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4  
NATIONAL  
STRATEGIES OR  
ACTION PLANS

**REDD+ ACADEMY**  
**LEARNING JOURNAL**  
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## UN-REDD

The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) in developing countries. The Programme was launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The UN-REDD Programme supports nationally-led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation.



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## REDD+ACADEMY

The REDD+ Academy is a coordinated REDD+ capacity development initiative led by the UN-REDD Programme and the UNEP Environmental Education and Training Unit, which seeks to match the scale of the global climate change mitigation challenge and enable systematic, focused capacity development to deliver REDD+ on the ground.

The REDD+ Academy is a comprehensive response to capacity building needs identified by the countries receiving support from the UN-REDD Programme. The main aim of the REDD+ Academy is to empower potential “REDD+ champions” with the requisite knowledge and skills to promote the implementation of national REDD+ activities.

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Our training targets two key groups of beneficiaries: the delegates to the United Nations and others who develop intergovernmental agreements establishing global norms, policies, and programmes, and the key national change agents who turn the global agreements into action at the national level.

Dear Learner,

Welcome to the second edition of the REDD+ Academy Learning Journals. The journals provide you with state of the art knowledge on REDD+ planning and implementation, developed by some of the world’s leading experts at the UN-REDD Programme.

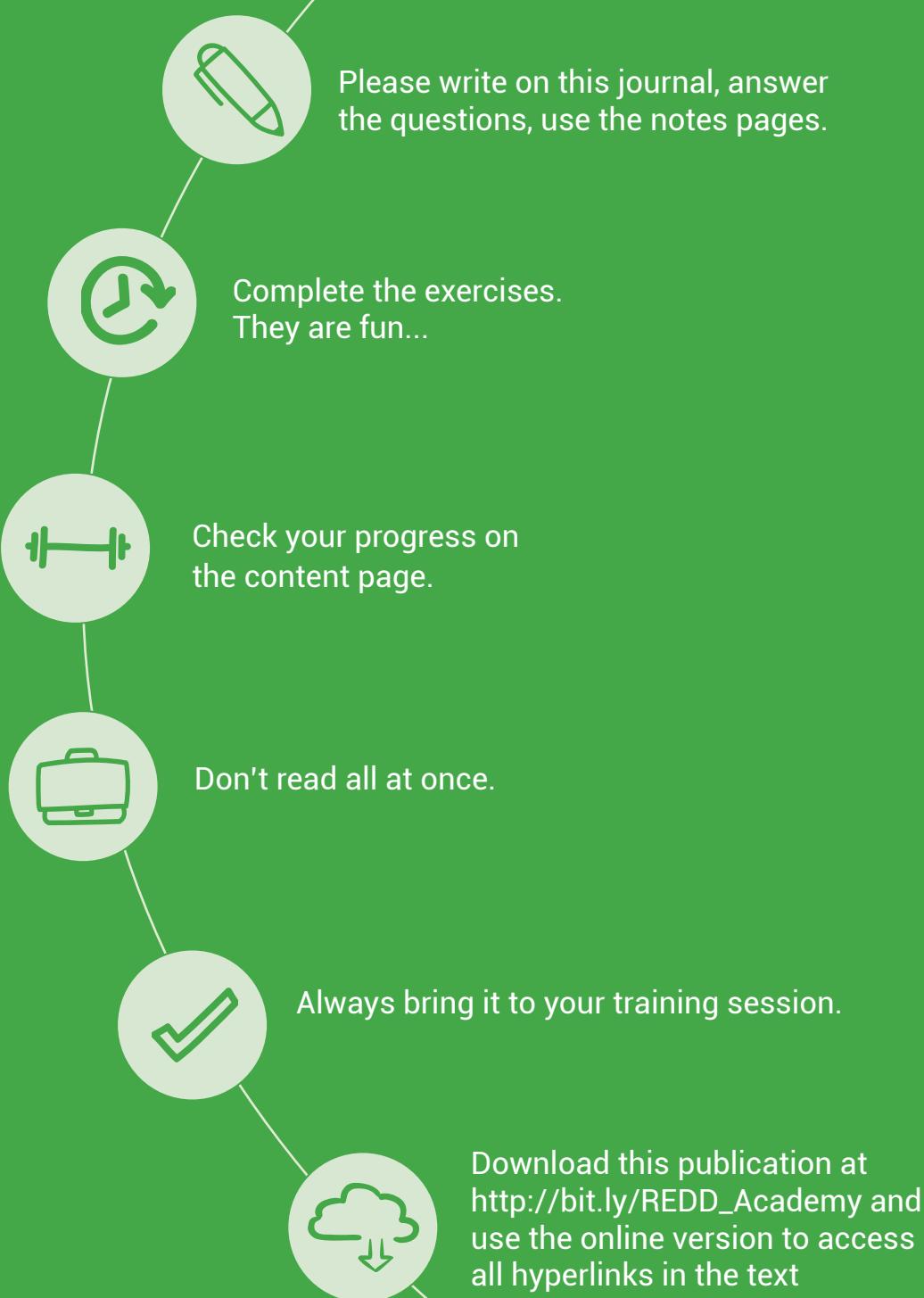
The journals have been designed to accompany you in your learning journey and equip you with the necessary knowledge to understand the various components of REDD+, from the basics to the finer points of setting reference levels, monitoring, allocation of incentives and stakeholder engagement.

With deforestation and forest degradation being the third largest source of greenhouse gas emissions globally, action to reduce deforestation and to rebuild forests globally is vital. By realizing social and economic benefits, REDD+ is also fundamental to delivering on the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the focus of many developing countries is now firmly on REDD+ implementation. I encourage you to take the REDD+ Academy online course, and apply your knowledge to make REDD+ a national and a global success!

*Mette L. Wilkie*

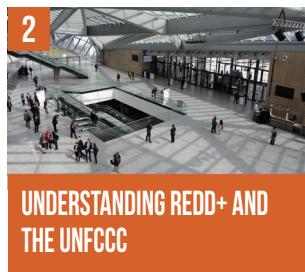
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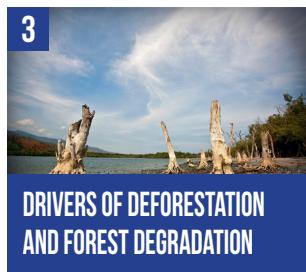
# CONTENTS



## 1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ROLE OF FORESTS



## 2 UNDERSTANDING REDD+ AND THE UNFCCC



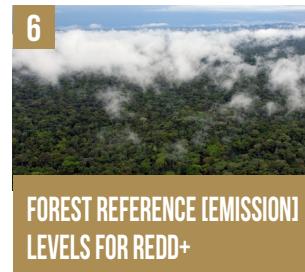
## 3 DRIVERS OF DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION



## 4 NATIONAL STRATEGIES OR ACTION PLANS



## 5 NATIONAL FOREST MONITORING SYSTEMS FOR REDD+



## 6 FOREST REFERENCE (EMISSION) LEVELS FOR REDD+



## 7 POLICIES AND MEASURES FOR REDD+ IMPLEMENTATION



## 8 REDD+ SAFEGUARDS UNDER THE UNFCCC



## 9 REDD+ FINANCE



## 10 APPROACHES FOR THE ALLOCATION OF INCENTIVES



## 11 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN REDD+



## 12 GOOD GOVERNANCE

- Why a NS/AP?
- Developing a NS/AP
- Cross-cutting issues throughout the NS/AP development and implementation process

### CASE STUDIES

#### ECUADOR & MEXICO

REDD+ NS/AP in the wider development and legal framework

### ACTIVITIES

- Exercise 7**  
Elements of a NS/AP
- Exercise 8**  
Main steps to develop a NS/AP





# 4

# National Strategies or Action Plans

This module explains the importance of strong design processes and documents for REDD+ national strategies or action plans (NS/APs), not only in implementing REDD+ activities, but also in ensuring buy-in from various key actors, mainstreaming REDD+ objectives in a country's development framework, securing financing and ensuring results. It also highlights various elements that countries may find useful to consider to achieve this.



## The module includes sections about:

- NS/APs and the UNFCCC
- Why quality NS/AP design processes and documents are so important
- Linking REDD+ to broader national objectives and development frameworks
- The process of developing a NS/AP
- Cross-cutting issues throughout the NS/AP development process



What do you already know about this topic?

# 4. NATIONAL STRATEGIES OR ACTION PLANS

## INTRODUCTION

Module 3 presented the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (DDFDs) and barriers to the ‘plus’ activities<sup>1</sup>. Conservation, enhancement and sustainable management of forest carbon stocks., as well as the critical elements to analyze. A good understanding of past and current forest cover dynamics as well as of the drivers and barriers behind them represent the essential foundations on which countries can gradually build their wider vision for REDD+, and the national strategies or action plans (NS/APs) to achieve it.

The UN-REDD Programme promotes the exchange of knowledge between countries and has facilitated various South-South learning exchange events<sup>2</sup> where countries presented and shared their experiences with REDD+ NS/APs. Many useful lessons learned and recommendations regarding both the NS/AP design process and documents were gathered. They constitute the core of this module.

## WHY A NS/AP?

NS/APs describe how emissions will be reduced and/or how forest carbon stocks will be enhanced, conserved and/or sustainably managed through the implementation of REDD+. NS/APs are integrative products of the readiness phase (phase 1). They draw on the analytical work, stakeholder dialogue and strategic decisions made to guide the implementation of REDD+ (phases 2 and 3). They are expected to be revised cyclically to integrate lessons learned and changes in context over time (i.e. changing threats and new opportunities).

However, beyond simply guiding REDD+ implementation or addressing a UNFCCC requirement, NS/AP documents and design processes are also opportunities and tools to achieve multiple objectives, as various countries have done (e.g. Brazil, Ecuador,

Mexico, or Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)). This includes especially contributing to the development objectives of the country as well as, to the extent possible, objectives of sectors key to REDD+ (i.e. drivers) through different pathways. Other types of additional objectives may include for example:

- Mobilizing additional financial resources nationally and internationally;
- Detailing how the country intends to achieve its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in the LULUCF sector (see section below on ‘*Mapping and aligning with national development goals and priorities*’);
- Enhancing policy coherence and cross-sectoral coordination, rationalizing resource use and streamlining policy implementation (e.g. DRC, Brazil, Ecuador or Mexico);
- Strengthening the resilience of development and businesses; opening new markets or retaining them in the long-term (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire);
- Valorising past and current efforts related to forests (e.g. Brazil, Costa Rica); or
- Engaging or re-engaging in constructive multi-stakeholders dialogue (e.g. DRC, Myanmar or Viet Nam).

Embedding such objectives is important to strengthen the strategy NS/AP and rally the various sectors and actors necessary to implement it. Countries should start thinking through such objectives early on while building on opportunities over time, as this will impact the nature and content of the strategy document as much as the design process itself.

## NS/AP in the UNFCCC

As discussed in **Module 2: Understanding REDD+ and the UNFCCC**, the NS/AP is one of the four design elements agreed internationally as prerequisites for REDD+ implementation and to access Results-Based Payments (RBPs) (Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71(a)), in accordance with Decisions 12/CP.17 and 11/CP.19)<sup>3</sup>. Figure 4.1 presents these four elements.

<sup>1</sup> Conservation, enhancement and sustainable management of forest carbon stocks.

<sup>2</sup> South-South regional learning exchange workshops in Ecuador (August 2014) for Latin America and Caribbean, and in Kenya (October 2014) for Africa. Information and Knowledge Sharing Session on NS/AP in Tanzania (November 2014). Reports and presentations from the Arusha meeting are available [here](#) and [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> The UNFCCC has gathered the full text of all the decisions relevant to REDD+ in the [Decision booklet REDD+](#) (UNFCCC, 2014).

**Figure 4.1 Design elements of readiness for REDD+ implementation**



Source: UN-REDD Programme

The UNFCCC has provided no detailed prescriptions for the content of a NS/AP and no templates to follow. Contrary to Forest Reference (Emission) Levels (FREL/FRLs), there is no requirement for a technical assessment or any kind of endorsement from the UNFCCC. The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (which comprises seven key decisions taken at the UNFCCC's 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP 19) in 2013) only recalls the necessity of a NS/AP for REDD+ and requests countries to post a link to their NS/AP on the Information Hub of the REDD+ Web Platform in order to qualify for RBPs (Decision 9/CP.19).

Nonetheless, paragraph 72 of Decision 1/CP.16 indicates that when developing (phase 1) and implementing (phase 2 and 3) their NS/AP, Parties are requested to address, inter alia:

- DDFDs;
- Land tenure issues;
- Forest governance issues;
- Gender considerations;
- REDD+ Safeguards;
- Full and effective participation of stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

Also, paragraph 1 of Appendix 1 of Decision 1/CP.16 sets out general guidance for implementing REDD+ activities that should be kept in mind while developing a NS/AP. According to this decision, REDD+ activities should:

- contribute to stabilizing greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations;

- be country-driven;
- be consistent with the objective of environmental integrity and take into account the multiple functions of forests and other ecosystems;
- be undertaken in accordance with national development priorities, objectives and circumstances and capabilities and should respect sovereignty;
- be consistent with national sustainable development needs and goals;
- be implemented in the context of sustainable development and reducing poverty, while responding to climate change;
- be consistent with the adaptation needs of the country;
- be supported by adequate and predictable financial and technology support, including support for capacity-building;
- be results-based;
- promote sustainable management of forests.



