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COMMUNITY BASED REDD+
COUNTRY PLAN
FOR
NIGERIA

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ACRONYM

CBO	Community Based Organization
CBR+	Community Based REDD+
CRS	Cross River State
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FMCs	Forest Management Committees
FRA	Forest Resource Assessment
GEF	Global Environment Facility
NESREA	National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-REDD+	United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

1 Executive Summary

Following the approval of UN-REDD Programme support for Nigeria in 2009, the UN-REDD National Programme in Nigeria commenced with the establishment of the National Stakeholder Committee on REDD+ and the designation of a UN-REDD Desk for the country. Cross River State government showed impressive interest backed by relevant actions to participate in the REDD+ process. Therefore, a pilot scheme for REDD+ was focused on Cross River State to provide a platform for learning and structural planning for REDD+ preparedness and implementation in other parts of Nigeria. As part of the take-off activities of the UN-REDD National Programme, a Cross River State-based structure for implementation of REDD+ was put in place.

In partnership between the UN-REDD Programme and the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP), the Community Based REDD+ initiative was developed to provide a platform for community engagement and empowerment for active participation in national REDD+ processes. **Community-Based REDD+ (CBR+)** was designed as a complement to the UN-REDD Programme's work in supporting countries to develop REDD+ Readiness with the aim to support quick and early interventions in beneficiary forest dependent communities. The UN-REDD Programme and GEF-SGP are contributing grant funds to be coordinated and administered by and through the GEF-SGP grant delivery mechanism. A maximum grants amount of up to \$50,000 per project will be available to civil society organizations, including national and local NGOs, community-based organizations and grassroots organizations, to empower communities and indigenous peoples to engage in REDD+ readiness activities, and develop experiences, lessons, and recommendations at the local level to feed into national REDD+ processes.

The UN-REDD Programme has carried out intensive consultations with Civil Society Organisations, communities, and other stakeholders. The outcomes of these have fed into the development of this CBR+ Country Plan for Nigeria. The consultations have prioritized four thematic areas for CBR+: sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation, capacity building to address climate change, rural livelihoods, and renewable energy.

The CBR+ Country Plan fully integrates and aligns its objectives with that of the GEF Small Grants Programme as well as with Nigeria's UN-REDD National Programme. The CBR+ Country Plan will guide the CBR+ National Steering Committee in the selection of projects to be funded, and is an open tool for use by communities and relevant Civil Society Organisations wishing to engage in CBR+.

2 National and Local Contexts

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has an estimated population of about 160 million. The country is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean in the South, the Republic of Benin to the West, the Republic of Cameroon to the East and the Republic of Niger and Chad to the North. The total land area of about 923,768 sq. km of tropical landscape is endowed with a wide spectrum of ecological biomes ranging from the 857 km stretch coastal marine ecosystem in the south, through a belt of the Guinean Rainforest zone, an extensive Guinea Savannah woodland, the Sudan Savannah grassland and a dry Sahel scrubland threatened with the fast expanding influence of the Sahara desert in the north. The country's two main rivers systems, the Benue and the Niger and their associated tributaries, form a huge network of hydrological systems and wetlands. The country also has a broad spectrum of socio-cultural diversity comprising of about 250 ethnic groups spread across the 774 Local Government areas in 36 States and a Federal capital territory located in Abuja in the central part.

Nigeria contains a rich series of climatic and vegetation zones across landscapes, leading to a diverse range of habitats and very rich biodiversity with an estimated 4,600 plant, 839 bird and 274 mammal species. The Gulf of Guinea's forests stretch into southern Nigeria: these forests are recognized as a global biodiversity hotspot. There are 22 primate species, including threatened and endangered species such as the Cross River Gorilla, and Drill and Preuss's Guenon monkey. Over 50% of the remaining tropical rainforests are located in a single state- Cross River State (CRS). Yet forest resources of different types, from savannah forests to mangroves, are still found across Nigeria, albeit with high fragmentation and ongoing pressures.

Nigeria is quickly losing her forest, having lost more than 50% of its forest cover since 1990; currently, less than 10% of the country is forested. According to FAO's 2010 Forest Resource Assessment (FRA), Nigeria's deforestation rate has increased from 2.7 % for 1990-2000 to 4.0 % for 2005-2010. A review of the latest FRA data by Maplecroft, a risk analysis company, identified Nigeria as having the highest deforestation rate in the world¹, with an accompanying rating of "extreme risk". Average annual forest loss is estimated to about 350 000 hectares, driven by unsustainable land use practices and natural resource exploitation, as well as high demand for domestic energy. This affects livelihoods, increases the risk of climate change, threatens biodiversity, and is exacerbated by high population growth rate and poverty.

