakage and ensuring perma-

nence requires further attention for effective emission reductions.

The study shows with moderate to high certainty that **efficiency in REDD+ will require concerted efforts to support capacity building**, to improve systems of measurement, reporting and verification at the national level, but also among local communities in community-based monitoring. Defining forests and associated forest and land tenure issues locally will be an important aspect to that; as well as including new private sector initiatives through innovative approaches. PES in Ghana for example shows one model of how to link commodities with carbon as a possible route to incentivising private sector involvement. While there is significant literature on MRV most of it points to the challenges of its efficiency and that it requires some adjusting, in particular from a governance perspective. Community based monitoring is demonstrably on the rise and promoted as a cost-effective way of measuring carbon.

It is with high certainty that the literature shows that governance is a dominating concern for

REDD+ performance but major gaps remain in understanding safeguards, tenure, and benefits sharing, among other things. Benefit distribution, risks, process, participation, governance - including roles and responsibilities - is given high coverage in the literature, with advances in terms of land tenure also a key topic in REDD+. Benefits sharing are also pending clarification in many countries. In the interim, payments are made to individuals, communities and other right holders via cash or development projects; and safeguards are one of the least approached areas in literature reviewed, including what safeguards exist, how they are implemented and how they are monitored.

4.2 STUDY A RECOMMENDATIONS

Study A has evidence to recommend the following:

Recommendation 1. To explore further studies on how to enhance effectiveness through building on coordination between different components of the donors and the REDD+ system, and tracking of investment and outcomes for both environment and social systems. In this regard, studying partnerships and how they can

be developed through engagement of the private sector through commodity chains networks and round tables would be important. Look toward models of effective bilateral partnerships such as those developed with/in Brazil and other REDD+ countries and share that learning as a way to build leadership across REDD+ partnerships.

Recommendation 2. To focus further studies on how to better safeguard and enhance measurement, reporting and verification systems. This may be achieved by targeting studies aimed at enhancing tools and technologies combined with efforts to provide training and capacity building at different scales (local monitoring, national accounting systems, international institutions). A core component of this would be to assess how to make more efficient the tools to assess REDD+ impacts on the environment and how to safeguard and link direct investment to changes to deforestation rates, relating to leakage, additionality and permanence.

Recommendation 3. To conduct further study on governance and safeguards, paying attention to indigenous and local community land rights, benefits sharing and the role of local institutions. For this it will be important to better understand how to integrate carbon for investment in the local economy in ways that are sustainable and support local institutions. Examining further evidence on the ground for how to increase efficiency through supporting community-based monitoring systems in direct partnerships with communities and community based associations in order to continue building equitable engagement of local communities, women and other vulnerable groups.

4.3 STUDY B CONCLUSIONS

Study B notes the promising features of the efforts to construct a NICFI-REDD+ theory of change, some challenges, and proposals for additional work in key areas of need.

Promising (Positive) Features:

Promising features were found in a review of documents discussing NICFI REDD+ theory of change as follows:

- **Strategic framework model and accompanying narrative:** NICFI has, over the course of the past year, begun to establish a theory of change narrative and a strategic framework as part of their 2015-16 budget request which has the following positive elements:

- > It places the initiative within the larger picture of the UN strategy to slow global warming.
- > The narrative found the recent budget request discusses the ‘theory of the problem’ before discussing the logic of the activities and an expected sequence of results. In this

way the discussion is put in the appropriate context. The theory states that there is market failure in that the forest’s actual value is not reflected in market transactions. It describes another failure as governance. These are very useful starting points upon which to examine the theory of the NICFI REDD+ programming.