#### REFLECTION POINT

Why do you think the UNFCCC decisions present a set of principles and general guidance for NS/AP rather than detailed prescriptions?

#### The overall ‘pathway’ to national REDD+ planning

The UNFCCC gives countries great flexibility on both the NS/AP design process and the NS/AP document itself, provided the general principles given in the previous section are followed. This allows each country to plot an optimal pathway towards REDD+, considering its specific national circumstances. Accordingly, the NS/AP document may take many forms.

Some countries have developed a REDD+ ‘Strategy’ (e.g. Brazil, DRC or Indonesia) while others have produced an ‘Action Plan’ (e.g. Ecuador). Plans tend to be more detailed and operationally-oriented than strategies, and may include a budget, quantitative objectives and outlines of programmes. Strategies may be frameworks providing long-term vision and general orientation. This varies widely in practice, as the terminology used may reflect factors like institutional preferences or constraints as much as progress in REDD+ investment planning. Chile’s “strategy”, for example, is more detailed than Viet Nam’s “action program”, as Viet Nam’s policy

framework restricts both the terminology and template of policy documents.

Such a NS or AP may materialize as (i) specific to REDD+ (e.g. Brazil, DRC or Mexico), or (ii) be incorporated into a wider climate and/or green economy framework. As may be most appropriate to rally stakeholders, the NS/AP need not be titled 'REDD+'. Chile and Peru, for example, have respectively launched their "National Strategy for climate change and vegetation resources" and "National Strategy for forests and climate change". Each constitutes a national REDD+ strategy but also goes beyond REDD+ to address wider objectives.

Following on from a main framework document (whether a NS or AP), some countries have opted to pursue their REDD+ planning process through a more detailed document, focused on the first few years of implementation. It may be called an 'Action Plan' (e.g. Brazil), 'Investment Plan' (e.g. DRC) or 'Investment Framework' (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire). Such a document may cover the whole country (e.g. DRC, Côte d'Ivoire), or focus on specific subnational areas. In the case of DRC or Côte d'Ivoire, this operational document aims at providing a wide framework for the coordination and alignment of investment towards REDD+ objectives (whether from strictly REDD+ sources, or relevant to REDD+), while targeting specifically a desired funding source (see Box 4.1).

Other countries (e.g. Chile), building on rich existing data and a robust readiness process, have decided to develop documents which may include a detailed timeline with clear annual targets and geographical priorities, and a budget for each measure highlighting secured contributions as well as gaps. This represents a robust basis for developing a funding proposal to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

The relevant overall 'pathway' to REDD+ planning, and the level of detail in the NS/AP, will strongly depend on:

- **The national context**, such as the level of decentralization and the overall approach to REDD+ planning from national to subnational level, reliance on international financing for implementation, track-record in reducing deforestation and policy implementation, 'maturity' in terms of strategic planning for REDD+ implementation, etc.
- **The objectives for the NS/AP** (which may not be explicit), such as simple compliance with UNFCCC requirements, developing a tool for domestic or international communication, and/or a tool for active fundraising.

Accordingly, the NS/AP design process may be organized in different ways, within the REDD+ readiness process, as well as in relation to other planning processes.

#### **Box 4.1: Different 'pathways' to REDD+ planning, examples from Brazil and DRC**

Brazil's remarkable achievements in terms of reduced deforestation are based on a set of policies and regulations at the national and subnational level, including two detailed biome-based action plans: (i) the AP for the prevention and control of deforestation, launched in 2004 and now in its third phase, focusing on the Amazon biome (49 per cent of the national territory) where the majority of its forests – and forest emissions – occur, and (ii) the AP for the Cerrado Biome, launched in 2010 and now in its second phase. This was achieved even before the UNFCCC agreed the basic provisions for REDD+. In 2015, Brazil included its vision and set of policies and measures (PAMs) in a single NS for REDD+. As highlighted in the strategy: "*The great challenge of the Brazilian government is the coordination of the various public policies, federal and state programs and initiatives, from the public and private entities that contribute to the mitigation of emissions in the land use change and forestry sector in order to achieve the commitments defined by the country*". Accordingly, an explicit objective for Brazil is to enhance coordination and promote synergies across policies, interventions and actors, as well as to access RBPs.

In the case of DRC, the '*National REDD+ framework-strategy*' was a milestone in the country's REDD+ readiness, aimed at catalyzing political momentum both internally and externally, sustaining and further enhancing the mobilization of political leaders as well as other stakeholders (line ministries, civil society, etc.), while creating space for dialogue with the international community. As such, it included substantial information demonstrating DRC's vision and the relevance of supporting it financially. The NS was followed by a more operational '*National REDD+ Investment Plan*', with a budget, results framework and outlines of PAMs for the period 2015-2020. This plan is seen as a tool for wide coordination: though focused on securing a financial commitment from a specific multilateral initiative (Central Africa Forest Initiative - CAFI), it aims at mobilizing other sources of international REDD+ finance later on, such as the GCF, but also at helping aligning conventional sources of funding (e.g. ODA) towards REDD+ objectives.

## The NS/AP design process: an opportunity

The form of a NS/AP and how its design process is organized will strongly influence whether and to what extent forests are mainstreamed into a country's development framework as well as shaping REDD+ activities on the ground. Form and design should therefore be thought through carefully.

While demonstrating compliance with UNFCCC guidance, the NS/AP document is also an opportunity for national and international stakeholders to assess a country's national vision for REDD+, as well as the approach, actions, tools and processes proposed.

A strong NS/AP document developed through a quality design process is therefore an opportunity to:

- build buy-in and trust among national stakeholders and the international community, demonstrating that it will address their concerns and contribute to their objectives;
- make REDD+ more tangible to stakeholders, linking it with existing policy objectives and interventions;
- build confidence in a country's capacity to deliver REDD+ results and receive RBPs;
- attract financial support from the international community for REDD+ implementation;
- Showcase existing domestic financial and policy efforts and demonstrate the value of supporting further
- Strengthen the readiness process by bringing together many work streams.

As mentioned, there are no criteria to assess the quality of a NS/AP and no technical review mechanism under the UNFCCC. However, access to international finance for REDD+ implementation - whether from bilateral (e.g. Norway) or multilateral (e.g. GCF, the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility's Carbon Fund, the Climate Investment Funds' Forest Investment Program (FIP)) sources - will require robust NS/APs and related investment plans or proposals. Below are a few elements that have been important for some donors and multilateral funding schemes:

- Being evidence-based;
- Addressing the main DDFDs, as well as their underlying causes (indirect drivers) and

possible barriers to the 'plus' activities of REDD+;

- Presenting a credible while ambitious vision for REDD+, with transformative PAMs;
- Demonstrating commitment, including through (i) specific qualitative and quantitative targets and commitments (e.g. % of natural forest cover preserved or regenerated, zero-deforestation agriculture supply chains) and (ii) domestic financial contributions ;
- Enjoying high-level political support;
- Building multi-sectoral dialogue and coordination and cooperation;
- Ensuring transparent and participatory design and implementation processes;
- Addressing social and environmental safeguards; and
- Articulating how the NS/AP differs from 'business as usual'.

This is particularly important as many countries are likely to need international public finance (e.g. GCF) to (i) complement and catalyze their own domestic efforts in implementing PAMs in order to generate REDD+ results, as well as (ii) raise and strengthen the profile of the REDD+ agenda in the country.

In order to capture domestic financing, the processes and requirements are likely to be different from those of the GCF or other international finance institutions; however a strong case will still need to be built (see **Module 9: REDD+ Finance**, as well as the 'Approach to financing' section of this module).



### REFLECTION POINT

What are transformative PAMs?

## Mapping and aligning with national development goals and priorities

The criteria above highlight again the importance of ensuring that the design process as much as the content of the document gradually build the broad support base necessary for action. It requires REDD+ (and the NS/AP) to be designed not as an objective of its own, separate from other policy objectives, but rather as an opportunity to achieve those in a different manner while taking forests into account.

This starts by embedding the NS/AP into the main development objectives of the country and related strategic documents. These may include a national vision document, medium-

term national/subnational development plans and relevant sectoral strategies. There may also be a national poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), a sustainable or green growth strategy, as well as a climate change strategy. REDD+ teams should therefore map and screen the national (and sub-national) strategic framework. The real influence of each of these strategic documents in the development framework of the country (i.e. planning, budgeting) will need to be assessed. Some countries have also nested their REDD+ strategy objectives into their legal framework (see case study in Box 4.2 below).

The relevance to REDD+ objectives of these strategic document, whether positive or negative, should be analysed to identify areas of tension

and opportunities for synergies. Countries may also find it useful to map (i) the institutional framework (line ministries and relevant cross-sectoral government bodies), (ii) governance mechanisms across national and sub-national levels, and (iii) the sectors and bodies relevant for the implementation of REDD+ (see also **Module 11: Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+**). As national and subnational planning processes are cyclical, REDD+ teams may want to check when key strategic documents will be revised, building their case and contributions in advance so as to be able to contribute to these and embed relevant objectives when the time comes (see section ‘Building a Vision for REDD+ and related strategic considerations’ below).

#### **Box 4.2: REDD+ NS/AP in the wider development and legal framework: Ecuador and Mexico**

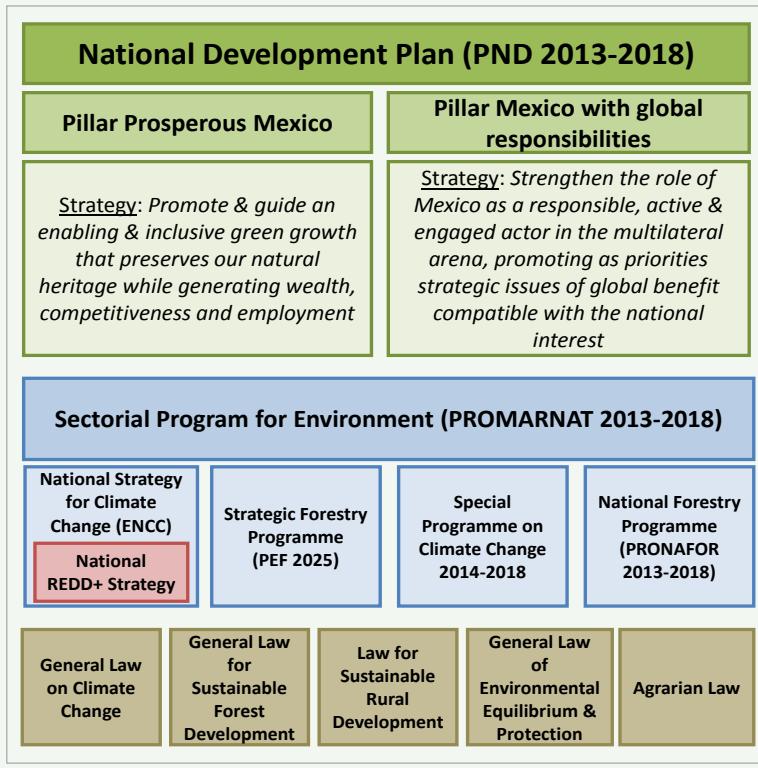
In 2008 a new constitution came into force in Ecuador. Incorporating the principle of “good living” (*buen vivir*) among its fundamental guidelines, with elements relating to forests, ecosystems, environmental services, rights of nature, rights of indigenous peoples, participation, and the mainstreaming of gender into public policy, it is recognized as pioneering in terms of social and environmental rights. It led to environmental sustainability being incorporated as an essential part of the development model of the country, and included in its main plans and strategies, of which the National Development Plan and the National Strategy for the Change of the Production Systems (*matriza productiva*). In 2009, the National Environmental Policy was issued. Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change were declared State policies. The National Climate Change Strategy (2012) guides the implementation of measures to reduce GHG emissions, creates favorable conditions for adopting them in priority sectors, and promotes carbon capture and storage. The National REDD+ Action Plan, which falls under the climate change strategy, will help i) specify the transition processes towards a balance between environmental sustainability, the reduction of

**Figure 4.2 Articulation of Ecuador REDD+ AP with other strategic documents**



GHG emissions and the achievement of development goals, and ii) integrate the forestry sector as an alternative for the diversification of rural economies. It is conceived as a concrete opportunity to contribute directly to the four strategic axes of the National Development Plan 2013-2017, which includes the transformation of production systems and strategic sectors. It will also contribute to implementing the National Territorial Strategy and the National Strategy for Rural Good Living (see Figure 4.2).

