



2.2 National-level FLEGT VPA and REDD+ interactions, Congo Basin

YITAGESU TEKLE TELEGNE, ROBERT M. OCHIENG, INGRID J. VISSEREN-HAMAKERS, MARCUS LINDNER, KALAME FOBISSIE and MARKKU KANNINEN

Introduction

This article analyzes the mutual influences of FLEGT and REDD+ in four Congo Basin countries: Cameroon, Republic of the Congo (ROC); Central African Republic (CAR); and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is based on desk study and eight interviews with experts involved in VPA and REDD+ processes from governmental and non-governmental organizations in Congo basin countries (see, e.g., Ochieng, Visseren-Hamakers and Nketiah 2013). The article assesses three mechanisms by which these initiatives are influenced (see also article 2.1):

- cognitive interaction;
- interaction through commitment; and
- behavioural interaction (Gehring and Oberthür 2009).

Cognitive interaction occurs when information, knowledge and institutional innovations developed in the source regime affect the decision-making or preferences of actors in the target regime. The learning process in the target regime can be triggered unintentionally or intentionally. Policy model interaction occurs when the target regime intentionally uses institutional innovations or ideas developed by the source regime. A request for assistance occurs when one regime requests the other regime to adapt to its needs.

Interaction through commitment occurs when rules in the source regime induce actors to modify their preferences regarding issues related to another regime. This assumes that regimes create a binding force so that actors will constantly be aware of their commitments in one regime while negotiating in the other. There are two types of interaction through



LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES FROM THE VPA PROCESS SHOULD GUIDE THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REDD+, AND VICE VERSA.

Yitagesu Tekle Tegegne is a Researcher with EFI, Finland; **Robert M. Ochieng** is a PhD Researcher, Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group, Wageningen University; **Ingrid J. Visseren-Hamakers** is Assistant Professor, Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group, Wageningen University; **Marcus Lindner** is Head Programme of Sustainability and Climate Change, EFI, Finland; **Kalame Fobissie** is Congo Basin Regional Forest and Climate Coordinator, WWF/CARPO, Cameroon; and **Markku Kanninen** is Professor of Tropical Silviculture and Director of VITRI, Finland.

commitment. Jurisdictional delimitation arises when regimes with similar membership that address similar issues have different objectives. Additional means of implementation occur if the two regimes have similar objectives and identical membership and one provides ways to implement commitments in the other.

Behavioural interaction occurs when the source regime triggers behavioural changes that affect implementation by the target regime. Usually, the source regime produces outputs that change the behaviour of actors relevant to the target regime.

FLEGT and REDD+ processes in Congo Basin

The Congo Basin countries are at different stages of negotiating or implementing a VPA and carrying out REDD+ readiness activities. Of the four countries analyzed, Cameroon is the most advanced in implementing its VPA and the least advanced in REDD+ readiness. DRC is the least advanced in negotiating its VPA and the most advanced in REDD+ readiness. Cameroon and ROC are revising their regulatory framework, developing a timber legality assurance system (TLAS) and starting to implement the VPA provisions for making information public. DRC is well advanced in developing its national REDD+ strategy and emission reduction programme. Although both processes are advanced in CAR, progress is unclear due to political instability. In DRC and ROC, VPA and REDD+ are coordinated by the same ministry; in Cameroon and CAR, REDD+ and the VPA are coordinated by different ministries (Table 1).

Table 1. An overview of VPA and REDD+ in four Congo Basin countries

Country	Key developments		Coordinating ministries
	VPA	REDD+	
Cameroon	VPA signed in 2010 and ratified in 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engaged since 2008 ▪ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) approved in 2013 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forestry and Wildlife coordinates VPA ▪ Environment coordinates REDD+
CAR	VPA signed in 2010 and ratified in 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engaged since 2007 ▪ R-PP approved in 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water and Forestry coordinates VPA ▪ Environment and Ecology coordinates REDD+
ROC	VPA signed in 2010 and ratified in 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engaged since 2008 ▪ R-PP approved in 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forest Economy and Sustainable Development coordinates both
DRC	Negotiations initiated in 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engaged since 2009 ▪ R-PP approved in 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environment coordinates both

Interactions between FLEGT VPA and REDD+ in Congo Basin countries

Cognitive interactions

In Cameroon, CAR and ROC the existing VPAs have served as a policy model for the design of the national REDD+ strategy. The VPAs in these countries have yielded useful

information that has influenced some aspects of REDD+ readiness. The R-PP of CAR (MEE 2013: 21), for example, states: “Selection of entities, their representatives, and interviewees to participate in critical discussions on REDD+ policies and decision-making was based on lessons learned from the FLEGT process.”

