

REDD+ Partnership Voluntary REDD+ Database Updated Progress Report

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1. Introduction

The Voluntary REDD+ Database (VRD) is a key provider of information to the global community on REDD+ financing, actions and results. The objectives of the database are to improve transparency and coordination around REDD+, support efforts to identify and analyse gaps and overlaps in REDD+ financing, and help share experiences on REDD+ between Partners and with other stakeholders.

The need for a VRD was initially voiced at the preparations for the *Paris International Conference on the Major Forest Basins* in March 2010, which was followed by a first data collection effort and a report to the *Oslo Climate and Forest Conference* in May 2010. The development of the VRD was agreed in the 2010 Work Program by Partners in the REDD+ Partnership, with subsequent work by the UN-REDD Programme team leading to the design and implementation of a database structure. Database development and management is being carried out by a team from FAO and UNEP-WCMC as part of the REDD+ Partnership Secretariat Services (FMT/PT), under the guidance of co-Chairs and Partners.

A revised Questionnaire was launched in mid March 2011. As of 9 June 2011, responses were received from 25 countries and 6 institutions. Eleven of these countries were reporting for the first time. Substantial effort is being put into improving the quality and comprehensiveness of the data, through dialogue with reporting countries and institutions. When earlier inputs are taken into account, responses have been received from 28 REDD+ countries (of 54 in the REDD+ Partnership) receiving financing, 15 donor countries (of 17 in the REDD+ Partnership), as well as 13



organisations/multilateral institutions. These totals include inputs to the initial *REDD+ Financing and Activities Survey* exercise conducted by Australia, France and Papua New Guinea in 2010, and subsequent updates.

Significant improvements to the database have also been achieved. A new, user-friendly interface is being developed, and the database structure updated to reflect the revised Questionnaire. This report gives an update on progress on the database and data collection, and proposed next steps. It is intended to serve as input for discussion at the Partnership meeting in Bonn on 12 June 2011.

2. Developments in data collection and database system

2a. Data acquisition – new questionnaire

Under the guidance of Partnership co-Chairs, the VRD team created a revised *REDD+ Partnership Questionnaire for Financing, Actions and Results*, disseminated in March 2011 to all 71 Partner countries and over 100 registered stakeholders. French and Spanish language versions were distributed in early May. The questionnaire was created in response to Partnership requests for additional work to: clarify data requirements and assure the quality of data submitted to the VRD, gather data from new respondents, update existing information, and collect data in a form more appropriate for analysis purposes (e.g. financing gaps and overlaps analyses). As of 9 June 2011, 31 questionnaire responses (or equivalent updates) had been received from 17 REDD+ countries, 8 donor countries and 6 institutions.

New aspects of the new Questionnaire include more detailed questions on REDD+ financing and further guidance on filling in the report. These changes are intended to address requests that have been made by database users, and provide better support for future analyses. The new data gathered will also enable new views of the data through the online interface.

Submitting data

In addition to the data collection rounds called by co-Chairs, the VRD accepts submissions and updates from countries and institutions on their REDD+ efforts at any time. Please email vrd@reddpluspartnership.org for more information, or download the form from the website.

2b. Data collection and entry principles

The VRD team has been implementing new processes to address issues raised by the Partnership. The following issues are being addressed during data collection, quality assurance and entry:

Responder coverage and completeness: a key task is to maximize the number of Partner countries and REDD+ initiatives included in the REDD+ reporting process, and to help respondents submit information that is as complete as possible. The VRD team has been working closely with respondents to assist in Questionnaire entry.

Data ownership: The country/institutional focal point has full ownership of the data. All changes to the data are made in close collaboration with the country/institutional focal point, and the final say is the hands of that focal point.

Data quality: Checking the database is an important part of the VRD team's work in collaboration with the country/institutional focal points.