Source: UN-REDD programme, adapted from a presentation from the Government of Ecuador

**Figure 4.3:** The Legal and policy landscape of Mexico's National Redd+ Strategy

Source: UN-REDD programme (adapted from Mexico's ENAREDD)

In Mexico the 2012 *General Law on Climate Change* is a long-term instrument that establishes a framework for climate change mitigation and adaptation, including in the forestry sector. The law defines goals including a reduction of emissions of 30% by 2020 compared to baseline, conditioned to support from developed countries, and 50 per cent by 2050 compared to 2000 emissions. It also instructs the National Forestry Commission to “*design strategies, policies, measures and actions to transition to a rate of zero per cent carbon loss in natural ecosystems, for their integration into the planning instruments of the forest policy for a sustainable development, taking into consideration the sustainable development and community forestry*”. In line with this, the National REDD+ Strategy (in red in Figure 4.3) takes its mandate from both the National Strategy for Climate Change (ENCC) and the Sectoral Program for Environment. The ENCC stresses the importance of forests as carbon reservoirs in its strategic axis

*“Promote better agricultural and forestry practices to enhance and preserve natural carbon sinks”.*

On top of this core national strategic development framework, the REDD+ process should as much as possible link and build on the wider global dynamics that may influence the national development agenda. This includes in particular the Agenda 2030 that all 193 Member States of the United Nations

adopted in September 2015. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented in Figure 4.4. These build on the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and seek to address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for equitable and sustainable development.

**Figure 4.4:** The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS)

Most of the SDGs are directly or more distantly relevant to REDD+. The integration of SDGs into the national strategic framework is an important opportunity to also embed REDD-relevant objectives (which may not need to be referred to as REDD+). Several of the steps, lessons learnt and recommendations given in this document are directly relevant to both SDGs and REDD+ design processes (see Box 4.3 for further reading).

As governments across the world increasingly realize that climate change threatens their economic and social progress, they are giving it an increasingly high profile in strategic documents, trying to balance shorter-term development objectives with longer-term resilience. This and related (Intended) Nationally Determined Contributions – (I)NDCs – represents further opportunities to embed REDD+ objectives in national strategies.

#### **Box 4.3: Resources for mainstreaming REDD+ into a national strategic development framework**

[\*\*UNDP \(2016\) “Getting Ready to Implement the 2030 Agenda” SDGs Learning, Training and Practice 2016\*\*](#)

[\*\*UNDP, WRI \(2015\) Designing and Preparing Intended Nationally Determined Contributions\*\*](#)

[\*\*UNDP, UNEP \(2015\). Mainstreaming Environment and Climate for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development: A Handbook to Strengthen Planning and Budgeting Processes\*\*](#)

Ahead of COP 21, held in Paris in 2015, the UNFCCC called on all parties to publicly outline what post-2020 climate actions they intended to take under the Paris Agreement that was sealed at the end of the conference. These Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs, now being converted into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)) typically include:

- Contributions of the main sectors to national GHG emissions,

- Overall national emission reduction objectives, whether voluntary or conditional on international financial contributions,
- Steps taken or to be taken to achieve this, as well as to adapt to climate change impacts,
- What support the country may need (or will provide) to address climate change.

In many REDD+ countries, the LULUCF sector (and forest cover change within it) represents a major source of emissions. Thus the Paris Agreement is an opportunity to reflect on how forests may contribute to their emission reduction objectives. Countries may not want to mention REDD+ per se in their NDC, but can ensure that forests and relevant objectives (emissions reductions, policy results) are mentioned and are coherent across the NDC and the NS/AP.

#### **Building the case for REDD+**

The case for forests and REDD+ will need to be built for each of the various key sectors and stakeholders, taking into account their specific, often different, and at times even conflicting objectives. It may include:

- the role of forests beyond carbon storage (e.g. reducing vulnerability to natural hazards such as landslides and flooding, regulating rainfall patterns important to agriculture, controlling soil erosion detrimental to agriculture and hydroelectricity generation, supporting livelihoods),
- the benefits of participation in REDD+ (e.g. international political visibility, corporate image, access to international finance and
- indirect opportunities (e.g. development of innovative tools, political push for enhanced cross-sectoral coordination and multi-stakeholder dialogue).

It is through such alignment of interests, whether directly related to REDD+ or not, from as many actors as possible within the government, private sector and civil society that a critical mass may be achieved. These actors may then collectively promote these objectives to others, using incentives or regulatory mechanisms. The reasons for participation, and therefore the case to be built, is likely to be very different for different actors, and highly variable across countries.

As illustrated in Figure 4.5 below, some entry points on which the case can be built may already exist in the strategic development framework of the country, while others will have to be created through policy dialogue. For example, the REDD+ agenda may capitalize on the objectives of the agriculture sector for intensification objectives, while building on various other agenda and

partners to strengthen land use planning with the Planning Ministry, and push through the REDD+ process for the modification of conditions for agricultural producers to access credit lines that include compliance with forest-related safeguards; all this contributing to the overall objective of national socio-economic and agriculture development.

**Figure 4.5: Examples of potential entry points for REDD+ towards various sectors and stakeholders**

Actor	Government	Private sector	Communities	Civil Society
Sector				
<b>Agriculture</b>	Agriculture intensification objectives	Access to (higher value) markets	Access to (higher value) markets	Social and environmental standards, with unimpaired or improved livelihoods for communities
	Support to certification	Corporate image	Access to incentives (financial or not)	
	Access to (higher value) markets	Compliance to industry sustainability standards (Access to credit: PAM)		
<b>Planning</b>	More efficient resource use Less conflict across sectors through enhanced coordination	Reduced conflicts with other sectors or with communities	Reduced conflicts within the community	Reduced conflicts within the community

Source: UN-REDD Programme

## Important lessons learned

While the NS/AP development process depends largely on national circumstances, the experience of countries so far highlights the following key lessons:

- **Developing a REDD+ NS/AP is about both process and product.** An emphasis on inclusive and equitable consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders will ensure a more robust and wider support-base for the strategy and will facilitate its endorsement and subsequent implementation. As an example, Costa Rica has conducted over 150 information and consultation meetings while designing its NS/AP.
- **NS/APs should not be regarded as stand-alone documents.** NS/APs should be developed and implemented within a country's national development planning process and in line with other relevant national and international efforts (e.g. SDGs, NDCs, Aichi Biodiversity Targets). Careful integration with other strategic documents as well as sectoral and cross-sectoral

objectives is key. Chile for example strongly ties its NS/AP to resilience to climate change, desertification and soil degradation;

- **The NS/AP design process should be planned early in the REDD+ readiness process,** rather than be considered a mere output of it. The sequencing of the various work streams (e.g. analytical work, consultations) can be challenging but is essential in ensuring efficiency in the NS/AP design process (and overall readiness).
- **Strategic choices made on each of the four design elements of REDD+ (NS/AP, FREL/FRL, NFMS, SIS) may have strong implications for the others** (see section 'Looking at scope, scale and priority drivers in perspective'). Ensuring regular communication and feedback loops in the development and implementation of the design elements is critical and may contribute to a more efficient readiness process. The NS/AP document is an opportunity to strengthen the links between the design elements and demonstrate the coherence of the country approach to REDD+ as well as its capacity to achieve results.

- **Designing NS/APs is an iterative step-wise process**, as NS/APs are organic documents that continue to be expanded and improved upon. Initial strategies may for example only address the most significant REDD+ activities and/or DDFDs, while planning for subsequent improvements following a pragmatic stepwise approach, as well as adapting to a dynamic context. Brazil decided for example to start addressing deforestation in the Amazon region only, while already preparing to include forest degradation as well as expanding to the Cerrado biome.

### A logical flow

Although the UNFCCC does not provide any template or recommendations on the structure of a NS/AP, many countries have articulated their NS/AP document around the broad ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions:

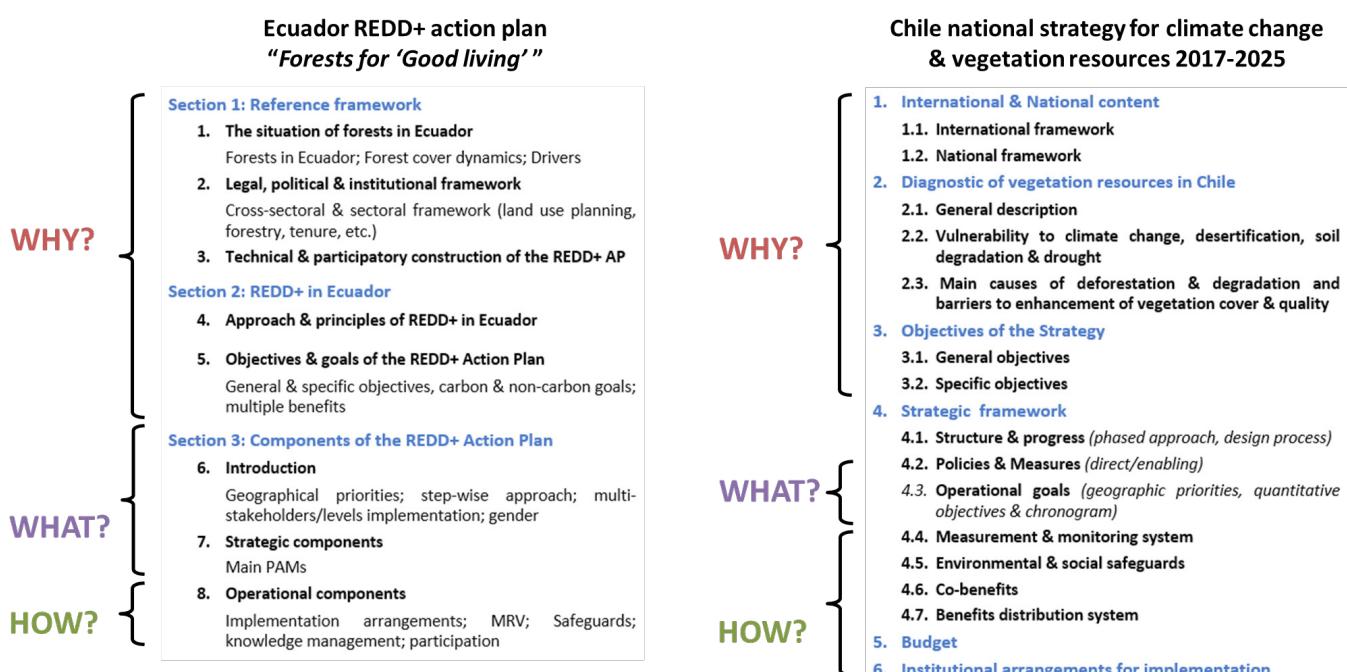
- **Why?(or what for?)** What is the overall country context, including the strategic

development framework? How does that relate, positively or negatively, to REDD+? What is its forest context (i.e. carbon stocks and fluxes, DDFDs and barriers to ‘plus’ activities, trends of land use change and carbon loss)? Considering all this, what is the vision for REDD+ and its contribution to national objectives? Or, put simply, what can REDD+ do for the country?

- **What?** What are the PAMs and approaches to achieve the REDD+ vision and results? How do they build on existing policies and interventions? How is this transformational?
- **How?** How will the NS/AP be implemented and results ensured? What are the legal, institutional and financial arrangements as well as the tools required for the effective implementation, management and monitoring of REDD+?

The same underlying questions may guide the NS/AP design process, as shown in Figure 4.6. The actual process, including sequencing, will strongly depend on country specific circumstances (e.g. existing relevant data, strategies and policies or planning processes, capacity).

