



Strategic alignment

Integrating REDD+ in NDCs and national climate policies

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Key messages

- Many developing countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) recognise the important role of forests and have put forward mitigation measures; however, these measures do not directly aim at reducing emissions.
- REDD+ is included in most developing countries' NDCs and climate change policies, but drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are not fully acknowledged.
- NDCs will be ineffective in achieving their intended outcomes unless they include clear policies and measures to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, as well as a transparent monitoring and evaluation framework.

Nationally Determined Contributions and REDD+ in a nutshell

REDD+ and NDCs will be ineffective in achieving their intended outcomes unless they include clear policies and measures to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, as well as a transparent monitoring and evaluation framework.



Countries have made significant progress in:



1. enhancing global and national recognition of the role of forests



2. developing more detailed policies and measures to reduce emissions

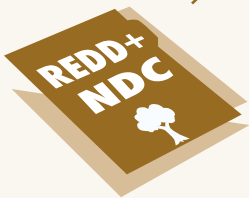


3. mapping out available funding resources for NDCs

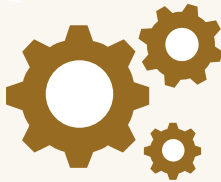


4. improving the monitoring and evaluation framework

How can countries enhance the role of forests in climate policies?



Strengthening global and national recognition of the role of forests in (1)NDCs



Implementing effective policies and measures in addressing drivers of deforestation and degradation



Securing adequate funding sources from both developed and developing countries



Implementing accountable and transparent land-use accounting and measurement, reporting and verification

6.1 Introduction

In 2015, 196 countries made history when they collectively decided under the Paris Agreement to transform their development trajectories in order to reduce global emissions. The agreement requires countries to prepare, communicate and maintain increasingly ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). By April 2018, 197 countries had submitted their NDCs or Intended NDCs (INDCs). Although implementation of the measures in these submitted (I)NDCs is expected to result in considerably lower global emission levels than business-as-usual scenarios, the committed reduction policies and measures are not sufficient to meet the Paris Agreement target. As agriculture, forestry and other land uses (AFOLU) are responsible for roughly a quarter of global emissions, the forest sector will need to play an even larger role in reducing emissions (Smith *et al.* 2014), and therefore should be well covered within any climate agreements (Seymour and Busch 2016), including (I)NDCs.

Since 2015, countries have also developed and implemented various new strategies in parallel to NDCs, from REDD+ to green growth to green economy and low-emission development strategies. Despite a lack of universal, commonly agreed definitions for these new strategies (Wentworth and Oji 2013; Box 6.1), they essentially share the same objective: to merge environmental protection and economic development (Brand 2012; Watson *et al.* 2013; Jacob *et al.* 2013), with forests playing a crucial role (Hein *et al.* 2018). Identifying potential synergies and trade-offs among these processes is crucial to supporting each of these initiatives to achieve their intended outcomes (Martius *et al.* 2015; Bastos Lima *et al.* 2017a; McMurray *et al.* 2017) and to enhance the effectiveness of NDCs in reducing emissions.

The chapter aims to answer the following questions: First, how have countries included forests in their (I)NDCs? Second, how can countries enhance the role of forests in this context, particularly in light of the many other global and national 'greening' initiatives? By addressing these questions, this chapter aims to inform policy-makers and practitioners about the opportunities and barriers to realising the potential contributions of forests to climate change mitigation, suggesting ways to increase the comprehensiveness of (I)NDCs with clear forest sector commitments.

6.2 How have countries included forests in their NDCs?

In existing NDCs, forests often appear as the linchpin linking economic and environmental outcomes. However, REDD+ was included in only 56 out of 162 NDCs submitted by 2016 (Pauw *et al.* 2016) and in 55 of 197 NDCs submitted by April 2018 (Authors' own analysis 2018). These 55 countries account for 98% of countries in Africa and 81% of countries in Asia, regions where most global deforestation occurs (Figure 6.1). However, countries with large areas of forest are not necessarily taking the opportunity that REDD+ presents to conserve it; for example, only 60% of countries in Latin America are actively developing REDD+ strategies.