Similarly, the R-PPs of Cameroon (MINEPDED 2013: 11) and ROC (MDDEFÉ 2011: 18) acknowledge that the consultation process for the preparation of a REDD+ strategy will build on lessons learned from experience with stakeholder consultation, including the VPA process. In ROC, the consultation process for the VPA divided stakeholders in three groups: public, private and civil society; the consultation for the preparation of a REDD+ strategy in the country targeted these same categories (MDDEFÉ 2011: 18). Participants involved in REDD+ should recognize that even though the VPA process was successful in conducting multi-stakeholder consultation, there are opportunities for REDD+ to build on this experience. A Cameroonian respondent noted: “There are good and bad experiences of FLEGT VPA with respect to multi-stakeholder consultation and dialogue. Stakeholders/actors of REDD+ should be aware of both.”

For instance, it may not be appropriate to consider the same group of stakeholders in REDD+ as in the VPA. This may lead to excluding some important group of stakeholders, such as small landholders/farmers in non-forested areas.

Cognitive interactions will likely continue given the overlap of issues and membership in the two regimes. For example, the R-PPs of Cameroon, CAR and ROC highlight the importance of assessing the potential social and environmental impacts of REDD+ — both negative and positive — through a strategic environmental and social impact assessment (SESA). The countries intend to design and implement SESAs for REDD+ based on relevant elements from other initiatives, including the VPA, demonstrating that the two regimes will continue to influence each other. The Cameroon R-PP (MINEPDED 2013: 81) clearly states: “The indicators that will be taken into consideration in the [SESA] ... will be based on the indicators identified in other frameworks. This involves, for example, criteria and indicators for governance developed in the context of the FLEGT-VPA process...”

ROC’s R-PP (MDDEFÉ 2011: 102) and CAR’s R-PP (MEE 2013: 6) state that the SESAs will include consideration of the principles, criteria, indicators and verification used in VPA, but add that the relevance of these measures to social and environmental risk assessment should be clarified.

Plans for future information sharing and consultation and dialogue under REDD+ will continue to build on the experience of the VPA process. For instance, the R-PP of Cameroon (MINEPDED 2013: 26) acknowledges: “Cameroon will have to put in place a robust and effective consultation plan and communication plan inspired by the plans implemented for existing or past processes such as FLEGT.”

In DRC, REDD+ could serve as policy model for VPA. For instance, FLEGT actors are using REDD+ institutions to strengthen the FLEGT debate at the provincial level. Otherwise, there are almost no cognitive interactions between the two regimes — when the VPA

process was launched in DRC, REDD+ preparations were already at an advanced stage. Both processes face a number of challenges, and opportunities for coordination exist, including addressing governance failures, land tenure and the use of effective participatory processes related to improved forest governance and management. According to the R-PP of DRC (MECNT 2010: 129), regulatory reforms to support the implementation of REDD+ should bear in mind the experience and lessons learned from the VPA processes in other countries and from the consultation process of the VPA agreement. The REDD+ process in DRC will have to draw on experiences generated by the VPA in other countries since the country's own VPA is still in the negotiation phase. It is important to note, however, that the VPA process in the country is more likely to learn from its own REDD+ process, which is well advanced.

Interactions through commitment

Some commitments made in the VPAs of Cameroon, CAR and ROC have also been made in REDD+. REDD+ will therefore provide additional means to implement VPA commitments. Under the VPA, Cameroon, CAR and ROC committed to (1) understand and monitor the impacts of the VPA on the livelihoods of potentially affected indigenous and local communities; and (2) undertake legislative and institutional reforms and improve and strengthen forest tenure schemes.