**Figure 4.6 – Comparison of the structure of Ecuador and Chile’s NS/APs**



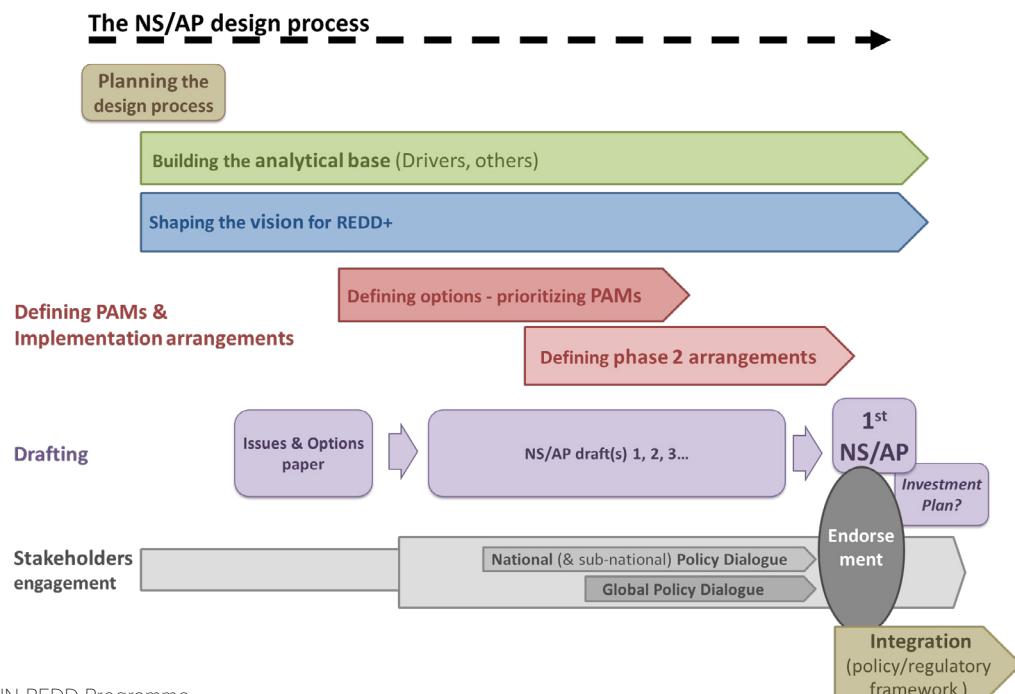
## DEVELOPING A NS/AP

Although the process of developing a NS/AP will be highly dependent on national circumstances, it may be broken down into several key elements (Figure 4.7). These elements are by no means fully sequential, and many should actually progress in parallel, with regular interactions and feedback loops:

- Planning the NS/AP design process
- Building the analytical base

- Building a REDD+ vision
- Analysing options and defining PAMs
- Defining implementation arrangements (financial, legal and institutional)
- NS/AP drafting
- Political and stakeholder endorsement
- Integration of the NS/AP into the policy/regulatory framework

**Figure 4.7** Key elements in developing a NS/AP



Source: UN-REDD Programme

### Planning the NS/AP design process

**Planning****Analytical Base****Vision for REDD+****PAMs****Phase 2 arrangements****Drafting****Endorsement****Integration**

Countries may find it useful to develop an overall roadmap of the NS/AP design process that can be shared and discussed with stakeholders. It may help to:

- Clarify the sequencing of technical inputs, strategic decisions, consultation and validation processes, and steps in the drafting process;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of the various institutions and partners involved;
- Identify the budget needs; and
- Structure the development and consultation process (e.g. platforms, small technical working groups, large workshops, mailing lists, etc.).

Ensuring adequate time and feedback loops among the various elements of the readiness process, as relevant and feasible, will also be critical to the overall efficiency of the process.

This roadmap may be complemented by more specific documents such as:

- A roadmap for data gathering and analysis contributing to various stages of the NS/AP design process;
- A stakeholder engagement strategy and roadmap, specifically including gender equality and women's empowerment aspects; and
- A capacity building plan.

Countries should also consider early on the proposed legal status of the NS/AP and its 'anchoring' (e.g. within a wider climate change, green economy strategy, or overarching development plan), as well as the steps towards this. It may be useful to take into account the planning cycles of the main national and subnational strategic documents, (see previous section 'Building the case for REDD+'). It may also be useful to clarify whether the NS/AP will be refined and operationalized through a dedicated REDD+ investment plan, or directly through programmes and projects, whether at the national or subnational level (see section 'The overall 'pathway' to national REDD+ planning').

**Planning****Analytical Base****Vision for REDD+****PAMs****Phase 2 arrangements****Drafting****Endorsement****Integration**

### **Building the analytical base**

This is often an iterative process throughout the development and revision of the NS/AP during which studies are produced and refined and technical capacity built. Evidence-based data, built with contributions from various sectors and stakeholders, will be required to enable informed decision-making and policy design, and ensure the validity and appropriateness of the NS/AP. Countries should start with existing information while improving the knowledge base along the way, rather than wait for the best data. Depending on the national context and decisions made, the relevant analysis and tools may vary greatly. A roadmap of analytical work helps ensure information is available when it is needed, taking into account financial and technical capacity.

The starting point for the strategy design process is a consensus among stakeholders on the main drivers and barriers (usually known, but not necessarily acknowledged and/or agreed upon). Whether this consensus is reached from the onset through a literature review of the main direct and indirect drivers at the national level, or through

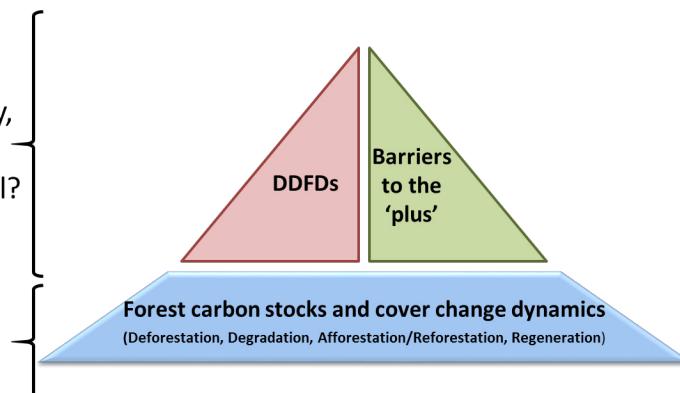
dialogue and consultations, countries may find it useful to think of their analysis of drivers as part of a wider analytical framework that provides foundations essential to a robust NS/AP design processes (see figure 4.8). It is useful to ensure linkages between the analyses of:

- Land use and land-use changes, forest carbon and forest cover dynamics (deforestation, degradation, afforestation/reforestation and regeneration); and
- Past, current and potential future DDFDs, and barriers to the 'plus' activities, that explain those dynamics.

This will provide crucial information on the potential of various REDD+ activities, geographical priorities, trends, potential entry points for REDD+ PAMs, etc. Following a general assessment at the national level, the analysis of drivers and barriers is likely to require various complementary analyses focusing (i) on specific direct or indirect drivers (e.g. legal, policy or fiscal framework; organization of agriculture supply chains; traditional practices, etc., and (ii) potentially on specific subnational areas. More information on the analysis of DDFDs can be found in **Module 3: Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation**.

**Figure 4.8** A strong analytical foundation for the NS/AP

- i. Why these forest dynamics?**  
What drives the DD dynamics, where, why, by who, how much?  
What prevents unlocking the “+” potential?
  
- ii. Past and current forest dynamics**  
How much forest/carbon, where?  
How much emissions and removals, where, what trends?



Source: UN-REDD Programme

Other analysis that may be required includes:

- Forward-looking analysis (i.e. modeling) of development scenarios to support dialogue and decision-making;
- Spatial planning (e.g. land-use optimization models to direct investment and meet development targets while minimizing negative impact on forests and local livelihoods; collecting and generating spatial information that can help identify appropriate areas for implementation of various REDD+ PAMs);
- Detailed studies of sectoral PAMs;
- Studies of costs, benefits and risks of potential REDD+ activities;
- Study of existing public and/or private financial flows in the land use sector; financing options for REDD+; required incentives; and
- Assessment of institutional capacities and capacity building needs.

For illustrative purposes, countries might ask themselves some of the following questions:

- *What is the physical and socio-economic context of the country, its governance structure, its main cross-sectoral and relevant sectoral development objectives? What positive or negative implications this may have for REDD+?*
- *What are the past, current and likely future forest dynamics (deforestation & degradation, reforestation & regeneration)? How does this relate to REDD+ activities? What are the direct & related underlying drivers of deforestation and degradation, and barriers to the ‘plus’ activities? Where, how much, who is involved, and why?*
- *How does REDD+ implementation relate to existing legal frameworks, policies and commitments?*



#### REFLECTION POINT

Can you think of any other relevant technical information that your country might want to include?



### **Building a vision for REDD+ and related strategic considerations (scope, scale, priority drivers/barriers, financing)**

Building on existing information, long-term visions, strategies and plans, including SDGs and INDCs (see earlier section “*Mapping and aligning with the National development goals and priorities*”) as well as the results of analytical work, countries may consider defining a long-term vision for REDD+ and the strategic pathway for achieving it, including in its initial stages (i.e. the first few years of implementation). This may include reflecting on the concrete goals the REDD+ mechanism may help to achieve, in terms of the five REDD+ activities as well as wider national objectives and priorities. Several countries, such as Chile, DRC, Ecuador, Mexico, have decided to firmly combine development objectives and REDD+ in a vision statement, and to accompany it with forest-related commitments alongside others related to the major sectors relevant to REDD+ (i.e. agriculture, energy, tenure, etc). In this sense, the national REDD+ vision may be understood as a combination of:

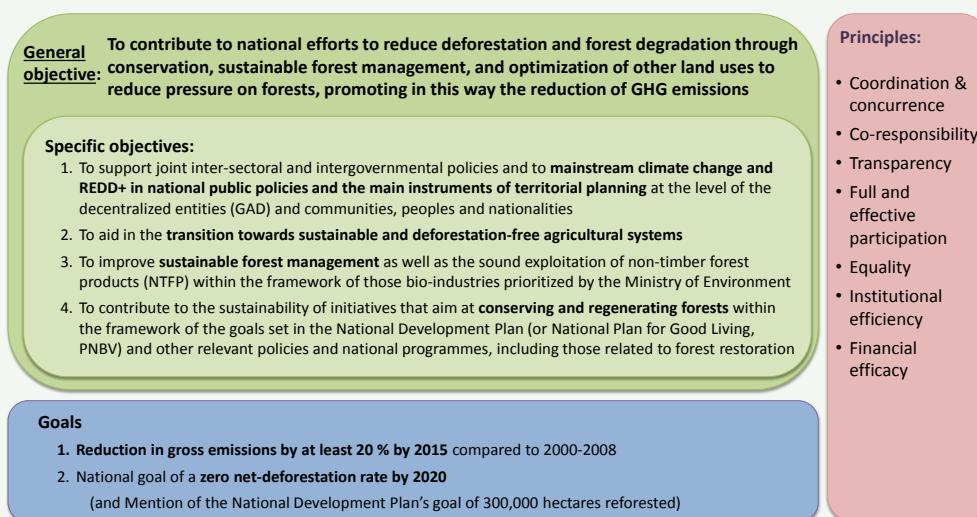
- **The main long-term objectives for forests in the country** (towards and beyond REDD+), **and key goals and commitments associated with them**, sectorial & cross-sectorial, related to forest/carbon or relevant to them. This is particularly important to set the direction and level of ambition in-country, as well as attract international support. Some countries have also defined an overall approach to REDD+ and overarching principles (e.g. DRC, Ecuador);
- **The main strategic decisions** that direct the way REDD+ will be implemented in the country in order to reach the long-term visions and related goals and commitments. These include the scope and scale of REDD+, geographical priorities, priority drivers to address, approach to financing and implementation, etc.

Such a vision for REDD+ is likely to be shaped gradually during the readiness process (and beyond), depending on the opportunities and constraints identified, the ‘business case’ made for REDD+, the ability to secure high-level political support and engage relevant stakeholders (including land-use sectors and the private sector).

### **Box 4.4: Examples of REDD+ national visions, objectives, goals**

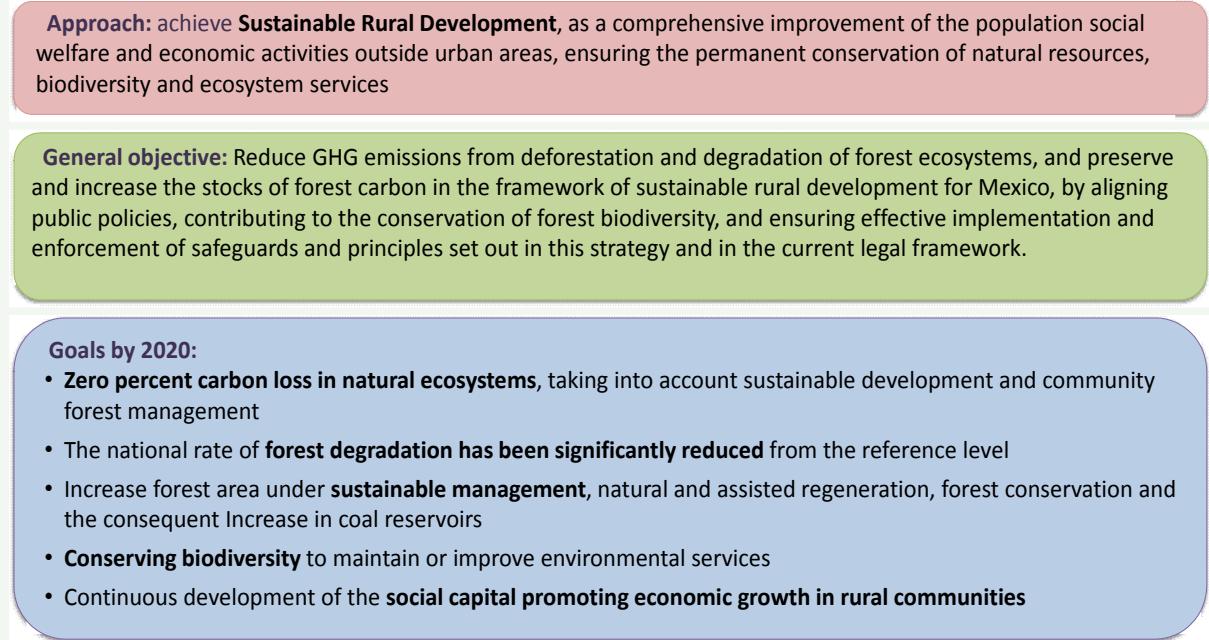
Figure 4.9 below shows the principles, objectives and specific goals for REDD+ implementation pursued by Ecuador. The objectives go beyond emissions reductions to promote a comprehensive transformation of the production systems.