2c. New user interface – viewing summary and detailed data

The VRD team is developing a new graphical user interface, which aims to allow the visitor to quickly access up-to-date information on REDD+ financing. The main entry point is the **overview** section (Figure 1), which offers access to a map showing funds committed to individual countries; an interactive graph of REDD+ financing through time and by type (grant, loan etc), and a list of all arrangements in the database. The default view of each of these summaries is based on reports from recipients, with an alternate option to view reports by funders. For good reasons, REDD+ funding reported by funders and by recipients can differ, so this choice is available for summary data throughout the website.

Visitors may also select from lists of **countries** or **institutions** (Figure 2), to access similar summary statistics, graphs, maps where relevant, and lists of arrangements. Details of individual arrangements may be viewed from these lists or from the summary page.



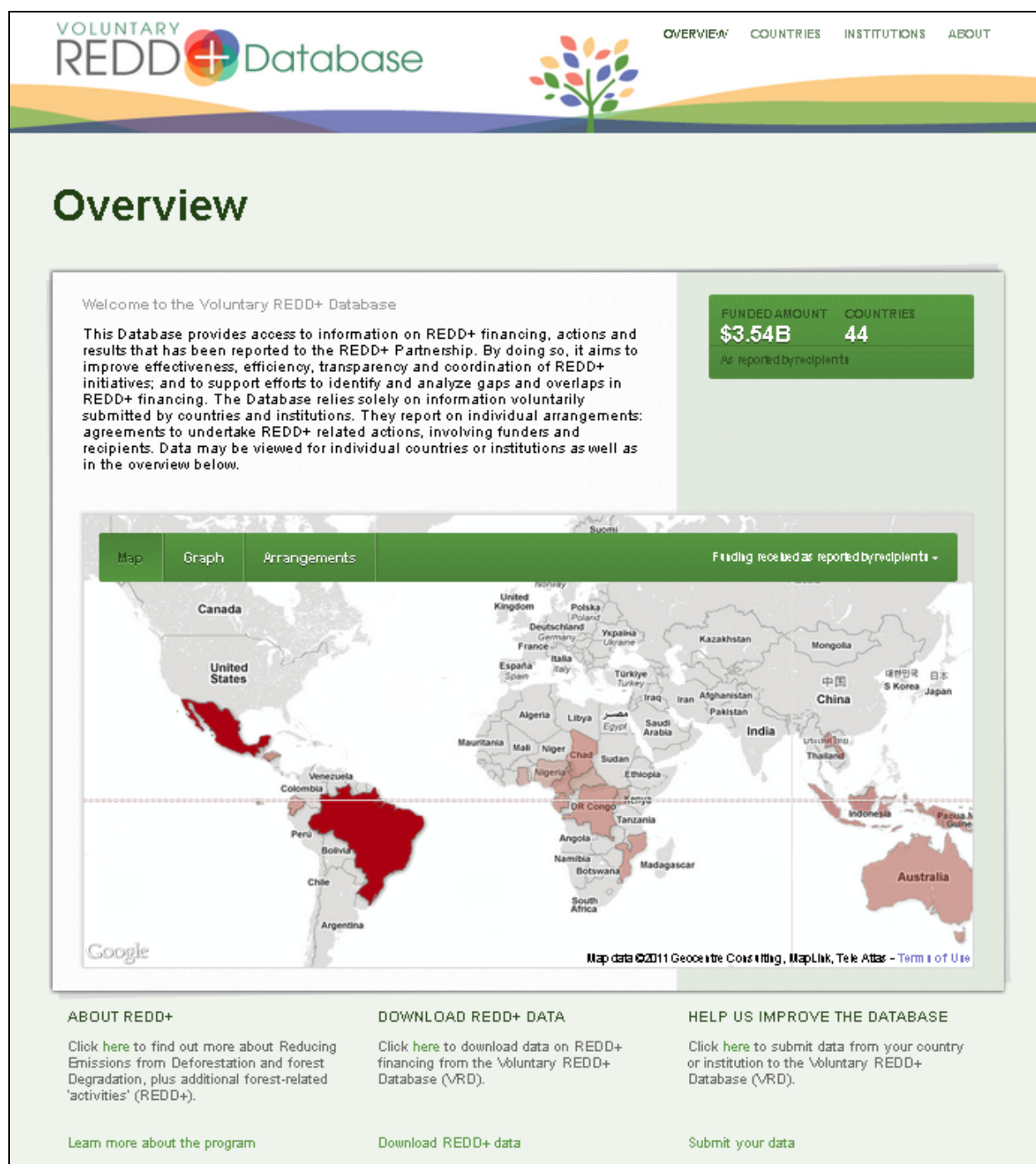


Figure 1: View of summary data (funding reported by recipients) on the new interface for the REDD+ Database