These commitments have been replicated in the R-PPs of all four countries. Under REDD+, these countries plan to, among other things, (1) implement social and environmental safeguards to prevent undesirable impacts of REDD+ on local and indigenous communities; and (2) reform legislation on a range of issues, including land tenure and property rights in forests, stakeholder engagement, and distribution of benefits from REDD+.

The overlap of commitments between the two regimes creates possibilities for joint actions. Another aspect to be considered is that REDD+ is voluntary and its commitments lack legal force, while the VPA is legally binding: countries are legally obliged to implement its commitments. This means that the VPA provides additional legal force to implement REDD+.



REDD+ could potentially support the VPA by providing additional financing and political attention. For instance, ROC's R-PP (MDDEF 2011: 72-74) states that REDD+ funds should be used to ensure that synergies are developed between the two processes. This means that REDD+ funds could be used to implement certain elements of the VPA. Conversely, the VPA's TLAS also includes requirements for monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), ranging from on-the-ground monitoring of forest management, ensuring compliance with laws, and independent third-party monitoring (*see articles 5.1 and 5.2 for more detail on the potential contributions of TLAS to MRV*). These will be useful to REDD+.

Additionally, under REDD+, the four countries plan to build capacity at all levels. Training will be conducted for civil society and local communities so that they can be involved in data collection and monitoring of REDD+ activities. This means that training and capacity building under REDD+ will not only improve the ability to implement REDD+ but will also



help to implement elements of the VPA. For instance, training in MRV and social and environmental safeguards will enhance people's capacity to perform tasks under the VPA, such as monitoring socio-economic impacts.

Likewise, the VPA process in these countries could also further the implementation of REDD+ by providing additional capacity and expertise. The Cameroon R-PP (MINEPDED 2013: 19) states that due to the complementary nature of VPA and REDD+ activities, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife will support the technical implementation of REDD+ MRV, including monitoring of carbon stocks. The

Cameroonian Ministry of Environment does not have sufficient capacity to effectively implement REDD+ activities.

The VPA could provide additional financial resources for implementing REDD+ in Congo Basin countries. The EU and FAO have financed a number of projects in Cameroon, CAR and ROC to improve the collection and monitoring of forest revenue and raise awareness of VPAs among forest community groups and local actors (FAO 2013). Some of these tasks are core activities in REDD+ MRV. Likewise, under the VPA, ROC has secured funds from the French Development Agency and EU FAO to support reform of the forestry code. Since similar reform is required under REDD+, these funds will be useful for REDD+.

Potential synergies between the VPA and REDD+ readiness also exist for the collection of information. The CAR R-PP (MEE 2013: 55) states that any additional studies under REDD+ will be carried out in collaboration with VPA implementation because the many overlaps between the two regimes permit future collaboration opportunities (MEE 2013: 55). This suggests that the two regimes will continue to inform each other as they evolve.

Behavioural interactions

Respondents noted that effective implementation of various elements of the VPA will generate positive changes in the behaviour of stakeholders in the forest sector. These changes will in turn have positive impacts on REDD+. For instance, each country in its VPA is obliged to ensure that information is shared with the public. The ROC VPA states: "Public disclosure of information is one of the key provisions of this Agreement for promoting governance" (EU and Republic of the Congo 2011).

By requiring stakeholders in the forestry sector to be provided with reliable information, the VPA may change the behaviour of actors, and since the actors in the regimes overlap, changes in behaviour due to VPA implementation should have a positive impact on the implementation of REDD+. VPA implementation could strengthen good governance in the

forest sector through mechanisms such as independent auditing and increased transparency. A Congolese respondent stated: “Improved forest governance under the VPA and rigorous application and enforcement of forest laws will induce positive behavioural changes in actors involved in the forest sector, and thus further the REDD+ objective of improving forest governance.”

While the anticipated behavioural interactions between the two regimes will largely have positive impacts, disruptive effects are also expected. Implementation of the TLAS in the domestic timber market may have a negative impact on the livelihoods of small-scale timber vendors and forest-dependent communities (Atyi et al. 2013) who REDD+ aims to support.