- > The discussion in the budget request notes a variety of potential strategies or actions to address the market and governance ‘failures’.
 - > The piece suggests a framework in which to relate the results logic and theory of change.
 - > In the earlier, more elaborated strategic framework, key common indicators were suggested for both multi-lateral and bilateral NICFI REDD+ initiatives.
- **Zero-Deforestation Pathway Partnerships model:** Another effort at a theory of change found in 2015 NICFI documents entitled

'Theory of Change: Build Zero-Deforestation Pathway Partnerships to move from Common Interests into Concerted Action' was provided to the study team and showed how various system stakeholders were linked to NICFI and REDD+ emission reduction and development. The stakeholders' model showed how a number of different groups such as civil society, various parts of the private sector, indigenous communities, funders and recipient states were a part of the picture in terms of getting to zero deforestation. This is a welcomed recognition of the multi-party reality of NICFI REDD+ policies and programmes, and individual results chains can be built up for different stakeholder groups in particular countries, to consider the politico-economic factors affecting behaviour change.

- **UNFCC – COP documents outlining multi-lateral aspirations and documents related to bilateral agreements:** A number of documents have been produced over the years which were led or directly developed by NICFI. These documents, while not officially titled theories of change, illustrate the thinking behind

the NICFI REDD+ initiatives to establish multi-lateral agreements with governments (and others) in order to set a strong multi-lateral support base for REDD+. They also suggest 'model' ideas about the use of a phased approach to help countries bilaterally to build capacity (and commitment) to get to a full results-based payments REDD+ regime.

Missed Opportunities - Challenges:

While the efforts to develop a theory of change have been promising, there remain the following missed opportunities and related challenges:

Programme Theory:

The change model for NICFI-REDD+ is somewhat unelaborated. This makes sense in some respects due to the highly variable nature of the initiatives and the stated need to do theories of change at a country level, but some further elaboration would have been useful so as to get at the essence of what the intended sequencing of activities and results is intended to involve. For example, there are elements of capacity building which could have benefited from elaboration.

The main change mechanisms are not fully described. For example, given the situations faced in the various countries and communities, why should paying for results work? How does it make up for the market and/or governance failures? How is it expected to fare in different contexts and conditions?

The discussion does not elaborate on assumptions and key factors needed to allow the strategies to work.

The discussion would benefit from an analysis of the institutional arrangements and processes of implementation as well as the broader elements of the theory of change.

The overarching objective of sustainable development / poverty alleviation is not directly promoted by NICFI actions; rather it appears that the avoidance of extreme climate change is taken as a precondition or proxy for them. Greater thought on the pathways through which NICFI actions can directly promote these objectives would be useful.

Contextual understanding regarding political economy factors effecting a transformation to RBP

Documents, consultations and the related literature suggest that the appropriate factors to allow results based payments to work, especially in a transition from a non-conditional or minimally conditional aid context to a more precise pay for performance context are rare and difficult to change in the limited time periods which have characterized NICFI REDD+. The evidence to date also suggests that in some cases a results based payments approach as currently understood and configured for NICFI- REDD+ may not suit the context and conditions of some countries and situations.

Funding Paradigm – the opportunity to move from a situation of hands-off funder to co-investor as a driving ‘mental model’

Documents, consultations and the literature suggest that various factors relating to constructive engagement and inclusiveness have been an issue for NICFI REDD+ in the past. Part of this may be attributed to the inclusion of intermediaries in what amounts to a complicated

delivery process. Part of this may also be a result of an approach which focuses on a pay for performance ‘compliance’ paradigm as opposed to a co-investment paradigm which might more closely include consideration of potential partner self-interest.

4.4 STUDY B RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings above, the following areas for further study (improvement-focused work) are proposed.

Recommendation 4 - Action research study of Indonesia. Conduct an action-research/ learning type of study which would develop and validate the programme theory for the bilateral agreement with Indonesia, given it has been suggested as the most logical and developed contract model (Angelsen, 2013) and that it represents the phased development approach recommended by an options assessment in 2009. The study would examine in detail the various aspects and segments of the phased approach, including the program management, the level of hands-on activity experienced and in retrospect deemed necessary, the engagement of various

parties and groups including the private sector, civil society and women as part of gender equity concerns. Groups for localized study could also include local government, the national and regional assemblies, banks and financial institutions, law enforcement institutions, political parties, universities and the media. The study would trace through the logic and actual progress through the phases and would include consideration of the key factors and conditions which have affected desired goals. The results of this study would include insights and potentially adjusted criteria for REDD+ project selection, negotiation of Letters of Intent and assistance agreements for the national jurisdictional approach. Cases other than Indonesia could also be studied in the same way – so as to learn from contrasting contexts.