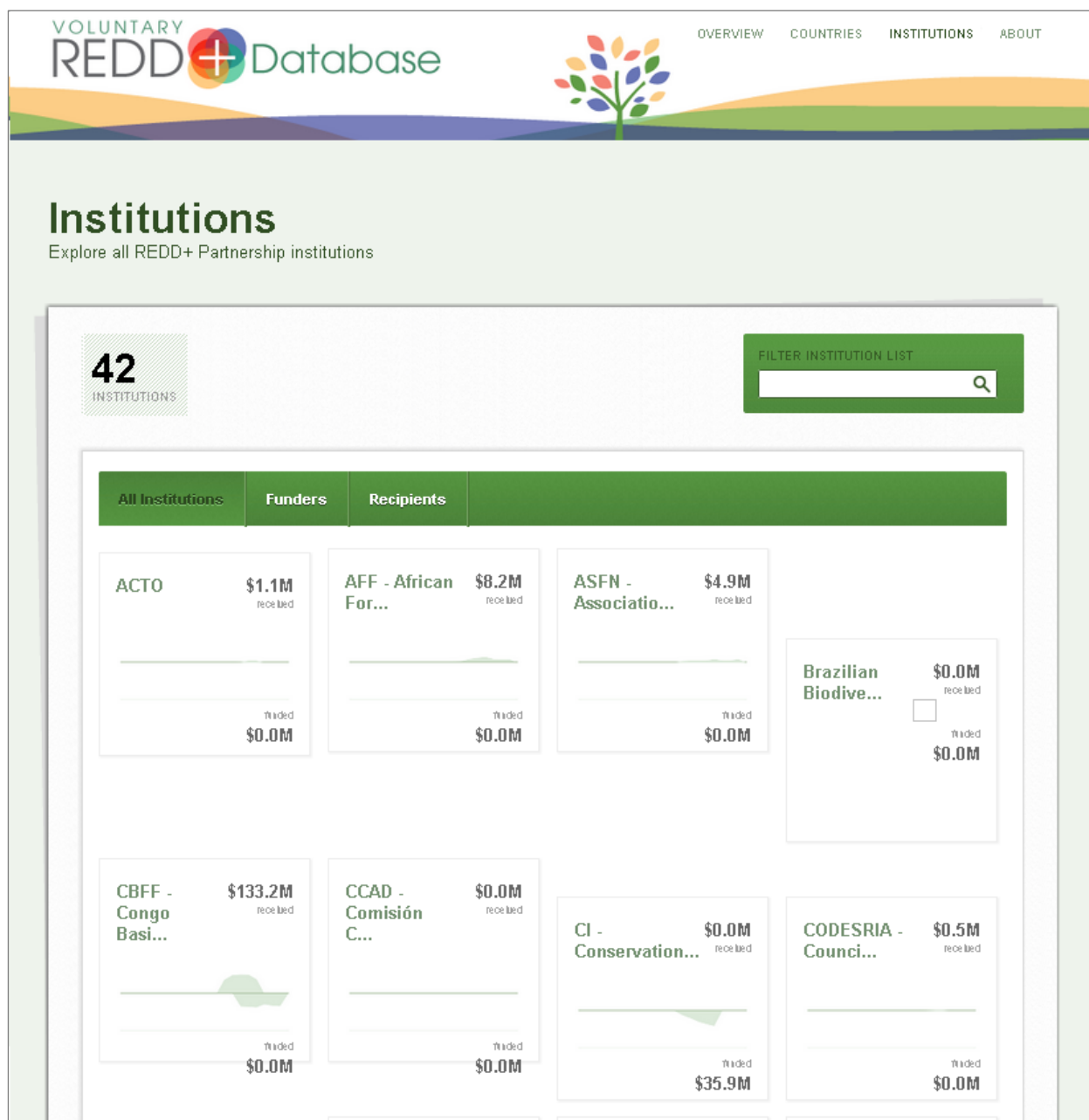


Figure 2: Entry point for institutions on the new interface for the Voluntary REDD+ Database