Box 6.1 Global and national green development strategies

Several new strategies have arisen in recent years, with the goal of ensuring environmental protection while promoting economic development:

Green economy: While there is no internationally agreed definition, UNEP (2011) is often cited, defining a green economy as “one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities”. UNEP also asserts that the green economy discourse has three main characteristics: low-carbon emissions, efficiency in natural resource use, and social inclusion.

Green growth: There is currently no consensus on the definition of green growth (Huberty *et al.* 2011). At least 13 different definitions have been used in recent publications, with fundamental differences within focus areas (Blaxekjaer 2012). Two major defining groups are: (i) those who align green growth with sustainable development, emphasising poverty reduction and global equity; and (ii) those emphasising transformations in industry and energy and the use of public-private partnerships (Scott *et al.* 2013; OECD 2011; Kasztelan 2017).

Low-emission development strategies (LEDS): LEDS emerged in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate talks in 2008. Despite this, no internationally agreed definition of LEDS has emerged. The elaboration and implementation of a LEDS can allow policy-makers to respond more effectively to climate change through the design of comprehensive policies that integrate low-emission and development planning, and encourage action across multiple sectors and levels (Clapp *et al.* 2010).

While they clearly overlap, the three concepts have different foci (Jacob *et al.* 2013). Green growth emphasises incentives and the search for new sources of growth through innovation, productivity, new markets, trust and stability. Green economy gives relatively higher priority to the government’s role, the regulatory and legal framework, and the promotion of private and public investment and its effects on certain sectors that will drive the greening of the economy (Permanent Secretariat of SELA 2012). LEDS, with its origin in the UNFCCC, remains less specific on actual policies and their implementation, but has a focus on the final outcome: low emissions.

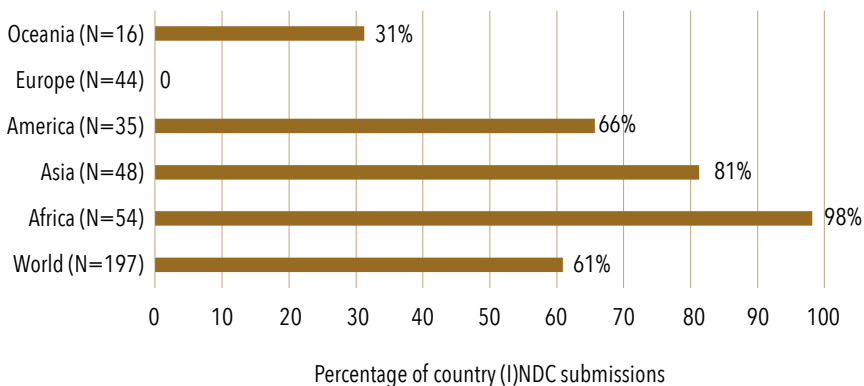


Figure 6.1 Share of (I)NDCs that mention REDD+ as a percentage of the total submitted (I)NDCs per region (N= 197)

Source: Authors’ own analysis

Several studies and reviews aimed to understand achievements made by countries that have included forests in their NDCs (Forsell *et al.* 2016; Hein *et al.* 2018), as well as challenges that need to be addressed. Table 6.1 provides a snapshot of progress made, and challenges encountered by, countries that have taken measures to enhance the role of forests in their (I)NDCs, through a review of four key areas: (i) global and national recognition of the role of forests in (I)NDCs; (ii) policies and measures; (iii) funding sources; and (iv) land-use accounting and measurement, reporting and verification (MRV). Countries have made significant progress in enhancing global and national recognition of the role of forests, developing more detailed policies and measures to reduce emissions, mapping out available funding resources for NDCs, and improving the monitoring and evaluation framework. However, governments can further enhance the effectiveness of their (I)NDCs by acknowledging and implementing policies and measures that directly tackle drivers of deforestation and degradation.

