Report

Information session on the Call for Proposals for "Implementation of REDD+ ground-truth projects on sustainable economic development opportunities"

Objective of the session

This information session was held in the context of a Call for Proposals launched by the NIMOS/REDD+ project in Suriname, on "Implementation of REDD+ ground-truth projects on sustainable economic development opportunities". Eligible organizations are invited to submit project proposals on this topic latest by 31 July, 2019. The purpose of the information session was to respond to questions for clarification that potential applicants may have after studying the Call for Proposals and related published documents, including the "Criteria and administrative procedure for selection of REDD+ Ground-truth Projects" and the "REDD+ Project Proposal Template" available online at https://www.surinameredd.org/. The information session shall be seen as part of the procurement process for the Call for Proposals, and this report is made publicly available to all potential applicants.

Date	Friday, July 5, 2019
Time	10:00-12:00
Location	Lalla Rookh Gebouw 1, Conference Room, Lalla Rookhweg 54, Paramaribo

Agenda of the session

10:00	Welcome and announcements
10:10	Presentation: Suriname REDD+ Program and the Call for Proposals for REDD+ Ground-Truth Projects
10:40	Questions and Answers
12:00	Closing

REDD+ staff and partners present

- Santusha Mahabier – REDD+ Technical Assistant / Moderator of the session
- Sandra Bihari – REDD+ Project Coordinator
- Anil Pershad – National Institute for Environment and Development in Suriname (NIMOS)
- Anuradha Khoenkhoen – United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Janet Landburg – Foundation for Forest Management and Production Control (SBB)
- Silvia Karwofodi – REDD+ Administrative Assistant
- Eric Sosrojoedo – REDD+ Logistics Officer
- Sara Svensson – Rapporteur

Presentation – Sandra Bihari, REDD+ Project Coordinator

A presentation was given to explain the link between the REDD+ program, ground-truth projects and the Call for Proposals. The presentation is made available online at https://www.surinameredd.org/.

REDD+ is an international mechanism that was created in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). REDD+ stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

The National Institute for Environment and Development in Suriname (NIMOS) is the Technical Focal Point of the REDD+ project in Suriname. On a day-to-day basis the project is coordinated by a REDD+ Project Management Unit (PMU). NIMOS reports to the Office of the President/Coordination Environment. UNDP is the delivery partner responsible for management of funds and project progress monitoring. The Foundation for Forest Management and Production Control (SBB) is implementing partner within the REDD+ project.

Internationally, REDD+ is carried out in three phases. First comes the Readiness phase, second the Implementation phase and lastly the Results-based activities phase. Suriname is now in the readiness phase, and in this phase a country needs to establish a number of systems and formulate plans that will be carried out in the following phases. A National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) has been created, the National REDD+ Strategy and a Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL) have been formulated, a Safeguards Information System (SIS) is well underway, and a Benefit Sharing Mechanism and Grievance and Redress Mechanism will be created. When a country has completed the readiness phase successfully, they can move ahead to the implementation phase where activities are carried out in line with the national REDD+ strategy. Capacity building continues throughout the implementation phase, in order to prepare for the third and final phase where, based on verified CO_2 emission reduction, the country can receive financial compensation in that regard.

The execution of the REDD+ readiness program started in Suriname in 2014. It is scheduled to end on 30 June 2020. The workplan for 2019-2020 includes a number of activities that need to be carried out within the REDD+ readiness phase. Ground-truth projects is one of the important activities included here. To correctly understand the goal of the ground-truth projects, it is important to understand that the REDD+ readiness phase and the later phases of REDD+ have different objectives. The long-term goal of REDD+ is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases related to forests, but the goal of these ground-truth projects is different and more linked to what the readiness phase is aimed to achieve. The focus of the ground-truth projects is capacity building, broadly defined as including both human, institutional and material capacity building.

A Call for Proposals was published to invite organizations and institutions in Suriname to apply for funding from the REDD+ Program to carry out ground-truth projects. The document "Criteria and administrative procedure for selection of REDD+ Ground-truth Projects" that was published together with the Call for Proposals explains clearly in paragraph 2 and in Annex I "Background Document" which types of activities/topics can be considered as REDD+ ground-truth projects.

Applicants who have a project idea related to the eligible activities may complete the "REDD+ Project Proposal Template" and submit it to reddprojects@nimos.org for consideration no later than 31 July 2019, 16:00 Suriname time.