3. Overview of current data

While the VRD is a project in progress and new data are continuously being entered, this section provides an overview of the dataset as of 9 June 2011. **43 countries** and **13 institutions** had submitted data. Country submissions include **28 REDD+ countries** receiving funds and **15 donor countries** (*Annex 1*).

So far, the new questionnaire has yielded submissions from **8 donor countries, 17 REDD+ countries;** and **6 institutions**. Sixteen additional countries have indicated that they do plan to respond. At the time of writing, the majority of these new submissions were being processed by the VRD team, and entry into the database is ongoing.

As of 9 June 2011, the database held 441 arrangements¹, when reports from both funders and recipients are combined. The large majority of these arrangements cover the period 2006 to 2016. A small number of the arrangements reported to the VRD are pre-2006.. **Donor countries have reported US\$4.1 billion going directly to REDD+ countries, and US\$3.6 billion** being directed to institutions (e.g. multilaterals) to support REDD+ initiatives in countries. **Recipient countries have reported US\$0.7 billion coming both from** donor countries and institutions (Table 1). Out of the REDD+ funding going directly to REDD+ countries, as reported by donor countries and institutions, the highest proportions go to the Latin America and Asia-Pacific regions.

Table 1: Total amounts reported as of 9 June 2011 for REDD+ arrangements between donor countries, REDD+ countries and institutions (excluding domestic funding)

Arrangement type	Amounts (billion US\$) as reported by:		
	Donor countries	REDD+ Countries	Institutions
Donor country → REDD+ country	4.1	0.5	n.appl.
Donor country → Institution	3.6	n.appl.	0.0
Institution → REDD+ country	n.appl.	0.2	1.1

In its current design, the database allows both funders and recipients to separately report on the same arrangement. This promotes transparency by allowing the figures for a given arrangement to be compared. However, about 90 percent (397) of the arrangements have been reported by funders. One reason is that, data are lacking or incomplete for many REDD+ countries. Differences in time periods or scope of arrangements applied in the reporting may also distort the picture.

4. Issues to address

At the Bangkok meeting of the REDD+ Partnership (April 2011) a number of issues were discussed concerning the future functioning of the database. Other issues have emerged in the recent data collection exercise. These issues are set out in Annex 2 of this report together with comments on how they might be addressed.

¹ An arrangement is an agreement to undertake REDD+ related actions, involving funders and recipients. These are undertaken within a certain timeframe, with an indicative budget and defined objectives. Information about arrangements forms the core of the Voluntary REDD+ Database.



5. Next steps

The following next steps are proposed for the third quarter of 2011:

- **Address issues:** We will seek to address the issues outlined in Annex 2, under the guidance of the Co-chairs and Partners. This may lead to the articulation of a strategy for the further development of the database.
- **Data acquisition:** We propose a further Questionnaire round in the second half of 2011. Priority will be assigned to following up with countries that have committed to submit data; following up with Partnership members that have never submitted data to offer assistance if necessary; following up on arrangements that have been reported by only one party, but where the other has submitted other data to the VRD; and identifying focal points for countries/institutions that are reported on by Partnership countries or stakeholders, but are not themselves part of the Partnership, who will be contacted where possible in subsequent Questionnaire rounds. An updated progress report will be presented to the next Partnership meeting.
- **Interface:** There is no provision for significant further work on the interface within the 2011 budget, but planning for work in 2012 can commence following feedback from the Partnership on the new site.
- **Communicating key statistics:** As well as communicating results via the interface and responding directly to queries, the VRD team proposes to update this progress report in time for the subsequent Partnership meetings. .
- **Budget for 2012:** There is a need for the REDD+ Partnership and the FMT/PT to agree a budget for work on the database in 2012.