Two major drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are frequently cited in literature: (i) forest conversion to agriculture production and (ii) weak forest governance, such as insecure tenure and the absence of safeguarding policies (e.g., full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, actions to address the risks of reversals; Chapters 1 and 5). But these are not widely recognised in current NDCs. Henders *et al.* (2018) review 271 documents (INDCs and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans) and found that only 14 explicitly make the link between forest loss and large-scale commodity production and consumption. In practice, REDD+ is also implemented in parallel with economic development programmes that cause deforestation and forest degradation (Bastos Lima 2017a; Brockhaus *et al.* 2017; Pham *et al.* 2017b). Besides these conflicting policy goals, we also found that countries gave highest attention to aspects of REDD+ finance and the improvement of forest monitoring systems, while forest governance and safeguards systems received much less attention (Figure 6.2). Such imbalances limit the potential effectiveness of policy responses aimed at addressing the drivers of deforestation and degradation.

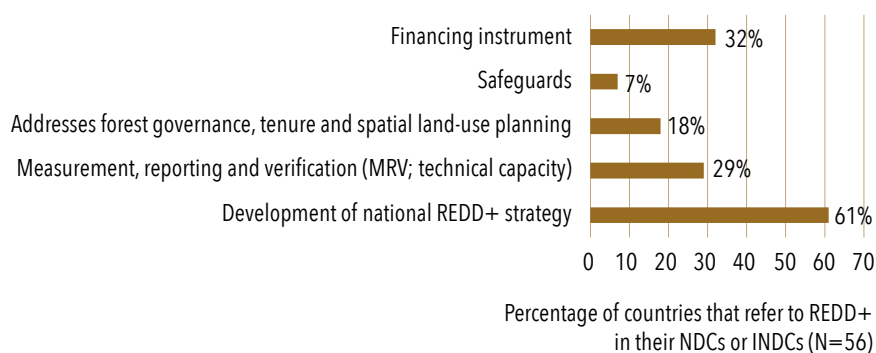


Figure 6.2 REDD+ strategies mentioned in countries' NDCs or INDCs

Source: Hein *et al.* (2018)

Table 6.1 Inclusion of forests in current (I)NDCs

	Progress	Gaps and challenges
Global and national recognition of the role of forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most (I)NDCs recognise the vital importance of the forest sector. • Countries that do not include forests in (I)NDCs do indicate their intention to mitigate emissions in forest sector. • LULUCF sectors are included in approximately 75% of (I)NDCs. • Links between mitigation and adaptation are widely recognised. • Out of 48 (I)NDCs submitted by Least Developed Countries, at least 42 cover AFOLU and 37 cover LULUCF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To realise the full global mitigation potential, many countries need to clarify and strengthen their intended forest sector contribution. • LULUCF is identified as a 'Focus Area' by relatively few countries in different regions, as well as globally.
Policies and measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantifiable targets are more common in the forestry sector than in agriculture. • Afforestation, reforestation and sustainable forest management are the most popular mitigation options in NDCs. • Many countries refer to and include REDD+ in their mitigation options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies vary and are not always aimed at reducing emissions. • Many (I)NDCs lack sufficient information on measures needed to achieve the mitigation goal. • There is limited discussion on the extent to which REDD+ is integrated into (I)NDCs.
Funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most countries indicate the required international support (finance, technology and capacity building). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many countries, particularly in Asia, do not provide cost estimates of AFOLU mitigation measures or identify financing sources. • Few (I)NDCs mention the roles of private sector sustainability commitments and the financial sector in reducing emissions.
Land-use accounting MRV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many countries are in the process of developing reference levels as part of national REDD+ strategy implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (I)NDCs lack clarity and consistency re: the accounting of emissions and removals. • Many (I)NDCs either do not specify methods or assumptions used in reporting or accounting, or omit them, citing a lack of information. • Discrepancies between REDD+ and NDCs exist in relation to scope of fluxes and purpose.