Questions and Answers

After the presentation, the floor was open for the participants of the information session to ask questions for clarification. The following questions and answers directly related to the Call for Proposals were raised:

Question	Is this Call for Proposals a sort of exercise for institutions and organizations for implementing projects in the coming REDD+ implementation phase?
Answer	The eligible topics for ground truthing projects are linked with the REDD+ strategy, so activities on the same topics, as well as other activities, will be further built upon in the implementation phase. This ground truthing is meant as capacity building towards the REDD+ Implementation Phase. It is about visualizing the types of capacity that communities and institutions need, in order to contribute actively in the next phase. This contributes to awareness on what is needed to be able to participate in REDD+.

Question	Are you looking at how suggested projects fit with other initiatives? Is there coordination in order to create synergies instead of overlaps between different funding sources?
Answer	We are aware that there are funding projects on the same topics or in the same areas. That is why the Call for Proposals is very broad and keeps a number of options for co-funding open. UNDP is partner in the Evaluation Commission and Decision Board, and they have a good overview of other projects that are funded so it will be considered when making the decisions.

Question	What is the definition of capacity building? Which capacity is supposed to be strengthened?
Answer	This is explained in the document "Criteria and administrative procedure for selection of REDD+ Ground-truth Projects". This Call for Proposals applies a very broad definition of capacity building that can mean the strengthening of human capacity and/or institutes. Capacity can be built among others through training, collaboration or practical work, and funds may be used for obtaining equipment in case that is necessary for the project.

Question	It is not easy for everybody, such as people in the interior, to fill in the project proposal template. Can it not be made less complex?
Answer	We have tried our best to keep the project template as simple as possible. The requirements are very basic for the grant amount. The guidelines for what must be submitted are meant to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities. We have agreed with the project partners to make the application procedure as simple as possible while still keeping it fair and transparent. It is important that the minimum

	requirements are met, since NIMOS/REDD+ need the minimum guarantee that there will be good monitoring and management of the funds. We must know that the organization is capable of carrying out a project within the agreed project duration.

Question	Is a Ministry allowed to submit a project proposal? Since we do not have statutes and are not registered in the Foundation Register (KKF), what do we need to attach as background documents?
Answer	Yes, Government institutions including Ministries are also eligible to submit project proposals. Because of the nature of such institutions it is obvious that you don't have the same background documents as NGOs, so these do not need to be submitted.

Question	How many partners can be included in a project proposal?
Answer	There is no minimum or maximum amount of organizations that may work together on a project. Activities conducted in a partnership between Civil Society, Government, Private Sector and ITPs are encouraged. It is important to note that all projects need to be completed no later than 31 May 2020, so you need to be sure that all partners can deliver the expected results within that time frame.

Question	What kind of competition is there for the funding? If many projects are submitted on the same topic, who will get the funding?
Answer	A total budget of US$ 270,000 has been set aside for all ground-truth projects. An internal plan subdivides which amount is planned to be allocated to the different categories of target groups. However, if we would not receive a relevant proposal from the private sector for example, we would still like to spend the funds completely and would therefore give the funds to a different target group category. That kind of competition exists, but all projects will be assessed in the same way.

Question	If our project would cost more than US$ 80,000, can we look for co-funding or split the project into phases?
Answer	Yes, this Call for Proposals allows for a project that is already in progress, to use the funding from REDD+ as co-funding. If you formulate a new project that exceeds the maximum amount for this Call, you can also look for co-funding elsewhere.

Question	Can different project proposals be linked to each other if more than US$ 80,000 is needed for what we want to achieve? For example, if we want to work on the exploitation of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and want to create one proposal focused on human skills and awareness, one on obtaining equipment and one on creating a market?
Answer	Yes, it is possible, as long as you want to collaborate with all partners. Keep in mind the restriction is that every organization may submit maximum one project proposal

on their name. You are free to collaborate with many different projects though and may carry out activities within projects that have been submitted by others.

Question	How much of the maximum US$ 80,000 can be spent on equipment? Is there a restriction on that? Can all REDD+ funding be used for equipment if there is other co-funding?
Answer	There is no fixed restriction on this at the moment, but purchasing equipment alone is not a project. If an institution is already working on capacity strengthening at a different level, it would have to be clearly explained in the proposal how this could be seen as co-financing and what the added value of all the equipment would be. It must be coherent with the whole.

Question	How long will it take before we know if our project proposals have been accepted?
Answer	The deadline to submit project proposals is 31 July 2019. Thereafter two committees will be in charge of evaluating the proposals and deciding whether or not to approve projects. At the technical level there is an Evaluation Commission, which needs 4 weeks to go through all project proposals and prepare recommendations. After that everything goes to the Decision Board, which has 2 weeks to go through the advice and decide if the project has been approved or not. This means that it will take a total of 6 weeks from the 31 July, so it will be announced in mid-September which projects are approved. 2 weeks are then set aside for preparations such as writing and signing contracts etc. The start date of the projects is planned for October 1, 2019.