Nigeria's political administrative system, which comprises of three tiers of government, namely the Federal, the States and the Local governments, enabled the role of each tier of government on varied aspects of forest resource policy and regulatory framework, as well as forest resource use and management. Nigeria's growing and emerging economy is dominated by earnings from export of crude oil and gas exploitation, but the country is optimistic in economic diversification, increased industrialisation and improvement in energy efficiency and agricultural transformation.

¹ <http://maplecroft.com/about/news/deforestation.html>

Since 2008, there has been a growing interest in Nigeria in REDD+ as a mechanism to save the dwindling forest resources, whilst simultaneously contributing to global efforts for climate-change mitigation and support to forest-related livelihoods. Cross River State first expressed this interest, which soon captured the attention of federal authorities.

This led to several meetings and consultations within the country, and between the country and international stakeholders, notably with the UN-REDD Programme, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Federal Ministry of Environment and others to explore opportunities for collaboration. At the end of 2009, Nigeria formally requested membership in the UN-REDD Programme, which was granted and supported by USD \$4 million to help Nigeria prepare fully for REDD+ implementation. The Nigeria REDD+ Programme is put in place at the Federal Ministry of Environment. Nigeria chose to establish a pilot REDD+ programme in Cross River State, in recognition of the existing forestry management infrastructure, political will in support of forest conservation and an enabling institutional framework for forest resource governance, including community institutions in Cross River State.

The Cross River State Government has established the institutional structure and framework to implement Nigeria's pilot phase of UN-REDD. The programme is domiciled and led by the Cross River State Forestry Commission, with full support from the Governor's Office and in collaboration with relevant government ministries and agencies in the State. At the CRS level the programme is implemented in three pilot sites involving 70 pilot Forest Dependent Communities across 10 (out of the 18) Local Government Areas in the State. Several of these pilot communities have developed some level of natural resources governance structures, like the Forest Management Committees (FMCs) that take responsibility for the management of much of the State's community forests. Some of these FMCs have received significant capacity building support from local and international Non-Government Organisations in the past and some have played a role in limiting and monitoring logging – demonstrating their potential role in a REDD programme. Of particular note is the Ekuri community that has led the state with their conservation of over 33,000 ha of community forest, the nine villages around the Mbe Mountains that established the first community conservancy, and several others like Iko Esai, Abontakon, and villages around the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary. The CBR+ programme will build on these community level governance institutions and the attendant community forestry practice to respond to the drivers of deforestation and build the communities' capacity to implement REDD+.

A State-wide awareness creation on REDD+, its role in forest resource management, the opportunities it has for future sustainable benefits from payment for ecosystem services, the significance of the role of communities, and the importance of social and environmental safeguards and standards of the process have been carried out on several occasions in Cross River State.

The State has carried out initial assessment of focal areas for REDD+ intervention and has opened up direct consultations and mobilization of communities in and around REDD+ focal areas. In addition, the

REDD+ programme has consulted and engaged broadly with Non-Governmental Organisations and relevant Civil Society Groups in CRS on similar issues; and to inform them on the Community Based REDD+ (CBR+) initiative and the role of the UN-REDD+ Programme and GEF-SGP in the implementation of CBR+.

2.1 Forest Policies and Programmes

The three tiers of government in Nigeria have their respective roles in forest resources management. Formulation of policy and national legislation is a major responsibility of the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Environment and her agencies. The Federal Government agencies also manage the varied portfolios on treaties, international conventions, and multilateral agreements.

Following a lengthy review, the National Forestry Policy was approved by the Federal Government in 2006. The Policy's overall objective is to achieve sustainable forest management, leading to sustainable increases in the economic, social and environmental benefits from forests and trees, for present and future generations, including the poor and vulnerable groups. Specific objectives include management practices; positive investment conditions in the sector; and encouraging forest dependent people, farmers and local communities to improve their livelihoods through new approaches to forestry. The strategy to implement this Policy includes promoting broad partnerships, decentralization, community participation, and the active participation of women, youth and vulnerable groups. It is worth noting that with Nigeria's federal structure, the Federal Government has responsibility for setting national forest policy while all implementation is carried out at the state level. A draft National Forestry Act, to give legal backing to the Policy, was produced in 2006. This Act is being reviewed by the National Assembly. Other pertinent national policies include the National Policy on Environment, which aims, amongst other things, to halt environmental degradation, and various regulations issued by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA). Another relevant policy is the Land Use Act of 1978, which vests ownership of all land in the country to the state government. At the State level, each of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory have their respective forest policies and Forest Acts which are used to regulate forestry practices in their jurisdiction. Most of these policies and legislations were adopted from the old regional governments in Nigeria and so they predate the creation of states (i.e. before the 1970s). The four regions of Nigeria were dissolved and became 12, then 19 and, finally, 36 states. However, the old forestry laws for these regions are still in force in most of the current states, which the REDD+ process in Nigeria aims at reviewing through a participatory process to enable the REDD+ mechanism and improve overall forest governance in CRS and Nigeria as a whole.