Note: LULUCF = Land use, land use change and forestry

Sources: Petersen and Varela 2015; FAO 2016; Forsell *et al.* 2016; Zeleke *et al.* 2016; ESCAP 2017; Schletz *et al.* 2017; Vladu 2017; Hein *et al.* 2018

6.3 How can countries enhance the role of forests in climate policies?

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for countries designing and implementing their climate policies, as they are at different stages of NDC implementation and have different governance regimes, human and financial capacity, and national priorities. Table 6.2 provides key considerations and discusses how countries can address the challenges identified in section 6.2 to improve their NDCs in order to harness forests' mitigation potential.

6.3.1 Global and national recognition of the role of forests in NDCs

While most NDCs recognise the role of forests, it is more often framed as general discourse rather than through practical considerations. Mitigation goals are defined in terms of economic interest, available financial resources and technological capacities, and details are lacking on how to avoid further deforestation. Brockhaus *et al.* (2014) and Korhonen-Kurki *et al.* (2018) point out similar patterns in the design of REDD+ strategies that fail to challenge business-as-usual drivers of deforestation, both within forest-rich tropical countries and globally (through existing trade and investment patterns that finance deforestation in the tropics). Therefore, important first steps for countries are to: (i) target policies and practices that encourage deforestation; (ii) secure political commitment for anti-deforestation policies; and (iii) foster strong national ownership of the REDD+ policy process.

Countries might use opportunities to enhance the role of forests in climate change policies by bridging REDD+ with other initiatives such as green growth and green economy, as this can help to reinforce co-benefits and streamline reporting processes. However, in most countries linkages among these multiple forest governance initiatives are hampered by a lack of communication among REDD+ actors and other actors/institutions, a lack of understanding of climate change funding landscapes and potential competition for funds, different greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting methods, and a lack of coordination and policy coherence, leading to conflicts between the various strategies (McMurray *et al.* 2017). Therefore, it is essential to build capacity among both state and non-state actors to strengthen their knowledge of REDD+, and to facilitate knowledge exchange at all levels of governance to enhance their competencies in the technical and operational aspects of REDD+. Otherwise, merging these initiatives without first clearly defining them will help neither NDCs nor REDD+ become more effective, and might dilute already well-defined objectives of policy instruments like REDD+ (Pham *et al.* 2017b).

6.3.2 Policies and measures

Without clear strategies to address the drivers of deforestation and degradation, effective implementation of REDD+ and NDCs is unlikely (Hein *et al.* 2018). To move REDD+ and NDCs forward, countries first need to acknowledge such drivers, and

recognise that the responsibility for addressing them reaches beyond the forestry sector. A review of specific drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, along with mapping of the roles (both positive and negative) of various actors and economic interests in these processes would help countries prioritise sectors and actors. These reviews would also help policy-makers develop appropriate policies and measures to address drivers – including removing contradictory policies such as subsidies for large-scale commercial agriculture – and carry out the modifications needed for cross-sectoral policy alignment. Although many countries do acknowledge the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation specific to their context, securing political commitment (which is highly influenced by economic policy) to take bold actions to address these drivers represents a major challenge (Korhonen-Kurki *et al.* 2018).

Effective policies and measures that discourage deforestation also require an inclusive decision-making process, in which decisions are made by a variety of actors (i.e., input legitimacy) and their diverse views are represented in REDD+ policy documents (i.e., output legitimacy) (Špirić *et al.* 2016). Coordinated and coherent sectoral policies would also help avoid duplication of efforts and the inefficient use of resources (Weiss 1993; Alter and Meunier 2009; Oberthür and Stokke 2011). A master land-use plan built with active engagement of all sectors, as well as effective monitoring of approved planning, would help to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination.

Clarification of rights and responsibilities among sectors and actors would also help to improve implementation of current NDCs. Consistent integration of REDD+ in NDCs would not only remove contradictions between policies; it would also require cross-sectoral coordination, along forest- and land-based commodity value chains (Visseren-Hamakers *et al.* 2012; Den Besten *et al.* 2014; Weatherley-Singh and Gupta 2015), and in some cases, through an overarching institution that is responsible for coordinating all sectors and existing programmes (Oberthür and Gehring 2011). International and national policies should also actively promote actions that encourage sustainable development and measures that increase consumer demand for sustainable commodities (McMurray *et al.* 2017), while fostering deforestation-free production on the ground.