Annex 1. Countries and institutions that have submitted information

REDD+ Recipient Countries	REDD+ Funder Countries	Organisations / Multilateral Institutions
Belize Brazil Cameroon Central African Republic Chad China Congo (DRC) Congo (Republic) Costa Rica Ecuador Gabon Ghana Guyana Honduras India Indonesia Laos Madagascar Mali Mexico Mozambique Nigeria Pakistan Panama Papua New Guinea Rwanda Togo Uganda	Australia Canada Denmark Finland France Germany Italy Japan The Netherlands Norway Spain Sweden Switzerland United Kingdom United States of America	Amigos do Protocolo de Kyoto Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) Conservation International (CI) Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Forest Investment Program (FIP) Global Environment Facility (GEF) International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) Pact Inc. Rainforest Alliance The Nature Conservancy (TNC) United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme) World Conservation Society (WCS) World Wildlife Fund (WWF)



Annex 2. Issues to address

At the Bangkok meeting of the REDD+ Partnership (April 2011) a number of issues were discussed concerning the future functioning of the database. Other issues have emerged in the recent data collection exercise. These issues are detailed below, together with comments (*in italics*) that seek guidance or make suggestions on how they might be addressed.

Questionnaire content

Fast Start Pledges vs Arrangements: there has been some variation in the way in which countries are reporting on Fast Start Pledges. The section was envisaged as permitting countries to report on initial pledges that had been made for REDD+ finances, but which had not yet been allocated in a planned or agreed arrangement. The arrangement form also allows for communicating information beyond fast-start. The Questionnaire stated that ‘In the context of this database, Fast Start pledges are a funding country’s declared intentions to finance REDD+ activities during the 2010-2012 period.’ The supplementary guidance contained an unhelpful error, defining the field “Name of financing institution (multilateral or bilateral)” as “the name of the multilateral or bilateral recipient institution”. This has led some countries to list pledges that are already designated for specific recipient countries or institutions, whilst other reporting countries have listed similar ‘pledges’ as planned arrangements. For consistency and as an interim measure, the VRD team has asked countries that have reported pledges to specific recipients to reformulate these as planned arrangements.

Comment: Greater clarity on the relationship between fast start pledges and arrangements is needed

Definition of REDD+ financing: respondents have different views on:

- (a) when arrangements can legitimately be reported on as contributing to REDD+. Start years ranging from 1995 (encompassing carbon-focused forest projects developed before RED reached the UNFCCC agenda) to 2010 (corresponding with the Copenhagen agreement) have been proposed.

Comment: Should a start date for REDD+ arrangements be established? If yes, should this be applied retrospectively to arrangements already in the database or only to arrangements that are entered into the database in the future?

- (b) what type of funds and activities should be reported as contributing to REDD+.

Comment: Should clearer rules on the type of arrangements that can be reported under the VRD be established? Or should the decision be left to Partners submitting data?

Different views on the same arrangement: for various reasons, the same arrangement may be reported differently by its parties in the following circumstances:

- (a) one party omits to report an arrangement that would be viewed by both sides as a contribution to REDD+. Where relevant, the new Questionnaire was accompanied by a pdf listing all arrangements already reported for the country or institution in question. Respondents were asked to note the reasons for omitting any of these existing



arrangements from their Questionnaire response. This was not always understood, and where necessary, a dialogue is undertaken with the respondent to clarify the reasons for any missing arrangements.

- (b) one party to an arrangement views it as a contribution to REDD+ and the other does not see REDD+ as the primary objective of that arrangement; under these circumstances, the VRD team will pass on the comments to the other party and encourage a discussion between the country/institutional focal points if the difference in view is not immediately resolved. If a difference persists, the arrangement will appear as reported by only one party.
- (c) partners may vary in their reporting of key issues such as the amount and timing of finance involved. The VRD team will notify both parties of major discrepancies in case of error, but recognise that there are genuine reasons for differences, such as exchange rate issues, and variation in fiscal year definitions.