2.2 Cross River State Forestry Policy

At the level of each State, policies are also formulated in alliance with the Federal Forestry policy, but with consideration for the State's potentials, capacity and extent of forest assets. In 2010, Cross River State after a prolonged participatory review process involving communities and civil society

organisations finally passed a new law on the Management and Sustainable Use of the Forest Resources of Cross River State. This law fills previous gaps in forest governance regimes and makes provisions for all of the different types of forests within the state. This law also defines the roles and responsibilities of all the potential stakeholders and beneficiaries of forest resources in the state. It provides for the procedures, processes, checks, and balances necessary to ensure that all of the existing and potential benefits from the state's forest resources contribute directly to the wellbeing of the people of Cross River State.

In addition, it enabled the government to allocate “carbon concessions” in the State's forests, and define a mechanism for the sharing of timber royalties from logging concessions that splits royalties between the government and forest communities. Another crucial policy initiative in CRS with respect to REDD+ is the moratorium on all logging, issued in 2008 by the State Government, and recently renewed. It in effect cancelled all logging concessions and bans logging in all forest types (e.g. forest reserves, community forests) across the entire State, to be applied for specific periods to plug unsustainable harvesting of timber resources in Cross River State.

2.3 Sustainable Forest Management, Climate Change and Payments for Environmental Services

At the national level, many forestry initiatives and programmes have been developed to support sustainable forest management. These include the Nigerian Forestry Action Programme, the Forest Outlook Study for Africa, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Desertification and Deforestation Programme, and the programme of the National Council on Shelterbelt. In spite of a variety of attempts to address deforestation in Nigeria, as mentioned above, the rate of deforestation in Nigeria remains one of the highest in the world. Most recently, an ambitious nationwide reforestation programme with indigenous species and local involvement has been launched to simultaneously regain forest cover and improve community livelihoods across the country.

Several federal climate change government structures have recently emerged, including the Presidential Implementation Committee on Clean Development Mechanism located in the Office of the Secretary to the Federal Government. The recently established regulatory agency National Environmental Standards Regulation and Enforcement Agency (NESREA) has a role to play in controlling pollution and emissions. Increasingly, the National Assembly is providing climate change decision-making. As part of the efforts on Climate Change mitigation, Nigeria has prepared a draft of the Climate Change Commission Bill which has an aspect of the activities included in the UN-REDD Programme for the attention of the Nigerian National Assembly.

In CRS, the Government, largely through its CRSFC, has initiated several initiatives to conserve their forests and biodiversity. These include the establishment of the first mangrove forest protected area in Nigeria, the creation of the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary and the certification of 19 Forest Management Committees (FMC) as local community institutions to interface effectively with other stakeholders in forest governance processes in the state. Through establishing FMCs, the State gives

formal recognition to community forest management and builds on the tradition of forest communities' stewardship and conservation of forests. In CRS, the policies relevant to climate change and Payment for Ecosystem Services are the new law on Management and Sustainable Use of the Forest Resources of Cross River State, which enables the award of concessions for PES. These include concessions for carbon, biodiversity offsets, eco-tourism and watershed protection. This is a first for Nigeria.

3 Methodology

Personnel and capacity building

The development of the CBR+ Country Plan benefitted from inputs from consultations with communities and other stakeholders on REDD+ that were being carried out by the UN-REDD National Programme. Prior to community consultations, the programme identified and engaged three Pilot Site Coordinators, one for each of the three REDD+ Pilot Sites in Cross River State as community liaison between the communities and REDD+. Thereafter, the programme held trainings on REDD+ and Stakeholder Engagement in particular for core REDD+ staff, community representatives, staff of Cross River State Forestry Commission, some Local Government Staff, and CBOs/NGOs. The objective was to create a pool of personnel and build their capacity to understand REDD+ and engage communities to participate in REDD+ activities. The GEF Small Grants Programme also held a workshop to acquaint participants, who are drawn from communities and NGOs/CBOs, which operate in Cross River and especially in the target communities, with the CBR+ process and got feedback that were incorporated into the CBR+ Plan.

Designing Instruments for Consultation

Within the wider context of the UN-REDD Programme, a stakeholder engagement strategy and communication strategy were developed to define clear objectives for consultation, guide the consultation process, as well as develop the content (messages) for consultation. The strategies were developed based on an initial stakeholder mapping and analysis process, which categorized and prioritized stakeholders based on their roles, their needs, and their levels of influence on the programme or vice versa. The mapping/analysis identified several institutions and categorized them into six broad stakeholder groups including Academia, Community Based/Civil Society Organisations, Forest Dependent Communities, Government (Local Governments and Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies), Media, and Private Sector. These instruments supported the programme to carry out disaggregated engagements with each of the stakeholder groups, paying greater attention to Forest Dependent Communities. A checklist of questions was developed to facilitate discussions during community meetings, engaging communities through focal groups, key informants, and town hall meetings including women, youth, and men. Keeping it simple, the checklist focused on how communities meet their livelihoods needs, what changes they might be experiencing, possible causes of these problems, and how they might be addressed. Simple role/group plays and audio-visual materials were used in some of the meetings.