6.3.3 Funding sources

Uncertain and unstable funding sources can hamper NDC implementation. Adequate funding not only requires commitment from developed countries, but also an understanding of how forests contribute to the local and national economy (Chapter 3). Mapping existing and potential funding for REDD+ and climate change policies can help countries consolidate their fundraising efforts, identify funding gaps and complementary financial resources for specific policies and measures, and prevent unhealthy competition among actors. Sectoral policies

need to prioritise government investment in areas that stimulate deforestation-free economic pathways and minimise government spending in areas that deplete forest resources (UNECA 2012). Developing and conducting a regular review of public environmental expenditure and green accounting can also provide an opportunity to mainstream forests in national financial planning.

The private sector is a source of REDD+ investment as it is involved in forest risk commodity supply chains, such as timber, soy, palm oil, beef/leather and biofuels. Mobilising private sector finance in REDD+ and NDCs has been identified by most developing countries as important, yet efforts have fallen far short of expectations (Streck 2012). Making the business case for REDD+ is a challenge for developing countries (Streck and Parker 2012), and efforts to identify alternative economic development pathways based on standing forests are being hampered by decreasing investment (and research) in sustainable management of, and production from, standing forests. More research and dialogue are needed on the sustainable use of standing forests, especially on how to align forest conservation goals with economic interests and political will.

Another important lesson learned from country REDD+ implementation is the need to recognise equity concerns in the distribution of benefits and costs – both direct opportunity costs and transaction (including implementation) costs (Loft *et al.* 2017a, Luttrell *et al.* 2018). Understanding in net terms who loses, who shares the costs of REDD+ implementation, and who will gain from it will help governments develop a comprehensive estimate of funding resources required to implement NDCs.

6.3.4 Land-use accounting and monitoring reporting and verification

Many countries have not provided details on forest sector targets (which targets and how to measure them) or on the underlying policies and measures needed to achieve them (Schletz *et al.* 2017). There is also a discrepancy (in practice) in GHG accounting between REDD+ and NDCs, resulting from their differences in scope and purpose. As the scope of fluxes in REDD+ is limited to significant anthropogenic forest-related emissions/removals, countries often choose only the most significant emissions (e.g., from deforestation, excluding degradation or regrowth) and currently not all are national in coverage. In addition to limitations related to national capacities and lack of scientific data for full reporting of GHG inventories, many NDCs are unclear as to the comprehensiveness of accounting methods that will be used for the land sector (Schletz *et al.* 2017). Unrealistic targets set by countries – such as to restore millions of hectares of land despite the lack of a strong precedent of success in restoration efforts and without acknowledging existing adaptation constraints (Chapter 15) – and unrealistic estimates of their forest carbon stocks might also lead to ineffective NDC implementation.

Table 6.2 Examples on how to enhance the role of forests in climate change policies

	Recognise needs (problems and opportunities)	Policy planning, design and implementation
Global and national recognition of the role of forests in NDCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop political and financial commitment to overcome business as usual. • Identify opportunities to bridge REDD+ with e.g., green growth, green economy and LEDS. • Recognise the potential risk of merging multiple initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and capacity to transform data into knowledge that can lead to a shift in attitudes among state and non-state agents. • Leverage synergies between adaptation and mitigation. • Clarify definitions of existing initiatives such as green growth, green economy and LEDS; identify and exploit potential synergies among these to achieve the common goal of sustainable development.
Policies and measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and that addressing drivers cannot be done by the forestry sector alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and livelihood benefits, to identify actors and sectors to be targeted. • Develop policies and measures for drivers, including removing contradictory policies. • Review modifications needed for policy alignment and strong cross-sectoral coordination. • Develop a clear monitoring and evaluation framework for private sector commitments.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that conflicts of interests can lead to resistance or even failure of policy implementation. • Attend to conflicts that can emerge with only limited participation of powerful (business-as-usual) actors who contribute directly or indirectly to deforestation and forest degradation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map existing and potential actors. • Assess risks to implementation. • Clarify rights and responsibilities among sectors and actors. • Set up a transparent, inclusive decision-making process. • Establish overarching agencies and key governmental decision-makers. • Build capacity in government agencies to use their own social resources and local knowledge.