Recommendation 5 - Cross Cutting Study of the key factors which enable Results Based Payments to work in the context of REDD+ types of initiatives. Conduct a realistic synthesis or true systematic review of the various applications of results based payments (funding) in REDD+ and other analogous circumstances

so as to establish what contextual conditions and key factors related to mechanisms involving results based payments work, to what extent and for whom? The study would involve an extensive early refinement and third party study selection and review process as well as consultations with key informants knowledgeable about results based payments as they have been implemented across a number of categories. The scope of the study could include consideration of different designs and management arrangements (including the level of hands-on funder involvement, the nature and use of intermediaries in delivery, the nature and type of private sector, civil society and other groups' roles in the RBP program delivery etc).

Recommendation 6 - Study of the extent to which a 'recipient' vs. a 'co-investor' paradigm might appropriately suit current and future NICFI focus areas. A question has been raised as to whether there is an inherent bias in delivery arrangements made at multi-lateral and bilateral government levels towards a "funder-recipient" relationship as compared to a co-investment (some might say 'partner')

model where all stakeholders see themselves in the mission together. Related to the above, conduct a study of whether, how and to what extent current and past NICFI-REDD+ initiatives have been characterized by stakeholders as co-investments as opposed to 'performance contract' agreements. Conduct a systematic review and/or a 'practice survey' of the various applications of results based payments (funding) in REDD+ and other co-investment support designs to determine the key factors that make them work. The scope of the study could include consideration of different designs and management arrangements (including the level of hands-on funder involvement, the nature and use of intermediaries in delivery, the nature and type of private sector, civil society and other groups' roles in the RBP program delivery etc.) and their relationships to results.

Recommendation 7: Conduct an international collaborative study of REDD+. Given that the study found that key REDD+ delivery agents like UNREDD and FCPF appear to have somewhat unelaborated programme theories related to REDD+ and the important mechanisms and

results chains involved in its delivery, it would be interesting for NICFI to consider the support of an international review and workshop involving senior staff of the main REDD+ initiatives to consider the various theories of change related to REDD+ more critically, elaborating on the approach started by this study. Such an initiative could be part of one or more of the studies suggested above.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

3E	Effectiveness, Efficiency and Equity	ICRAF	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry	PES	Payment for Environmental Services
D&D	Design & Development	IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development	PROFOR	Program on Forests
CABI	Center for Agriculture and Biosciences International	INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions	RBF	Results-Based Financing
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism	IOE	Islands of Excellence within and outside of REDD+	RBM	Results Based Management
CFUGs	Community Forestry Users Groups	IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	RBP	Result Based Payment
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research	IR	Inception Report	REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
COP	Conference of Parties	IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature	REL/RL	Reference Emission Levels
DFR	Draft Final Report	KI	Key Informant	SNA	Support National Programme
EDGAR	Emission Database for Global Atmospheric Research	LULUCF/ LUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry	TL	Team Leader
EFC	Energy for change	M	Million	TFCG	Tanzania Forest Conservation Group
EFI	European Forest Institute	MODIS	Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer	TOC	Theory of Change
EPI	Environmental Performance Index	MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification	ToR	Terms of Reference
EUR	Euro	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization	UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation	NICFI	Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility	NOK	Norwegian Kroner	UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
FIP	Forest Investment Program	NORAD	Norwegian development aid	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent	OFAC	Observatoire des Forêts d'Afrique Central	USD	United State Dollar
FR	Final Report	PA	Protected Areas	WRI	World Resource Institute
FRA	Forest Resource Assessment	PC	Partner Countries		
GCP	Global Canopy Programme				
GHG	Green House Gases				
GPS	Global Positioning System				

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