Community Entry and Consultations

The CBR+ Country Plan benefitted from widespread consultations with forest dependent communities across the three pilot sites of the REDD+ Programme in Cross River State. While implementing the stakeholder engagement strategy, the first phase of stakeholder consultations, which occurred between January and July 2014, involved individual consultations with 52 communities across the three pilot sites of the REDD+ Programme on REDD+ topics, including CBR+. The approach for community consultation involved initial consultation with community leaders as the first entry point, which then was followed by town hall meetings involving more community members. Head count of participating community members in some of the consultations e.g. in Iko Esai, Old and New Ekuri, Esuk Mba, and Buanchor was over a hundred and fifty persons including men, women, and youth. The consultation process was participatory, ensuring a more effective participation and in-depth information from all groups to enable a robust plan for the Nigeria CBR+. The four thematic areas that this plan has proposed were priority areas identified from consulting with local communities and other stakeholders. In one of such consultations at Iko Esai, one of the communities in the Ekuri/Iko Pilot Site, women emphasized the need to support increased productivity of agricultural produce; improved soil management to limit encroachment to forests and walking distance to farms (which they said was more than three hours walking distance from their homes) and improved road accessibility to improve the value chain of their products. In a similar meeting in Old and New Ekuri, the village heads described NGOs as the voices of the communities and recommended NGOs' leadership in implementing CBR+. However, they insisted that projects that CBR+ will support should be relevant to the needs and conditions of specific communities and not based on a generic and assumed need, as is the case in several projects. Community participation in projects design and monitoring, according to them, will be crucial in ensuring that projects under CBR+ are relevant to communities, accepted by communities, create positive impacts in lives of community members, and help reduce communities' sole dependence on the forests.

Multi Stakeholder Consultations, Cluster Meetings, and Stakeholder Forum to Validate the Plan

In addition to community-level consultations, the programme held other consultations with each of remaining five stakeholder groups (Academia, Community Based/Civil Society Organisations, Government, Media, and Private Sector) in separate meetings that held between September and December 2014 (see annex 1 for dates and other consultation details). The broad based consultation enabled the CBR+ plan to validate community preferences as an ongoing process, and refine the outcomes to reflect the thoughts, current realities, and the change that stakeholders expect would happen from implementing this plan. For more inclusiveness, the consultations maintained steady dialogue with the National REDD+ Secretariat for their input and guidance to ensure that the plan and priorities that community stakeholders have proposed are or can be aligned by National Policies and Programmes as a sustainability consideration. Following comments received on the initial draft, the programme held two major events to validate the revised plan.

The first event held in the first half of December, 2014, where the programme organised three ‘Cluster Meetings’ in the pilot sites, one for each Pilot Site. This was necessary because, having consulted individually with the communities, the Cluster Meetings provided opportunity for a joint meeting of all constituent communities in a Pilot Site to discuss and affirm the outcomes of previous individual consultations. Communities participated in the Cluster Meetings by representation through their Village Heads, Women Leaders, Youth Leaders, CBOs, and some persons of influence. A total of 70 communities from the three REDD+ Pilot Sites in CRS participated in the Cluster Meetings. From the Afi/Mbe Pilot Site, 25 communities attended; 14 communities attended the Ekuri/Iko Pilot Site Cluster Meeting; and 31 communities from the Mangrove Pilot Site participated in the Cluster Meeting here. In addition, CSOs, Media, Local Governments and State Government MDAs attended each of the Cluster Meetings. These cluster meetings served as mini-validation events for the CBR+ plan, ensuring that the contents reflect community priorities and respond to environmental conditions in the areas.

In the second event, the Programme held the inaugural meeting of the CRS REDD+ Stakeholder Forum for three days from 17th to 19th December, 2014. A major objective of this forum was to validate the CBR+ Plan. The forum brought together representatives from Forest Dependent Communities (including the youth, women, and men), Traditional Rulers’ Council including Paramount Rulers and Clan Heads as Chief Custodians of culture and traditional heritage, Local Governments across the 3 REDD+ Pilot Sites, Government Agencies at both National and State levels, CSOs/CBOs, Media, Private Sector, and Academia. The Stakeholder Forum serves as a platform for coordinating stakeholder activities and developing strategies for effective REDD+ implementation in Cross River State and replication of lessons learned in other States of Nigeria. The Forum discussed the CBR+ plan and confirmed that the contents reflected outcomes of earlier consultations, and will help address the needs of forest dependent communities and the State in general to support the development of ecologically friendly livelihoods practices, improve natural resources management, address the need for energy and public education to ensure a holistic response to the drivers of deforestation and problems associated with climate change. Speaking at this event, the Economic Adviser to the CRS Government and Vice Chairman of the State’s Planning Commission described CBR+ and the CBR+ Plan as **“essential process and tool of the REDD+ Programme in Nigeria that we are happy and privileged to be part of to enable us think through measures that we can practically apply in building and sustaining a green and forest carbon-based economy while correcting the damages we have caused to our environment and to our lives”**.