Comment: the VRD team should facilitate the explanation of differences and the reduction of discrepancies in case of different reporting for a same arrangement. Some parties have suggested that joint submissions by funders and recipients could be a way to reduce potential discrepancies.

Annualisation: the Questionnaire requests annualised data on financial contributions within individual arrangements, which is not always easy for respondents to identify. Where a total is known, but the distribution within years is not known, we ask respondents whether they would prefer to divide the amount evenly between the years of the arrangement, allocate it all to a single year (e.g. that of disbursement), or note the amount and year range in the comments section, without allocating finances to years. The last of these solutions means that the financial data will be absent from summary statistics.

Comment: The initial survey during the Paris-Oslo process asked for contributions to be reported over year ranges. For older records that have not received an update in this Questionnaire round, the VRD team has annualised the data by assigning averages across the year ranges. This is the one circumstance where data are visible in a form that has not had prior approval from the partner or stakeholder institution. We propose to contact the appropriate focal points to request their approval or alternative instructions for the annualisation of these older records.

Tracking funds through multiple arrangements: where funds pass from one funder to another and then to a recipient country, the recipient country sometimes wishes to report the original funder. In the current format, this requires the respondent to add another arrangement table describing that agreement, in which the country is listed as the beneficiary.

Comment: It may be simpler in future to add a field to the arrangements table in which the originator of the funding may be listed in such cases.

Tracking finance over time: the database in its current form does not explicitly track the progress of a pledge to an arrangement to a disbursement. The Fast Start Finance section does request information on how much of a given pledge is currently in the form of an arrangement (either as a planned or a formal agreement). The arrangement form does not provide sufficient clarity about whether reported funds are committed or disbursed.



Comment: Possible solution to track disbursement: add column to contributions section of Arrangements table identifying funds disbursed by a stated date. Joint reporting by funders and recipients has also been suggested as a method of addressing this issue.

Beyond finance: the VRD's mandate is to collect information on finance, actions and results. It has been suggested that the database could be the recipient for broader information collection or could provide links to other types of databases.

Comment: Guidance would be needed on the interest for collecting a broader set of information. The impact on the development of the core information of the VRD should be kept in mind.

Data acquisition

Focal points: The REDD+ Partnership Secretariat has not yet been notified of Database focal points for some Partner countries and stakeholder institutions.

Data quantity and dialogue with respondents: Several countries and institutions have 50+ country arrangements, so completing the questionnaire and reconciling with existing data to avoid double-counting does take time. An e-mail dialogue spanning multiple weeks is sometimes required to clarify and finalise a Questionnaire's content prior to its entry into the Database. To speed up data entry, the VRD team has sometimes requested permission from the country/institutional database focal point to enter some of the data submitted before the Questionnaire is completely finalised.

Interface

Language versions: the interface has been developed in the English language, and content (e.g. 'Approach to REDD+') is added in the language used in Questionnaire submission (English, French or Spanish).

Comment: Should the work programme for 2012 include translation of the interface?

Regional results: Some countries have expressed an interest in seeing regional summaries of data, both for funding origin and destination.

Comment: Should regional summaries be included in the interface in the 2012?

Identifying related arrangements: At present, a list of arrangement records is given on each country and institution page. These may be viewed as 'reported by recipients' or 'reported by funders'. When two parties have reported on the same arrangement, there is no explicit identification of their relationship in the database. Possible solution: add the facility to make an explicit link between two related arrangements. The voluntary nature of reporting means that this is likely to be very incomplete; there are also issues in that in some cases, an arrangement described by one respondent is treated as multiple arrangements by another respondent.

Comment: how important is this issue?

Communicating key statistics



Regional bias: Africa appears to have less funding than other REDD+ regions; consultation and analysis could be carried out to identify the extent to which this is a bias in the data reported or an accurate reflection of reality

Informing donor funding decisions: the database is intended to contribute to the Partnership's gap analysis, which has this role. Efforts have been made to ensure that the data collected is useful for this purpose.

Contacts with other databases: Opportunities for enhancing the visibility of the VRD could be explored.