	Recognise needs (problems and opportunities)	Policy planning, design and implementation
Funding sources	Understand the contribution of forests to the national economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map existing and potential funding sources to identify priorities and prevent competition. • Prioritise government investment in areas that stimulate the greening of economic sectors. • Limit government spending in areas that deplete natural capital. • Secure adequate finance to address drivers of deforestation and degradation. • Conduct regular public environmental expenditure reviews. • Develop and monitor green accounting and alternative development measures. • Mobilise private sector finance.
	Recognise both opportunity and transaction (implementation) costs, as well as equity concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify who loses, who bears the costs and who will gain in net terms. • Develop plans for benefit and cost sharing, addressing compensation and equity concerns. • Involve stakeholders to gain political acceptance on benefit- and cost-sharing arrangements.
Land-use accounting MRV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the politics of numbers ('what counts is counted'). • Acknowledge that actors have different capacities in accessing, processing and providing information. • Understand policies and power imbalances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop safeguards information systems to ensure transparency. • Empower civil society organisations and monitoring frameworks. • Enhance the MRV capacity of government agencies. • Build independent assessments systems. • Develop clearly defined and measurable targets, and source more information on the underlying policies and measures to achieve them. • Enable consistent land-use accounting.

Sources: Martius *et al.* 2015; Petersen and Varela 2015; FAO 2016; Forsell *et al.* 2016; Zeleke *et al.* 2016; Brockhaus *et al.* 2017; ESCAP 2017; Schletz *et al.* 2017; Vladu 2017; Hein *et al.* 2018; Luttrell *et al.* 2018

Evidence also shows that the politics of numbers influence how an accounting system is set up (Chapters 4 and 5; Brockhaus *et al.* 2017). Transparency is critical and can be achieved through safeguards information systems, independent assessments, mitigation targets that clearly distinguish between unconditional and conditional commitment towards reducing emissions, and consistent land-use accounting. More information about financial, capacity building and technology needs is also necessary to facilitate the appropriate and effective transfer of resources from donors to receiving countries.

Transparency in value chains and divestment strategies is needed to hold the state and private sector accountable to their zero deforestation commitments (Chapter 13). As countries develop and refine their REDD+ plans and NDCs, internal coordination is essential to ensure methodological consistency between related initiatives. REDD+ can provide incentives for reducing emissions, thereby creating motivation for behavioural change in forest management. And the incipient REDD+ MRV and safeguards systems can be expanded with relatively little effort beyond the forestry sector (Martius *et al.* 2015). Therefore the entities involved in developing and revising NDCs should consider and – where appropriate – accommodate REDD+ advancements in methodology, data and institutional arrangements to meet NDC accounting requirements (McMurray *et al.* 2017). Actors have different capacities in accessing, processing and providing information; therefore, empowering civil society organisations and enhancing the capacity of government agencies in MRV should be important components of NDCs.

6.4 Conclusions

Many developing countries' NDCs have recognised the important role of forests, put forward mitigation measures in the forestry sector, and developed multiple green initiatives to achieve their mitigation goals. However, these measures do not directly aim to reduce emissions, nor do they provide sufficient information on the mitigation policies and measures needed or planned to achieve their goals. NDCs will be ineffective unless they have clear policies and measures to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and encourage institutional reform with cross-sectoral coordination, political commitment and national ownership of REDD+. They should also include adequate funding and capacity building, and support inclusive and transparent access to decision-making. However, while international funding is available for large-scale land conversion, funding for avoiding deforestation is limited (Chapter 3). The success of REDD+ and NDCs requires not only an understanding of countries' forest mitigation potential, but also the recognition and understanding of the political economy of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and the roles of actors and their interests and how they can hinder or enable change. Integrating forest targets with other land sector targets, and identifying potential synergies between REDD+ and development goals, green growth, green economy and LEDS, can also help to reinforce co-benefits and streamline reporting processes.