Finally, participants at the CRS REDD+ Stakeholders’ Forum validated the Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan to initiate and guide CBR+ implementation in the State and other parts of the country where the REDD+ programme and CBR+ will be replicated.

4 Priority Areas

The Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan will focus on both geographic and thematic areas. Geographically, Cross River State (CRS) will be targeted, in particular priority areas to the UN-REDD Programme and the GEF-SGP in Nigeria.

Cross River State contains 50% of the remaining forests in Nigeria. In addition, the government of Cross River State has demonstrated strong political will to address climate change evidenced by the institutionalization of forest management strategy through the creation of the Forestry Commission. The state also has participated directly or indirectly in practical demonstration efforts to manage its forest.

GEF-SGP operates within five focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, persistent organic pollutants and international waters. For the purpose of CBR+, only biodiversity, climate change and land degradation focal themes shall be considered. Additionally, GEF-SGP priorities are centred on reaching the poor and marginalized who live closest to the natural resources and who impact the environment through their various living and natural resource exploitation practices and who are the first victims of environmental degradation. The UN-REDD process in Cross River has identified 70 communities in total who are directly living closest to the focal sites and would thus be the beneficiaries of CBR+ demonstration projects.

4.1 Geographical Focal Areas

Two of the UN-REDD pilot sites in Cross River State are located in the Guinean rainforest block. They are the Ekuri-Iko (up to Okokori-Etara Eyeyeng-Owai-Ukpon River) in the central part of Cross River State and the Mbe Mountain – Afi River area located in Boki Local Government of northern Cross River (see map in Figure 1). The third pilot site of the UN-REDD Programme is in the Cross River estuaries where communities face challenges of depleting fish stocks, degradation of mangrove habitats and deprivation of sustainable livelihoods due to resource depletion and poverty.

The Cross River Mangrove is over 258,000 sq. km in size and contains one of the important segments of the Nigerian coastal mangrove ecosystem. Nigeria has the largest mangrove ecosystem in Africa. Mangroves support local fisheries and provide domestic and commercial source of energy for rural inhabitants of communities in estuary areas.

CBR+ shall focus on community-based projects in these three UN-REDD pilot areas.

The pilot areas chosen are the areas of greater forest management and biodiversity conservation assets of Cross River State and by extension, that of Nigeria. The communities have experience in working with varied stakeholders in the past and will be able to utilize the opportunities provided by CBR+.