**Figure 4.9: Objectives and goals of Ecuador REDD+ Action Plan**



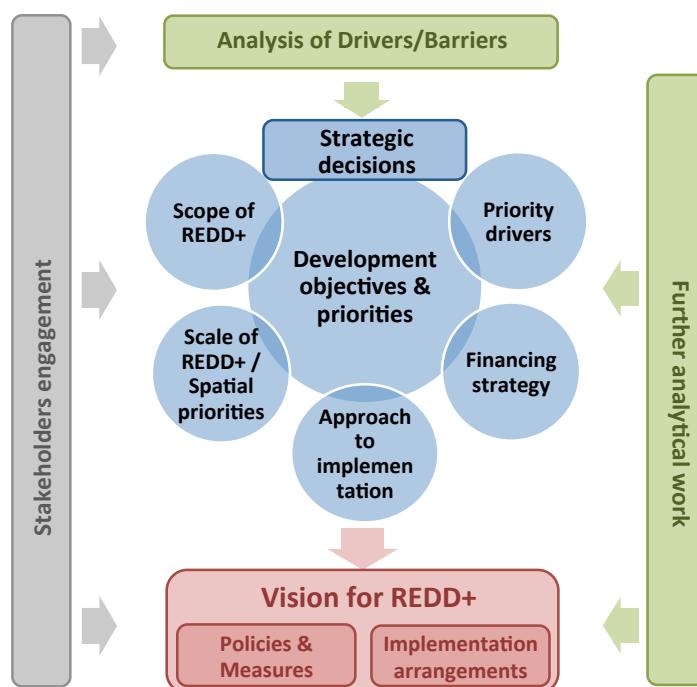
Source: UN-REDD Programme

In its vision, Mexico identifies the linkage with the higher objective of Sustainable Rural Development as an essential strategic approach to achieve REDD+ (see Figure 4.10). In order to achieve this, Mexico stresses in its objective and associated goals the importance of policy coordination and alignment. It considers that an integrated, cross-sectoral and spatial approach is required to address the pressure leading to deforestation and forest degradation.

**Figure 4.10: Approach, objectives and goals of Mexico REDD+ National Strategy**

Source: UN-REDD Programme, adapted from Mexico National REDD+ Strategy

## Various strategic considerations

**Figure 4.11: Strategic considerations shaping the country vision for REDD+**

Source: UN-REDD Programme

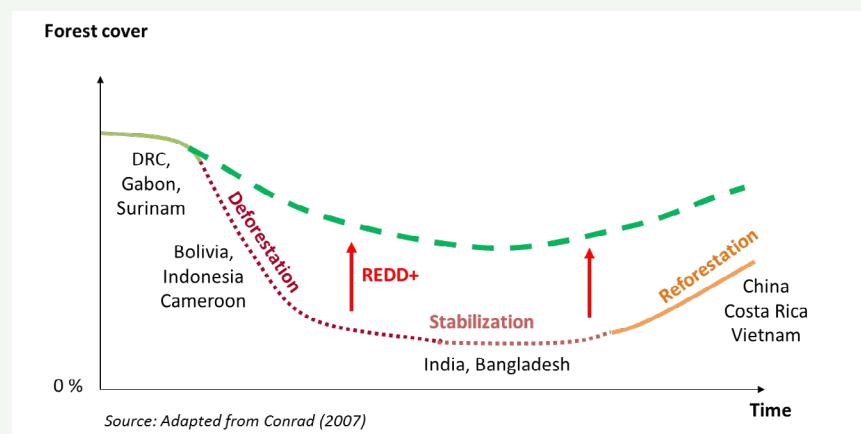
Figure 4.11 shows the strategic considerations shaping a country's vision for REDD+. The 'scope' of REDD+ (Figure 4.13) relates primarily to which of the five REDD+ activities a country chooses to implement. The 'scale' of REDD+ (Figure 4.14) refers (i) primarily to the geographical area in which the country will take responsibility for implementing REDD+ towards RBPs (i.e. area covered by a FRL/FREL, with related monitoring and reporting), but also (ii) the priority areas where it will focus REDD+ investment. 'Priority drivers' identifies

those direct and indirect drivers a country decides to address as a matter of priority, which may be a subset of all the drivers identified. The 'approach to REDD+ implementation' includes (i) whether REDD+ will be implemented mostly through setting an adapted policy and regulatory framework and/or through specific dedicated investments; (ii) the complementary roles of the various levels of government (national, subnational, local); and (iii) the types of actors involved in actual implementation (e.g. government agencies, private sector, NGOs).

#### Box 4.5: The forest transition theory

The forest transition theory suggests a pattern of change in forest cover in a country or region over time (Figure 4.12). Initially, a country has a high and relatively stable portion of land under forest cover. With development processes kicking in, deforestation begins and then accelerates due to the consumption of forest resources to meet national needs and finance national development, as well as through the conversion of forest land to other uses (e.g. agriculture). This reduction in forest cover eventually stabilizes when either (i) the most accessible forests and forest land has been used, and/or (ii) conversion to agriculture in particular is less profitable compared to other activities (diversification of the economy), and/or (iii) wood scarcity made reforestation efforts attractive and/or necessary. Indeed, rural exodus leaves the possibility to regenerate forests (i.e. afforestation/reforestation, agroforestry, regeneration, restoration), though with overall poorer carbon content, ecosystem services and biodiversity, and the related negative impacts it may have on livelihoods and economic viability.

**Figure 4.12: REDD+ and the Forest transition curve**



This empirical theory describes a broad pattern which will be influenced by many internal and external factors (e.g. population pressure, connection to the global economy, law enforcement capacity, global economic forces and government policies). REDD+ seeks to change the structural causes of the forest transition curve by: (i) encouraging developing countries to influence the internal factors driving the transition through adequate PAMs, while (ii) influencing the external factors that are out of direct reach of REDD+ countries, related for example to market forces (e.g. zero net deforestation commitments by large commodity producers, conditions for market access in consuming countries). Depending on the stage in the forest transition curve, as well as the vision for REDD+, countries are likely to use varying sets of PAMs, and mixes of incentives and enforcement, to inflect the curve while pursuing their development objectives.

## Scope of REDD+

The ‘scope’ of REDD+ activities (Figure 4.13) relates primarily to which of (or combination of) the five REDD+ activities a country chooses to implement. It may also refer to the five carbon pools a country accounts for (aboveground biomass, belowground biomass, deadwood, litter, soil). The scope of a submitted FREL/FRL may represent a sub-set of the activities and pools presented in the NS/AP, with the intention to expand to the full scope of activities and pools over time, applying a stepwise approach.

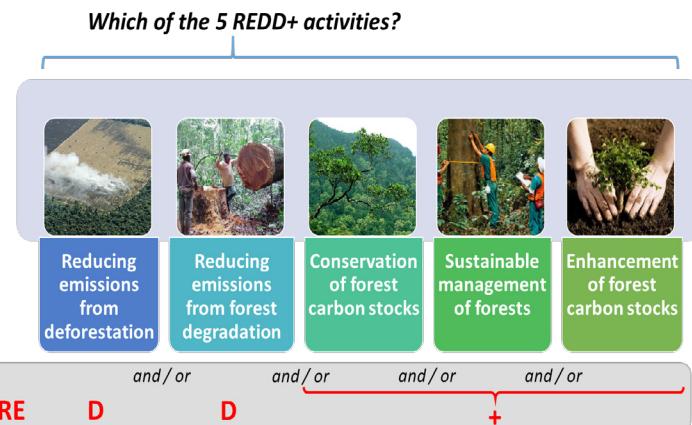
The broad scope of the five REDD+ activities allows participation by many countries with diverse national circumstances and at various stages in the forest transition curve (see box 4.5 above). A country’s choice on the scope of REDD+ activities may depend on, inter alia:

- The significance of the various REDD+ activities in terms of GHG emissions and/or removals;
- Their relation to the various drivers and the capacity to implement the activities through efficient and cost-effective PAMs;
- Technical considerations on the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) and (FREL/FRL);
- Political priorities.

While all ‘significant’ REDD+ activities should eventually be included, countries may find it useful to first focus on one or a few easier REDD+ activities (e.g. reducing deforestation, or reducing deforestation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks), while building further capacity to include all significant REDD+ activities.

Countries may decide to address in their NS/AP, through dedicated PAMs, REDD+ activities outside the scope of their initial FREL/FRL. This may be related to a focus on non-carbon benefits, political priorities, to ensure support from important stakeholders or to address the risk of displacement of emissions to another activity (e.g. from deforestation to degradation). All stakeholders should however be aware that these will not lead to RBPs under the UNFCCC, and countries may consider making a clear distinction on this in their NS/AP to ensure that financial resources are allocated in the most strategic and efficient way. It is however essential to ensure that all REDD+ activities included in the FREL/FRL are included in the NS/AP and covered by PAMs. Countries may otherwise perform poorly when reporting their results to the international community.

**Figure 4.13: The scope of REDD+**



Source: UN-REDD Programme

## Scale of REDD+

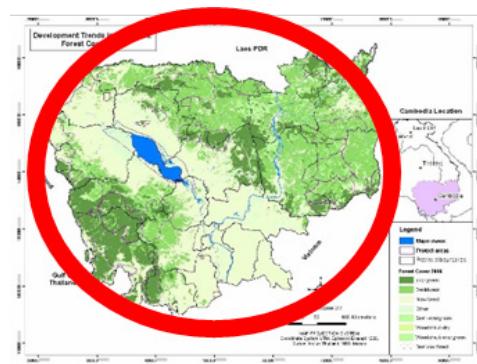
The UNFCCC allows flexibility for countries to start developing their FREL/FRL and to monitor (NFMS) and report at a subnational scale as an interim measure (Decision 1 CP/16, para 71b and c). In that sense, the scale of REDD+ refers primarily to the geographical area in which the country will implement REDD+ with the goal of securing RBPs. A country may opt for a subnational scale FREL/FRL, or for a national scale while still focusing part or all of its REDD-relevant efforts on one or more key subnational areas presenting the highest REDD+ potential (see Figure 4.14). The NS/AP should however be developed at the national scale, as should the Safeguard Information System (SIS) (Decision 1 CP/16, para 71a and d). A country’s decision to go for a subnational FREL/FRL as an interim measure may be related, inter alia, to:

- limited financial and/or technical capacity to address the drivers/barriers at the level required to achieve measurable results over the whole country, or to monitor and report results at the national scale (e.g. sheer size of the country, lack of relevant data for some regions);
- a lack of control over its entire territory (i.e. armed groups);
- its geographical development priorities; and
- a wish to test various approaches and tools in a more specific context (e.g. the Amazon biome) or with easier control (i.e. less spread out, less actors involved), while building capacity for national-scale implementation (i.e. communication and training material, tools and process).

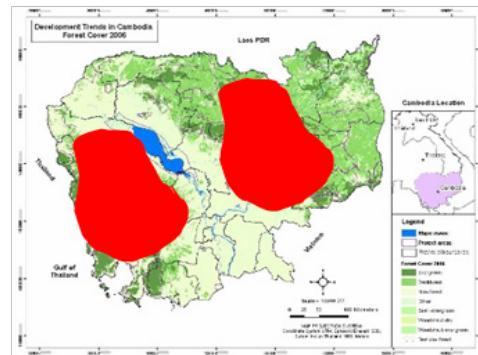


### REFLECTION POINT

Has your country started considering its scope for REDD+? If yes, do you know which activities, and why?

**Figure 4.14: The scale of REDD+**

**OR**  
?



Source: UN-REDD Programme

A country opting for a subnational FREL/FRL as an interim measure may consider different approaches to delineate the area covered. This could be tied to administrative units (e.g. the Cross River State in Nigeria), a specific biome (e.g. the Amazon biome in Brazil), or the area relevant to a specific priority driver. Each option will have different pros and cons: e.g. using an administrative unit may facilitate decision-making, the harmonization of PAMs, and synergies between different levels of government, while a biome or driver-based approach may allow working on more homogenous deforestation and degradation processes and more integrated answers. Ultimately, the optimal option will depend on the specific context, including governance structure or the specific DDFDs. Countries may actually consider a compromise between these options, such as Brazil using the already existing “Legal Amazon” region (created in 1948 based on studies of how to plan the economic and social development of the Amazon region).