Key findings and recommendations

The strongest interactions occur in Cameroon, CAR and ROC; interactions in the DRC are weak. Several interactions have occurred between the two regimes in Cameroon, CAR and ROC, and more are expected. In these countries, the process for developing the VPA has served as a policy model for designing elements of REDD+. Since these cognitive interactions have been largely synergistic, lessons and experiences from the VPA process should guide the design and implementation of REDD+, and vice versa, in these countries. Furthermore, each regime could provide additional means for implementing commitments in the other. REDD+ in particular is expected to mobilize resources for implementation of the VPA in Cameroon, CAR and ROC. Implementation of elements of the VPA is also expected to result in positive behavioural change, which will in turn have positive impacts on REDD+. Disruptive interactions, such as short-term negative impacts on livelihoods, are also possible; much will depend on how the secretariats of the two regimes handle implementation.

Interactions are expected to continue as the two regimes co-evolve, and certain actions could help to support positive interactions and mitigate negative impacts. Continued collaboration and strengthened communication between the two regimes in all four countries – through, for example, periodic joint strategy meetings – and getting to know each other and each other’s processes is a first step. The two regimes could then explore requests for assistance and jurisdictional delimitations to enhance mutual support. Duplication in the work and activities of the two regimes (e.g., sensitization activities, legislative review, capacity building) in these countries can be expected, and this may result in inefficient use of resources.

The two regimes, through their respective institutional structures, should agree on which work is carried out by which regime and which could be implemented jointly. Since some elements of either regime could be best addressed in the other, requests for assistance could provide a strategic way of managing potential overlaps. For instance, in all countries, the VPA secretariat could ask the REDD+ secretariat to implement elements concerning forest monitoring. Although this has already been recognized and called for in Cameroon, no formal systems have been established. Finally, donors of the two

regimes could stimulate the governments to increase coherence between VPA and REDD+ processes. In these ways, interactions between VPA and REDD+ can be further enhanced, and both regimes can most effectively contribute to reducing illegal logging and avoiding deforestation and forest degradation.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank Christophe Van Orshoven, Edith A. Johnson, Lea Turunen and Iola Leal Riesco for their valuable input to this article. This study formed part of the GSE FM REDD project financed by the European Space Agency.

References

- Atyi, R.E., S. Assembe-Mvondo, G. Lescuyer and P. Cerutti. 2013. "Impacts of international timber procurement policies on Central Africa's forestry sector: The case of Cameroon." *Forest Policy and Economics* 32: 40–48.
- EU and Republic of the Congo. 2011. Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of the Congo on Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade. www.fao.org/forestry/eu-flegt/78077/en.
- FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations). 2013. *Compendium on experiences from the Voluntary Partnership Agreement process in Central and West African Countries*. www.fao.org/forestry/37830-09c6e70d4769baf6bbe6721cbd5422b58.pdf.
- Gehring, T. and S. Oberthür. 2009. "The causal mechanism of interaction between international institutions." *European Journal of International Relations* 15 (1) 125–156.
- MDDEFE (*Ministère du développement durable, de l'économie forestière et de l'environnement*). 2011. Readiness Preparation Proposal, Republic of the Congo. www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/forestcarbonpartnership.org/files/Documents/PDF/Sep2011/RPP_de_la_R%C3%A9publique_du_Congo_Version_finale_16_Septembre_2011.pdf. In French.
- MECNT (Ministry of Environment, Conservation of Nature and Tourism). 2010. Readiness Preparation Proposal, Democratic Republic of Congo. www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/forestcarbonpartnership.org/files/Documents/PDF/Jul2010/R-PP_V3.1_English_July2010.pdf.
- MEE (Ministry of Environment and Ecology). 2013. Readiness Preparation Proposal, Central African Republic. www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/fcp/files/2013/May2013/20130523_RPP_CAR_EN_final.pdf.
- MINEPDED (Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development). 2013. Readiness Preparation Proposal, Cameroon. www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/forestcarbonpartnership.org/files/Documents/PDF/Feb2013/Cameroon%20final%20R-PP-English-January%202013.pdf.
- Ochieng, R.M., I. J. Visseren-Hamakers and K.S. Nketiah. 2013. "Interaction between the FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ in Ghana: Recommendations for interaction management." *Forest Policy and Economics* 32: 32–39.