REDD PILOT PLOTS

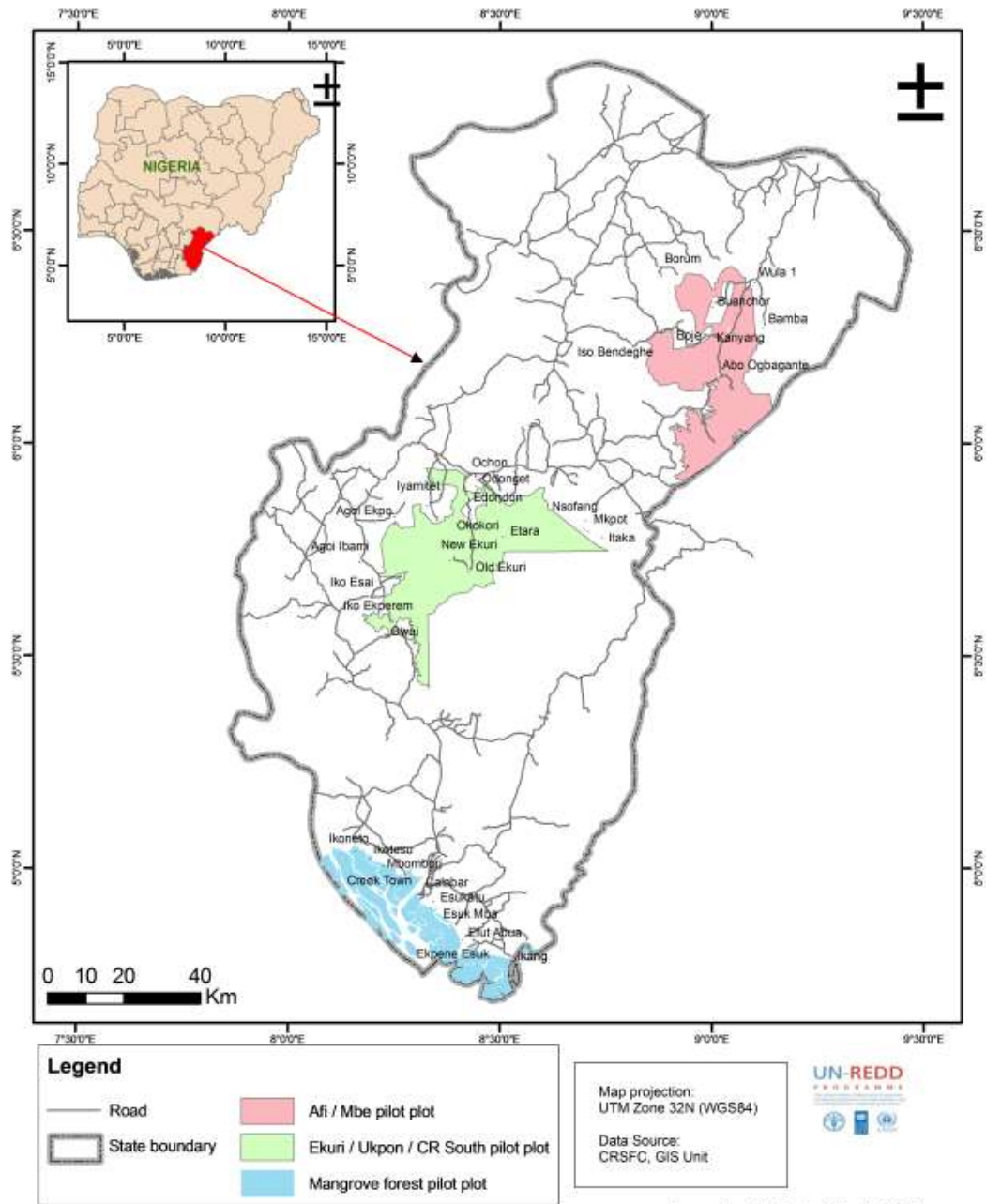


Figure 1: REDD+ (&Proposed CBR+) Pilot Sites in Cross River State - Nigeria

4.2 Thematic Focal Areas

Thematically, the Nigeria CBR+ Plan has prioritised interventions that will help address the impacts and drivers of deforestation, including **i)** climate change; **ii)** biodiversity loss; **iii)** land degradation/poor forest management; **iv)** low capacity/skills to combat climate change and natural resource depletion **v)** poverty,

and vi) energy. The REDD+ process ultimately aims at reducing climate change through improving forest governance processes and the development of alternative livelihoods and sustainable development of forest dependent communities. CBR+ in Nigeria will support initiatives that will address the problems listed above, and empower local communities, including women, men and the youth, by building their capacity for climate change adaptation and effective participation in the Nigeria REDD+ programme.

The opportunity provided by GEF-SGP as the implementation partner for CBR+ is an added value for communities to engage in small scale but focused initiatives: solution for livelihoods, inputs to resource management and direct intervention to fight poverty. The nature of SGP support is short-term and result-oriented approaches that target poor communities and easily mobilize resources in fashion that addresses the needs of men and women; and these will be applied to CBR+ to ensure results are established on the ground to address the drivers of deforestation and improve the well-being for forest dependent communities.

The following are priority thematic areas of the Nigeria CBR+ Plan.

4.2.1 Sustainable Forest Management/Biodiversity conservation

Within the context of sustainable forest management, the Nigeria REDD+ Programme considers biodiversity conservation an important issue. The country, particularly Cross River State is considered a biodiversity hotspot including many endangered and threatened species. Therefore, CBR+ will pay particular attention to i) strengthening protected areas, especially community conserved areas; ii) developing community-based conservation by promoting positive traditional or local ecological knowledge and practices; iii) promoting sustainable use of natural resources, especially forestry, non-timber forest products, agroforestry, fisheries and ecotourism; iv) adopting Environmental Communication to promote behaviour change around forest use; and v) engaging in evidence-based policy development and reform.

This complements the objectives of the Nigeria REDD+ process piloted in CRS, and aligns with the vision of GEF-SGP Nigeria which is to become the “Donors’ Standard” for supporting community initiatives targeting poor and marginalized communities in environmental management and livelihood enhancement through pilot projects that influence national policy.

4.2.2 Capacity Development to engage in climate change mitigation processes, including REDD+

Local (forest dependent) communities, and particularly those who are often marginalized within them, such as women, youth, the poor, and disabled, generally lack the awareness and capacity to participate in processes like REDD+. The Nigeria REDD+ Programme has therefore responded by developing a stakeholder engagement strategy (as an evolving tool for engendering participation) that prioritises capacity building through awareness creation and training, specifically targeting local communities to ensure their members are equitably empowered and actively engaged and benefitting in the process.