Even with a national scale FREL/FRL and monitoring and reporting, REDD-relevant investments are likely to focus at least partly on one or more key areas. In addition to the reasons for a subnational FREL/FRL listed above, focusing REDD+ implementation on some specific areas could be related to the presence of hotspots of deforestation and forest degradation, or areas where the potential of the ‘plus’ activities can be best realized (i.e. areas of high ‘REDD+ potential’, in other words areas with high potential to generate emissions reductions &/or removals – REDD+ results – so as to access RBPAs). It could be also due to the presence of particularly active subnational authorities, the

presence of implementation partners, or to preferences of financial partners.

On the other hand, even if the country opts for a subnational FREL/FRL, PAMs at the national level will be paramount in supporting subnational implementation (see section on “Approaches to REDD+ implementation” below). Also, countries may still consider supporting REDD-relevant PAMs outside a subnational area, even though they will not lead to RBPs under the UNFCCC.

Several tools can assist in identifying the best option(s) (see **Module 7: Policies and Measures for REDD+ Implementation**). Countries going for interim subnational implementation may consider striking a balance between targeting ‘low hanging fruit’ to ensure results and addressing the more thorny issues and geographical areas. This will influence the credibility of the NS/AP and its utility in engaging the international community and securing support for REDD+ investments (as opposed to RBPs).

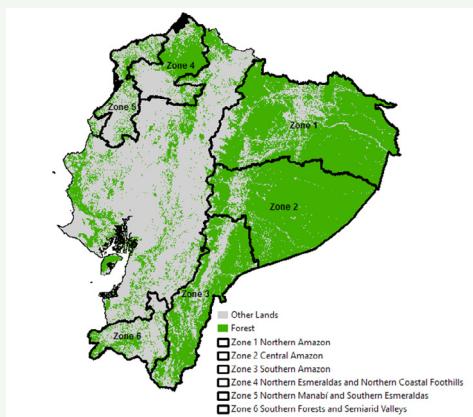
Whether opting for a subnational or national FREL/FRL while focusing efforts on some strategic subnational areas, countries may consider presenting in their NS/AP:

- The rationale behind the choice of approach and location for subnational implementation;
- The consequences regarding the REDD+ implementation arrangements (REDD+ architecture);
- The way it is expected to contribute to addressing the overall national REDD+ context; and
- The tentative vision for a future smooth scaling-up towards national-scale implementation.

### Box 4.6: Geographical priorities for REDD+ in Ecuador

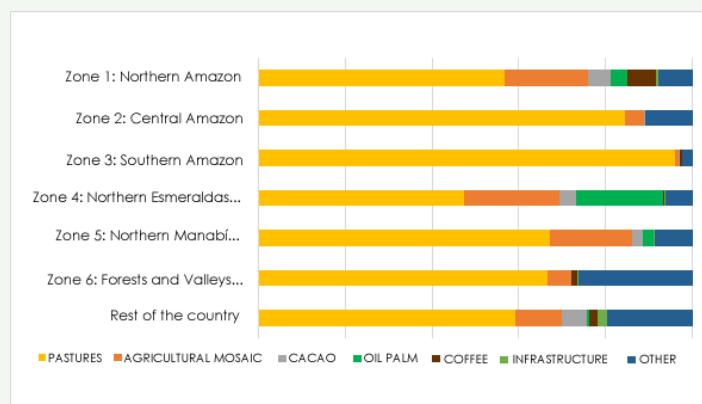
As part of its readiness process, Ecuador has identified 13 homogeneous areas of deforestation processes (HAD) by grouping administrative entities (cantons) whose population, agricultural and environmental dynamics are similar. Of these, six zones were prioritized for REDD+ (see Figure 4.15) because of: i) their forest potential; ii) the dynamics of deforestation (medium to high) and regeneration trends; iii) the presence of indigenous territories; iv) biodiversity. The six areas cover 102,283 km<sup>2</sup> of forest, of which 87 per cent are located in the Amazon.

**Figure 4.15: Homogeneous areas of deforestation (HAD) prioritized for REDD+**



Source: Ecuador REDD+ Action Plan

**Figure 4.16: Land uses causing deforestation in the six areas prioritized for REDD+ and the rest of the country (2008-2014)**



Source: Ecuador REDD+ Action Plan

Land uses of deforested areas in these six zones are different and respond to different dynamics of deforestation (see Figure 4.16).

Combining the HADs with the Planning Zones of the Secretariat for Planning and Development, as well as Indigenous Territories, will allow the prioritization of more effective interventions and a better resource allocation, based on local realities.

### Priority drivers

A country may also want to consider which strategic direct driver(s) and related indirect drivers it wishes to address as a priority. Such a prioritization exercise may consider, among other things:

- The significance of each direct driver in terms of emissions from deforestation/forest degradation, or potential for removals from the 'plus' activities;
- Choices in terms of scope and scale;
- Political priorities;
- The capacity to tackle the driver (technical capacity, political capital required, and actors needed, all this considering the related indirect drivers);

- Expected implementation costs and benefits (including non-carbon benefits); and
- Potential environmental and social risks and benefits associated with addressing a given driver.

More information on the prioritization of drivers can be found in **Module 3**.

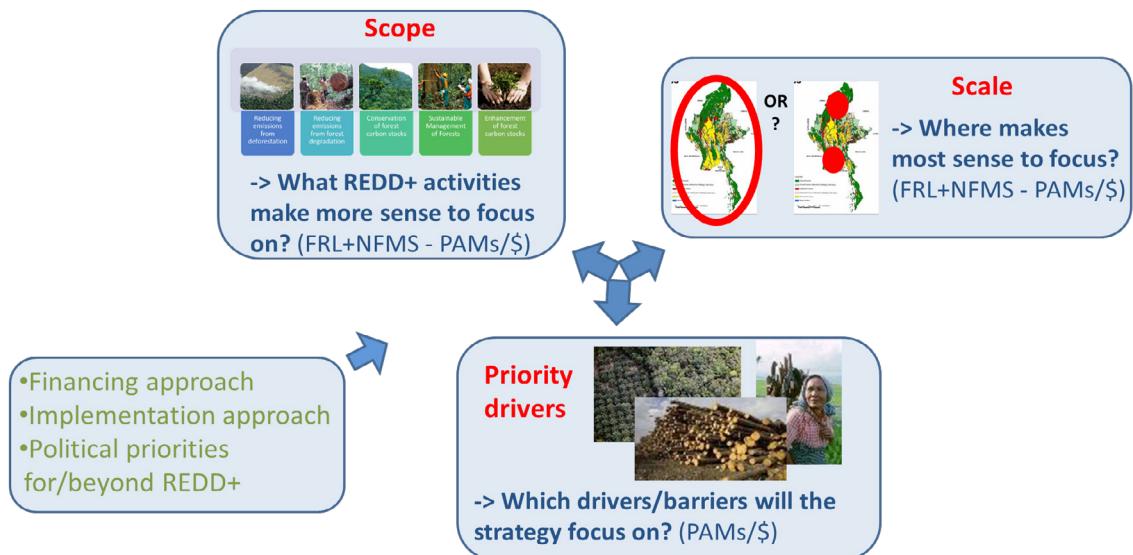
In sum, the most significant driver(s) in terms of potential emissions reductions and/or enhanced removals may not always be the first priority to address. Such driver(s) may be addressed more effectively at a later stage when the context (i.e. political, financial) is more conducive. However, as discarding significant drivers may undermine the overall credibility of the NS/AP, and the capacity to generate significant results, it is important to present and argue these points carefully.

## Looking at scope, scale and priority drivers in perspective

Decisions on scope, scale, and/or priority drivers will have strong implications for each other and should be considered together (Figure 4.17).

They may also have important implications for the design and implementation of the various elements of the national REDD+ architecture (especially the NS/AP and choice of PAMs, FREL/FRL, NFMS and safeguards/SIS), as well as the other way round.

**Fig 4.17: Strong inter-relations between considerations on Scope, Scale and priority drivers**



Source: UN-REDD Programme



### REFLECTION POINT

How do you think scope may impact on scale and priority drivers? And the other way round? How may this relate to the REDD+ architecture?

For example, if a country focuses on reducing emissions from deforestation in order to receive RBPs, the NFMS should be designed to monitor deforestation, a FREL should be set to account for historical deforestation (and adjusted for national circumstances, as necessary); safeguards (and SIS) must be operational anyhow. On the other hand, difficulties in including some of the REDD+ activities in the FREL/FEL (e.g. degradation), or technical or costs limitations in monitoring that activity through the NFMS, may contribute to the decision to not address the drivers linked to that activity or may affect the level of financial effort put into it, as it will not lead to RBPs (e.g. addressing selective logging or fuelwood collection leading to forest degradation). Again, a country may still decide to include them for their non-carbon benefits or other reasons.

Decisions on scale or priority areas for REDD+ implementation may have important implications for, inter alia, the relevant activities and drivers to be addressed, the stakeholders to engage, the expected costs and benefits, the design and implementation of the REDD+ architecture (FRL/FREL, NFMS SIS and legal, institutional and financial arrangements), as well as the

capacity required. In the same way, the cost and capacity implications of deploying the REDD+ architecture, or of implementing PAMs to obtain significant results, may lead a country to start REDD+ implementation at the subnational level, or to focus efforts on fewer key areas in implementing its national approach.

Choices made regarding priority drivers (e.g. charcoal production) and PAMs to address them (e.g. formalization and organization of the charcoal value chain) may have strong implications in terms of safeguards (e.g. impact on the livelihoods of the many vulnerable households involved in the production, transport or marketing). Addressing and respecting the safeguards and ensuring successful implementation may require adjustments in the way PAMs are implemented, and complementing them with others.

Though decisions on strategic aspects such as scope, scale and priority drivers may be taken at different stages of the readiness process, considering these aspects early on may help focus the analytical work, reflections and consultations on the key aspects. The optimal choices to start implementation will depend

entirely on country-specific circumstances and decisions regarding the long-term vision for REDD+ and the strategic pathway towards it.

## Approach to financing

Before a country can receive RBPs under REDD+, it first needs to demonstrate results in terms of emissions reductions or removals against its FREL/FRL. ‘Investment’ finance will be required to (i) implement the PAMs expected to generate the results, as well as to (ii) build capacity in the development and implementation of the NFMS and SIS (i.e. transaction costs).

The approach to financing is likely to influence the country vision for REDD+ as well as the NS/AP design and resource mobilization processes. As mentioned earlier, international public finance is likely to be necessary for many countries to (i) complement and catalyse their own domestic efforts in implementing REDD+PAMs and (ii) strengthen the profile of the REDD+ agenda in the country.

International finance may come from sources such as:

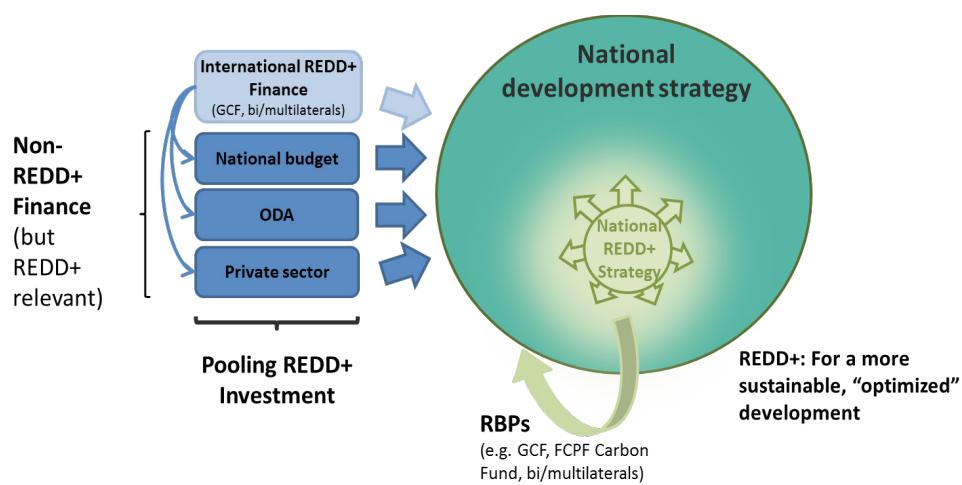
- Bilateral agreements (potentially both investment and RBPs);
- Multilateral initiatives (potentially both investment and RBPs), such as the Central Africa Forest Initiative (CAFI) or the Forest Investment Programme (FIP) (investment), and the World Bank’s Carbon Fund (RBPs);

- GCF (investment as well as RBPs, though the modalities for RBPs are yet to be clarified);
- Private sector.

GCF is anticipated to become one of the main funding instruments for the UNFCCC, including REDD+. While modalities to access RBPs under the GCF are yet to be clarified, it is already possible for countries to submit proposals to support their domestic efforts towards the implementation of their NS/AP. The GCF places major emphasis on “paradigm shifts” (i.e. supporting ‘game changer’ interventions alongside feasibility studies (including thorough financial feasibility), the relevance of proposed PAMs and implementation instruments, compliance with safeguards, as well as clear leadership from governments. For a more efficient and cost-effective process, it is crucial that countries build the requirements of the targeted financial sources into their REDD-readiness and NS/AP design processes (e.g. feasibility studies required for GCF proposals).