Question	While this Call for Proposals focuses on awareness and capacity building, should we already state what the ultimate goal of the application is, if we intend to continue with the project in the REDD+ implementation phase?
Answer	It would be great to indicate sustainability and direction in that way, even if it is not required. Keep in mind that the short-term goal of the readiness phase is a bit different than the overall goal in the next phases. REDD+ is linked with the UNFCCC and the long-term goal is to reduce CO_2 emissions. If you are going to link your project to the next phase of REDD+, that must be the goal. However, for this Call for Proposals, capacity building is one of the main objectives.

Question	I am thinking of activities and different objectives. Economic development is very important, but so is capacity building and also cooperation and partnerships. Can there be a combination of different objectives?
Answer	Absolutely.

Question	Eight months is a very short period for building up sustainable projects with long-term results. Can it not be extended?

Answer	We fully understand that, but the REDD+ project itself ends on 30 June 2020, so we do not have the authority now to support projects with a longer duration. If the project has to last longer, it could be considered to look for co-funding that allows it to continue after 31 May 2020.

Question	The project proposal template mentions that the categories 'miscellaneous' and 'project coordination' may not exceed a maximum percentage of the total budget. What exactly falls within those categories, and what is not included there?
Answer	Miscellaneous is mainly what you pay for things such as telephone charges, office rent and other charges, so it is a bit comparable with project administrative costs. Project coordination is mainly about the people managing the project, in other words the human capacity needed to implement the project. If you have a project manager for a number of hours, a financial person for a number of hours, and a communications person for a number of hours, this should be included here. It could be a team to implement the project or one person doing everything. There is a piece of travel cost from your home to the office that can be included here since it is linked to human costs. But if for example you would have to go abroad to carry out a project activity, you can put that separately in your proposal and not as a project coordination cost.

Question	Does the applicant receive the total amount of the project funding in one time?
Answer	No. The project template includes a payment schedule (part 6) where it should be suggested how much should be paid per deliverable. This table may be adjusted by the Decision Board and will finally be included in the contract. The contract will specify how payment will be made, for example in three tranches or installments. The number of tranches depends on the project. Every payment request will be linked to a deliverable with underlying documentation. For each transfer, this must be verifiable for the delivery partner UNDP.

Question	One of the criteria is that the organization must demonstrate capacity to manage funds. Is it enough to send you our most recent financial report, or what kind of documentation do you want?
Answer	Yes, we would like to receive the most recent financial report.

Question	What should be done if a community-based organization (CBO) is not yet able to fully implement a project themselves, but could do so under the guidance of a larger NGO? Who should submit the proposal then?
Answer	It is possible for different actors to submit joint proposals and to collaborate on ground truthing projects. In this case it would be a great opportunity for the CBO and NGO to prepare a project proposal together, where each of them contributes with the part that they are the strongest on. If they both meet all the criteria set up for project

submitters, it doesn't matter who formally submits the proposal. If only one of them meets those criteria, we advise that partner to be the submitter.

It would be recommended that they provide guidance to their partner throughout the project, in order to share and spread the capacity to manage projects. Such plans can be described in the proposal to make it stronger. The strengthening of one or more CBOs could in fact also be a project on its own, to help them prepare for the REDD+ implementing phase. It is important that the project is submitted by an organization that meets the conditions, but the goal can be to prepare others for the next phase.

Question	It is important that CBOs can be in charge of project proposals themselves, because there is not always another organization that they trust to collaborate with. How can you support them to make this possible, even if they do not have a financial statement yet?
Answer	We fully agree that CBOs need capacity enhancement. It would be preferred in an ideal situation that CBOs can write, submit and implement project proposals themselves. If a CBO already has the capacity to carry out a project before 31 May 2020, we would definitely suggest the CBO to submit a proposal on their own. However, if a CBO wants to carry out a project but for some reason is not yet fully capable of doing everything independently, we would still recommend cooperation with other organizations to strengthen the CBO in the long term.

Question	CBOs may have been involved in executing larger projects and demonstrating results, even if they often have insufficient financial administration. Could there be another acceptable way for them to show that they are able to manage funds and implement projects? Can they be the main submitter but collaborate with an umbrella organization for the financial part, and in that case, how many CBOs is each umbrella organization allowed to support?
Answer	When it comes to submitting a project the rule of one project per submitter will be applied. Umbrella organizations can certainly help multiple CBOs if the CBO themselves or someone else submits the proposals. Then you have to look at a construction where you indicate in the proposal that the financial administration of the CBO is not strong enough, that someone else will help with that part this time, but that capacity building will take place so that they can learn to handle it independently next time. However, the submitter of the project must meet the requirements as set forth in the project criteria.