Thus, the reason stakeholders have included capacity building as an important priority area for the CBR+ in Nigeria to build informed forest dependent communities with the relevant skills to respond appropriately to climate change. The CBR+ process will also utilize a **gender mainstreaming** approach to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women, youth, the poor and disabled are empowered and actively participate and benefit from the REDD+ process. Even within this vulnerable group, the plan identifies and will target young and unmarried women as most vulnerable and marginalised – they hardly fit into the youth category that is dominated by the male (a common profile in communities of CRS), nor do they fit into the women’s category dominated by the married women; yet they provide a large labour force and represent a major forest resource user group (but without identity and a voice). Additionally, when capacity building activities are undertaken, efforts will be made to arrange them in a gender responsive manner, wherein meetings/trainings/consultations and any corresponding materials, etc., are intentionally designed (time, location, group arrangement, such as mixed groups, and/or women’s and men’s only meetings) and held to encourage women’s and men’s equitable and meaningful participation and involvement.

4.2.3 Sustainable Livelihoods

The Nigeria UN-REDD Programme and the GEF Small Grants Programme consider agriculture as a major driver of deforestation in the country. Forest dependent communities increasingly utilise forest resources and depend on their productivity to produce food and earn income for the well-being of households. Already, the Nigeria UN-REDD Programme recommends that interventions addressing rural livelihoods should demonstrate sustainable approaches and value addition and improved access to markets of agricultural produce in a manner that addresses poor forest use. This Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan will therefore respond by supporting genuine alternatives to promote climate resilient agriculture in the target areas, and continuously build on learning to replicate in other parts of the country. Expanding sustainable livelihoods options will clearly demonstrate relevance and profitability to the local population, as well as benefits of sustainable forest utilisation.

4.2.4 Renewable Energy

Reliance on fuel wood and charcoal as main sources of energy in forest dependent communities contributes to deforestation and forest degradation. In line with the Nigeria UN-REDD Programme, the CBR+ Country Plan will consider options for introducing renewable or more efficient energy sources in order to both reduce deforestation and degradation and reduce the burden on women who are often responsible for collecting firewood to meet their household energy needs.

This priority is closely linked with the objective of the GEF-SGP, which aims at empowering community groups with innovations that focus on alternative energy sources and/or improved energy utilization methodologies as demonstrated in a reliable number of beneficiaries of the GEF-SGP in Nigeria. CBR+ will leverage GEF-SGP’s experience with communities that have reduced the level of dependence on natural forests for energy as fuelwood or charcoal or those that have demonstrated more efficient use of new inputs into energy resource use in communities.

5 Outcomes and Indicators

The overall objective of CBR+ is to catalyse REDD+ Readiness from the ground up by empowering communities to pilot REDD+ methodologies and approaches to address deforestation and degradation and promote biodiversity conservation. In other words, CBR+ is based on the potential to build local community capacities and enabling them to provide experiences, which can feed into the national REDD+ strategy, goals and processes.

CBR+ in Nigeria will therefore achieve the following **outcomes**:

- I. More functional and efficient community-based forest management activities involving equitably women and men from local communities developed;
- II. Capacity to implement REDD+ and develop forest resource management in Cross River State communities equitably improved;
- III. Capacity of women and men from local community groups to generate income through new, alternative and sustainable livelihoods options equitably improved;
- IV. Products value chain improved and access to markets increased;
- V. Capacity of women and men from local communities to develop and use more efficient energy sources increased; and
- VI. Forest governance mechanism clearly addresses the needs of women and other vulnerable groups.

The plan identifies the following **impact indicators** corresponding to each of the outcomes listed above.

5.1 Outcomes, Impact Indicators and Means of Verification

Outcome 1: More functional and efficient community-based forest management activities involving equitably women and men from local communities developed

Impact Indicators:

Community members (men and women) participating meaningfully in community-based forest management activities;

Community members maintain current community-wide footprint of farmland and halt the number of new farms in tropical high or mangrove forest areas;

Verified accounts of reduced negative impacts on biodiversity habitats and/or resources in and around protected areas, and indigenous and community conservation areas

Incidences of lessons from community-based forest management activities informing state- and national-level thinking on forests and climate change related issues;

Means of verification: Community baseline profile, monitoring reports, Project Activity sheets, site visits. (When data on community member involvement is reported, such data will be disaggregated by sex and marital status)

Outcome 2: Awareness and level of communication on REDD+ and forest resource management in Cross River State communities equitably improved

Impact Indicators:

Majority of community members, equitably including both married and unmarried women and men and youth, are able to express views freely on the expected inputs and roles into the REDD+ process;