Although COP decisions emphasize the international nature of RBPs, it does not mean that investment finance will necessarily come from international sources or only from such sources. Countries are currently competing for limited international public REDD+ finance to support their domestic efforts; and even with substantial international public REDD+ finance, countries will need to diversify and align resources towards REDD+ objectives from multiple sources, whether REDD+ specific or not, domestic or international, public or private (see Figure 4.18).

**Figure 4.18: Necessity to pool and align REDD+ and non-REDD+ funding sources for NS/AP implementation**



Source: UN-REDD Programme

This stresses once again the importance of embedding REDD+ into the national development priorities of the country and sectors driving forest cover change (i.e. the many reasons to implement REDD+ beyond emissions reductions). This will also demonstrate and strengthen national ownership and long-term sustainability of REDD+ implementation, important elements in making the case for international support for REDD+ implementation. As many if not most PAMs towards REDD+ may not be new, since many countries have been implementing PAMs to address deforestation or to promote conservation and sustainable management of forests for decades, countries should at least start by highlighting relevant existing domestic financial efforts.

Countries have so far demonstrated very different approaches to financial planning for REDD+. Chile's national strategy, for example, already includes an overall budget that presents existing funding for its various PAMs and also highlights gaps. On the other hand, the NS/APs of DRC, Mexico or Peru do not include any budget. In the case of DRC, a budget was subsequently developed for its national investment plan.

The type of funding sources targeted and especially the level of reliance on external sources are likely to influence the type of information required in the strategy (and/or any subsequent investment plan), the level of detail and type of technical analysis required to back it up, etc. This should therefore be thought through early on.

A more in-depth discussion on financing REDD+ can be found in **Module 9: REDD+ Finance**.

### **Approaches to REDD+ implementation**

Different countries may have different approaches to REDD+ implementation, depending on their situation and priorities. Some countries may take a 'hands-off' approach, using the legal, policy and fiscal framework to encourage 'good behavior' and discourage the bad; others may be more 'hands-on', developing concrete interventions in the field; and yet others may use a combination of both. Some countries may decide to implement REDD+ mostly through government agencies, while others may rely on national and

international service providers, whether from civil society or the private sector. Countries may also give different roles to different levels of government (depending also on the governance structure, i.e. level of decentralization).

In the same way, REDD+ implementation is likely to require coordinated interventions at multiple levels of governance, from national to subnational and local levels. These various levels of governance encompass diverse stakeholders, including decision-makers, influential actors and agents of deforestation and forest degradation, each with different interests and implementation capacities. As relevant in their national context, countries may find it useful to reflect on their PAMs through these various levels of governance, ensuring that PAMs at higher levels have a catalytic effect at the lower levels and address some issues that the lower levels cannot (see **Module 7** on PAMs for more details).

Ultimately, the optimal approach to REDD+ implementation should be decided pragmatically based on national circumstances, and may be a combination of these various options.

Countries might ask themselves some of the following questions:

**How may REDD+ influence and/or contribute to our national development framework?**

- What are the significant REDD+ activities in our country? Are there technical limitations in implementing them (e.g. National Forest Monitoring Systems NFMS, FREL/FRL)?
- Will we develop a FREL/FRL at the national scale and/or focus on specific subnational areas, and why?
- How do the drivers identified relate to the various REDD+ activities? What are the most significant drivers in terms of REDD+, and which ones should be prioritized (e.g. REDD+ significance, feasibility, priorities)?
- What is our approach to REDD+ implementation? What roles for the various governance levels (national, subnational, local)? How do we ensure that the higher governance levels will efficiently and effectively catalyse, coordinate and support subnational efforts and public and private actors?



## Analysing options and prioritizing Policies and Measures (PAMs)

In the context of REDD+, PAMs can be understood as actions taken and/or mandated by governments in order to implement REDD+ activities, potentially in combination with other objectives (such as integrated rural development or sectoral transformation). As such, the presentation of PAMs occupies a central section of the NS/AP document.

The identification of PAMs to achieve REDD+ results will be informed by the analytical base, including the analysis of the drivers and barriers, as well as the national REDD+ vision and the related strategic considerations presented earlier (scope, scale, priority drivers, etc). It should also take clearly into account lessons learnt from past and current interventions, as well as build on existing PAMs, strengthening and complementing them, or realigning them towards the vision defined.

Countries may present a quite wide while coherent and relevant set of PAMs to address the various direct and indirect drivers and barriers prioritized. The NS/AP may be used as a wider coordination framework for the many investments potentially relevant to REDD+ (positively or negatively), and their alignment towards REDD+ objectives.

However, with financial resources limited, countries may still want to prioritize those PAMs that will have most impact. This may be done early on or later during actual investment planning. While the process of developing a theory of change (discussed further below) should assist in identifying the most relevant PAMs, various factors may be taken into consideration, including:

- The mitigation potential of the packages of PAMs (and importance of individual PAMs in allowing the overall package to have an impact);
- Alignment with national (and/or subnational) development priorities and plans;
- Overall feasibility:
  - Political acceptability of/support for actions; supporting policy, legal and institutional framework;
  - Financial feasibility, whether through public or private sources, domestic and international;

- Technical capacity, at national and subnational levels, to implement PAMs effectively and efficiently;
- The likely costs and (non-carbon) benefits, as well as potential risks (See **Module 8: REDD+ Safeguards under the UNFCCC**);
- Existing PAMs on which to build.

The process of selecting PAMs should be done in consultation with relevant stakeholders, from national and local government officials to civil society organizations, the private sector, and community and indigenous groups, among others (see **Module 11**).

The relevance and adequacy of individual PAMs should not be assessed in isolation, but instead developed as coherent package of REDD+ interventions, sequenced over time, that complement one other to address both direct and underlying drivers, in an effective, equitable and efficient way. Potential or necessary synergies and catalytic effects between PAMs implemented at the national, subnational, and local levels should be considered (e.g. policy or regulatory reforms supporting the implementation of actions at the subnational level). The development of this package might be supported by the definition of a theory of change, which expresses how the various PAMs are – collectively – expected to achieve desired results (carbon and other types of benefits). Developing an overall theory of change may also facilitate the potential subsequent step of developing an investment plan and/or project proposals. A more in depth discussion can be found in **Module 7**.

Countries might ask themselves some of the following questions:

- What are the PAMs that we envisage putting in place to implement identified REDD+ activities? How do the proposed actions adequately address the related direct as well as underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and/or barriers to the ‘plus’ activities?
- Why and how have the PAMs been defined and prioritized? What is their social, political and economic feasibility and viability, and how do they relate to existing policies and measures (correcting, supporting and/or adding to them)? In which way(s) are they transformative?



## Defining implementation arrangements (financial, legal and institutional)

Countries should define how they will ensure the efficient and effective implementation of REDD+ in phase 2. This includes the institutional, legal and financial arrangements to oversee, coordinate, implement, monitor and report on REDD+ implementation. Institutional arrangements for the readiness phase may have to be reconsidered in the implementation phase to be more in line with the drivers addressed and PAMs selected. Clear mandates, budgets and legal base should be established, that build on existing arrangements supplemented as needed.

Box 4.7 proposes several resources to support this step. The institutional arrangements for REDD+ should be

country-driven. They could be supported by guidance from the UN-REDD Programme, if and when appropriate. For more information on the monitoring of PAMs, see **Module 7**.

Countries might ask themselves some of the following questions:

- How will we instigate and ensure effective inter-institutional and inter-sectoral dialogue and coordination?
- How will various tools be put in place or improved to allow adequate monitoring and evaluation of REDD+ implementation and performance?
- How will these arrangements build on existing structures, processes and legal frameworks, and complement them?



## The drafting process of the NS/AP

The drafting of the NS/AP should allow for plenty of interactions and feedback loops, so as to ensure ownership and support from all relevant stakeholders. Following previous processes (analysis, PAMs selection, etc), it is an opportunity for additional consultation, with various drafts being released and circulated to various audience, building up to a full version of the NS/AP. While early drafts – encompassing part or all of the strategy – may be circulated to smaller audience first, later drafts should be more inclusive and may include both in-country as well as international stakeholders. The length of this process will depend on the way it is conducted and the extent of consensus desired on the various elements of the documents.

Some countries (e.g. Zambia, Uganda, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam) found it useful to start the NS/AP development – and drafting – process with an ‘Issues and Options paper’, which:

- Gathers and presents in a coherent manner all relevant existing information (e.g. location and intensity of forest dynamics, drivers and barriers, existing PAMs as well as lessons learned, progress on the FREL/FRL and NFMS, etc.), highlighting critical gaps;
- Analyzes the information collected, considering the various issues that will shape the strategic approach to REDD+ (scope and scale, priority drivers, geographical priorities, etc.); and
- Presents options that decision-makers could consider for the issues listed, with their likely implications and associated pros and cons, as well as recommendations.

### Box 4.7 Resources to support the definition of Institutional arrangements

- [UN-REDD/FAO \(2013\) Legal Analysis of Cross-cutting Issues for REDD+ Implementation: Lessons Learned from Mexico, Viet Nam and Zambia](#)
- [FAO Development Law Service](#)

The process of putting the Issues and Options paper together is already an occasion to engage with many relevant sectors and stakeholders. But the draft paper may be an opportunity to intensify and support this multi-stakeholder dialogue, and launch a wider consultation process at the national level and, potentially, in some key subnational areas. It will of course be an important vehicle for engaging and informing decision-makers.

An Issues and Options paper may help in structuring the NS/AP development process, ensuring the support of adequate expertise, and obtaining a sufficiently ‘strategic’ document. Though this document may represent a ‘proto-strategy’, countries may want to avoid considering it as a draft strategy. The reasons for this may include, differing objectives, the inclusion of potentially sensitive issues that may be more difficult to discuss in a draft NS/AP, and the management of expectations at such an early stage. Obviously, this document should however strongly facilitate and contribute to the first draft NS/AP.



### Political and stakeholder endorsement

Countries might consider undertaking an exercise of political endorsement or validation of their NS/AP. This means giving the document a formal ‘stamp of approval’ from the government (including key ministries related to

direct and underlying drivers of deforestation) as well as validation by relevant stakeholders. This will add weight and legitimacy to the document, especially if looking for financial support for REDD+ investment.



### Formal integration of the NS/AP

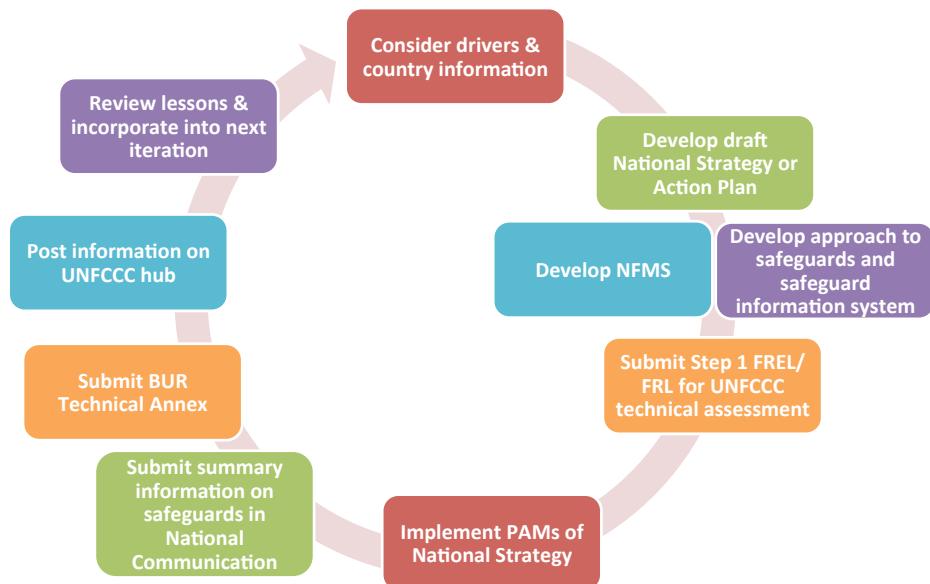
Once the NS/AP has been endorsed, countries might consider integrating it formally into national policy and/or the regulatory framework through instruments such as a presidential or ministerial decree, or by incorporating it into national laws (e.g. a climate change regulatory

framework). To the extent possible, the content of the NS/AP should be integrated into relevant cross-sectoral and sectoral plans at the national and subnational levels (e.g. agricultural plan or land-use plan, depending on the drivers addressed and strategic options selected). This may be a lengthy process but is essential for the strategy to have a real transformational impact.

## An iterative step-wise process

As with any strategic document, NS/APs are meant to be revised periodically according to changes in the context as well as lessons learned (Figure 4.19). Changes in the context may relate to mutating or emerging drivers of deforestation, changes in the political and economic context, or improvement in a country’s technical capacity (e.g. NFMS) which allows it to widen the scope

of REDD+. The implementation phase (phase 2) is meant for experimenting and further building capacity towards phase 3 (with both phases most likely overlapping). It involves testing various PAMs and combinations of PAMs, in various contexts and through different implementation arrangements. Lessons learned should be documented and integrated through an adaptive management framework and reflected in subsequent versions of the NS/AP (see also **Module 7**).

**Figure 4.19: REDD+ Implementation: a continuous improvement cycle**

Source: UN-REDD Programme

## CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES THROUGHOUT THE NS/ AP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Several additional elements must be considered to ensure a quality NS/AP design process and document.

### National institutional clarity, leadership and coordination

The NS/AP design process is likely to require the convergence of information and efforts from many stakeholders, sectors, thematic and geographical areas, at various levels of governance, which may prove quite challenging. Strong leadership from a single governmental body over the whole readiness process, backed by an adequate legal framework and budget are key to effective readiness and strategy design processes. This is also true for the implementation phase, when multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms are likely to be even more important.

### Multi-level, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder processes

It is important to build understanding, consensus, support and collaboration from the various productive sectors and cross-sectoral institutions, since most DFDDs have their cause outside the forestry sector. Multi-sectoral engagement and coordination (including forestry, environment, agriculture, planning, and finance) are thus crucial, both in the readiness and implementation phases. The NS/AP design process is a good opportunity and medium for making REDD+ more tangible to other sectors. Figure 4.20 provides an example of sectoral ministries and their possible input in the NS/AP development process. The various levels of government should also be taken into account, clearly identifying who has responsibility for what.

Cross-sectoral dialogue and coordination mechanisms may need to be strengthened or created to help align government actions to achieve REDD+ results. Higher-level political support is particularly critical in achieving this.

**Figure 4.20 Example of sectoral ministry engagement**

Source: UN-REDD Programme

In order to build consensus, support and collaboration, it is also necessary for the process to be participatory, transparent and equitable, involving non-governmental actors, including grassroots organizations representing communities and indigenous people, and the private sector. Additional expertise should be used by involving research centers, academia, etc. A good multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder process will facilitate final validation and appropriation of the NS/AP.

Mapping key actors, inside and outside the government, is useful for defining an effective stakeholder engagement strategy. Potential supporters (institutions and individuals) and challengers may be identified, along with the kind of information, interventions and/or support that may raise their interest and support in REDD+. A formal or informal roadmap could then be prepared so as to engage them in an appropriate and timely manner. More information on stakeholder engagement can be found in **Module 11**.

When starting the implementation of REDD+ in one or more subnational areas, leadership at the national level will be essential in ensuring coherence and consistency in the REDD+ readiness work (which encompasses development of FREL/FRL, safeguards and SIS, among other things) both:

- Among subnational entities (horizontal coherence); and
- Between subnational entities and the national level (vertical coherence).

Coherence and consistency are going to be key in ensuring easier aggregation of information for quality reporting to the UNFCCC for RBPs, as well as in managing the transition from subnational to national implementation over time. This issue will be even more acute when various instruments outside the UNFCCC are mixed, such as subnational or project-level approaches relating to voluntary carbon markets (VCM), as methodologies and rules used by various VCM standards may not be aligned with those of the UNFCCC. Integration with these other instruments, already deployed in many REDD+ countries, is necessary but can be particularly complex when coherence is not ensured from the onset. The many opportunities and constraints associated with pursuing this kind of alternative approach should be evaluated carefully.

## Gender considerations

Women's and men's specific roles, rights and responsibilities, as well as their particular use patterns and knowledge of forests, shape their experiences differently. As such, gender-differentiated needs, uses and knowledge (including of the forest) are critical inputs to policy and programmatic interventions (e.g. which land use types could be well suited for REDD+ activities), which in turn will help facilitate the long-term success of REDD+ on the ground. Thus, understanding the varying roles played by men and women can enable a more accurate analysis of the problem — who

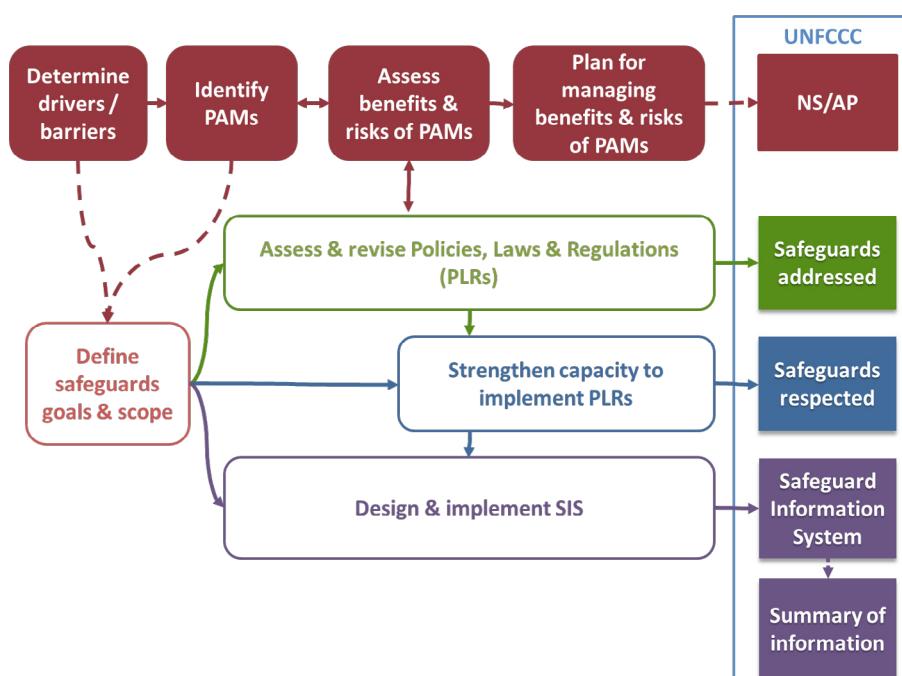
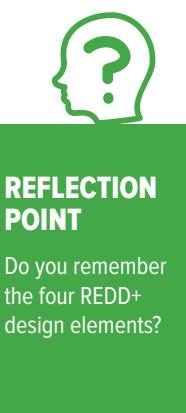
is driving deforestation, where and how – and also help identify potential solutions and allows REDD+ interventions to be applicable and relevant at national and local levels. To ensure that NS/APs are inclusive and resilient, specific efforts should be made to integrate a gender perspective, wherein the specific roles, priorities and contributions of women, youth and men are taken into account at every stage of policy and programme development, from design through implementation and evaluation. Gender-responsive NS/AP and PAMs should therefore recognize the role of women as (often) primary users of forests with valuable knowledge and experience; ensure women's and men's equitable involvement in associated decision-making processes; clearly communicate the potential benefits to women; and include enforceable measures that ensure those benefits are both protected and delivered ([UN-REDD, 2001](#)). The UN-REDD Programme has developed two tools - a "Methodological Brief on Gender" (unpublished as of late-2016) and a "[Guidance Note on Gender Sensitive REDD+](#)", to assist partner countries and stakeholders in integrating a gender perspective into the preparation, development and implementation of NS/APs.

## Ensuring coordination and coherence among REDD+ design elements

As mentioned, the NS/AP is only one of the four design elements which a country should prepare in order to be ready to receive RBPs. Choices made on each the four elements may have strong implications for the others (see section "*Looking at scope, scale and priority drivers in perspective*", as well **Module 8** on safeguards and **Module 7** on PAMs). As such, it is important when designing the NS/AP to consider the wider picture and ensure regular communication and coordination in the development and implementation of the four REDD+ elements.

For example, the analysis of the drivers/barriers and PAMs will assist in defining the goals and scope of the safeguards. Investing too much effort in safeguards before the country considers its strategic options may be inefficient (e.g. too general, or not focusing on the right issues or geographical areas) as well as abstract, and trigger debate about potential risks that proves irrelevant later on (e.g. over the potential threats from REDD+ on the livelihoods of indigenous peoples, while REDD+ implementation may eventually focus on areas or drivers that do not pose a threat to livelihoods of indigenous peoples). Figure 4.21 illustrates a potential sequencing of and feedback loops between the NS/AP and safeguards/SIS development processes.

**Figure 4.21: Linkages between NS/AP development process and Safeguards/SIS**





## EXERCISE 7

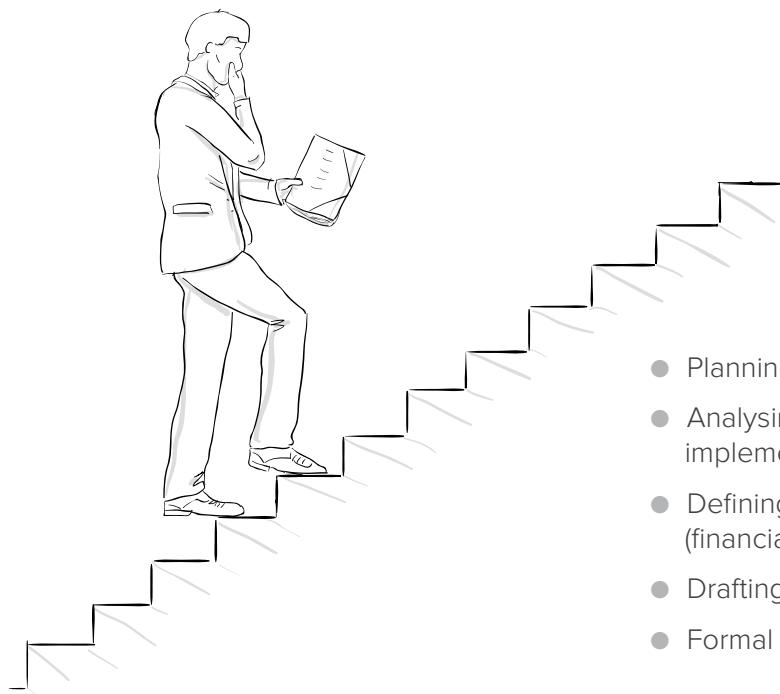
The NS/APs of most countries have a logical flow, articulated around the guiding questions ‘Why/What/How’. Some of the following potential elements of a NS/AP relate to the ‘Why’ question, others to the ‘What’ or the ‘How’. Can you identify which is which? Use the left hand column to try without referring to the text. Then use the right hand column to check your answers.

Your answer	Potential elements of the strategy	Answer after referring to text.
	PAMs to address drivers and achieve results	
	Country vision for REDD+	
	Forest context of the country (DDFD processes & trends, drivers, barriers to ‘plus’)	
	Implementation arrangements	
	The way PAMs in the strategy build on/ supplement/change existing PAMs	
	Development context and objectives of the country	
	Scope of REDD+, scale of REDD+, priority drivers	



## EXERCISE 8

One the way to an important meeting with a government partner to develop a NS/AP, you struggle to recall the 8 main steps in the design process. These are the only ones you can remember. What’s missing?



- Planning the NS/AP design process
- Analysing options and prioritizing activities to implement (PAMs)
- Defining implementation arrangements (financial, legal and institutional)
- Drafting processes
- Formal integration of the NS/AP



## KEY MESSAGES OF THIS CHAPTER

- NS/APs describe how emissions will be reduced and/or how forest carbon stocks will be enhanced, conserved and/or sustainably managed in the implementation of REDD+;
- NS/AP are one of four design elements required by the UNFCCC for REDD+ implementation and to access RBPs;
- Countries should identify which national priorities may be supported by implementing REDD+, beyond climate change mitigation (e.g. enhanced policy coherence and cross-sectoral coordination, strengthened resilience to natural hazard, integrated sustainable rural development, etc)
- Ensuring the quality of both the NS/AP design process and NS/AP document is essential, as it is an opportunity to:
  - Build buy-in and trust across national stakeholders as well as from the international community;
  - Make REDD+ more tangible to relevant stakeholders by linking it with existing policy objectives;
  - Give confidence in a country's capacity to deliver REDD+ results and receive RBPs;
  - Increase chances to attract financial support for implementation from the international community;
  - Showcase existing domestic financial and policy efforts, and demonstrate the value of further support;
  - Contribute to a well-coordinated and more efficient readiness process.
- Strategic choices made on each of the four design elements of REDD+ (NS/AP, FREL/FRL, NFMS, SIS) may have strong implications for the others: ensuring regular communication and feedback loops in their development and during their implementation is therefore critical; and
- Developing a NS/AP is an iterative, step-wise process.



## WHAT FURTHER QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THIS TOPIC?



## NOTES

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## Web resources

- FAO Development Law Service <http://www.fao.org/legal/home/legal-office/en/>
- REDD+ Web Platform, at <http://redd.unfccc.int/>. The UNFCCC’s hub for sharing information and lessons learned about REDD+ activities.
- UNFCCC website, at <https://unfccc.int/2860.php> (not unfccc.int). A source of background information on the convention and, in its ‘Land Use and Climate Change’ section, on REDD+.
- UN-REDD Programme, at: <http://www.un-redd.org/>, and its Collaborative Online Workspace, at <http://www.unredd.net/>. Provides resources and a discussion forum to support countries engaged in REDD+ and promote stakeholder engagement.

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