Community stakeholder groups, including marginalized groups, such as youth, women, unmarried women, etc. freely and meaningfully, participate in CBR+ activities;

Number of community-level institutional structures supporting community engagement in REDD+

Means of verification: Community meeting reports, CBR+ Project reports, site visits. (When data on community member involvement is reported, such data will be disaggregated by sex and marital status)

Outcome 3: Capacity of women and men from local community groups to generate income through new, alternative and sustainable livelihoods options equitably improved

Impact Indicators:

Number of community groups that have developed alternative and sustainable sources of income while reducing negative impacts on forests;

Number of men and women (married and unmarried) actively and meaningfully participating in activities that generate income through new, alternative and sustainable livelihoods options

Number of community members (men and women, particularly those from marginalized groups) benefitting from increased/diversified income from alternative livelihoods activities that reduce negative impacts on forests

Means of verification: Direct sighting of new alternative sources of income in the community; measurement of income increase, CBR+ Project Reports, Community Meeting Reports, site visits. (When community members targeted and this information is reported, such data will be disaggregated by sex age marital status and any other relevant indicators)

Outcome 4: Products value chain improved and access to markets increased

Impact Indicators:

Number of community members applying new/improved skills and knowledge to increase efficiency and productivity;

Number of community members and products gaining increased access to markets;

Number of community members/groups reporting increased income from improved value chain and increased access to markets

Means of verification: Production and sales records. (When data on community member involvement is reported/measured, such data will be disaggregated by sex, age marital status and any other relevant indicators)

Outcome 5: Capacity of women and men from local communities to develop and use more efficient energy sources increased

Impact Indicators:

Number of households (or men and women (married and unmarried)) embracing and using energy efficient sources;

Reduction in the number of community members engaged in fuelwood exploitation activities;

Increase in the hectares of land allowed to regenerate and restored;

Decrease in wood consumption by the community;

Decrease in time spent (number of hours) by men and women in the community on collecting fuel wood;

Reported decrease in respiratory diseases/symptoms related to the inhalation of smoke from household cooking and heating.

Means of verification: Community Energy Assessment reports, Data of request for improved energy source materials, CBR+ Project reports, site visits, Community Resource Assessment reports. (When data on community member involvement is reported/measured, such data will be disaggregated by sex and marital status)

Outcome 6: Forest governance mechanism clearly addresses the needs of women and other vulnerable groups

Impact Indicators:

Number of communities applying environmental communication and by-laws to address the needs of women and other vulnerable groups;

Number of women, youth, and other vulnerable groups participating in decision-making and other forest resource management activities;

Number of community-based forest business enterprises owned and/or accessed by women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.

Means of verification: Community resource management plans and by-laws; cooperatives' records, field monitoring reports. (When data on community member involvement is reported/measured, such data will be disaggregated by sex and marital status)

6 Link to national REDD+ process

The objective of Nigeria's REDD+ Programme is "to build the REDD+ mechanism in Nigeria, using Cross River State as a demonstration model. The Programme aims to construct the REDD+ system from the grassroots through intense action from the grassroots in Cross River State. Involving forest dependent communities in CRS in the Nigeria REDD+ Readiness process through CBR+ will inform the national REDD+ readiness framework and develop best practices that can be replicated in other interested states. To achieve this objective, the Nigeria REDD+ Readiness Programme has evolved a two-track approach to achieve REDD+ readiness in Nigeria, based on: (i) the development of institutional and technical capacities at Federal level, and (ii) carrying out intense institutional, strategy building and demonstration activities in Cross River State.

The Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan aligns with this strategy by emphasizing capacity building in CRS as a pilot with a national level oversight; and a general plan to document and disseminate lessons learned for effective replication to other States.

The Nigeria UN-REDD National Programme targets forest communities for intervention to slow down the rate of deforestation and promote sustainable forest management practices to maintain ecosystem integrity in the long term and continue to promote forest conservation as a means of livelihood for communities in Nigeria. The four thematic focus areas of CBR+ in Nigeria: Capacity for forest management; awareness on climate change and impacts on livelihoods; direct efforts on income generating activities and livelihoods; and efforts aimed at improved energy efficiency all contribute to long term survival of forestry ecosystems and its enabling support to communities, and therefore provide strong links to the aims and objectives of the national REDD+ process.

While the goal of the Nigeria REDD+ Programme is to enable Nigeria to contribute to climate change mitigation through improved forest conservation and enhancing sustainable community livelihoods, the CBR+ initiative has as an immediate goal to build capacity of forest dependent communities to evolve community-led strategies to conserve biodiversity and support communities to benefit from halted deforestation and forest degradation. It is important that Nigeria is on the path to REDD+ readiness and requires intensive collaborative interventions to achieve the desired goal. Contributing to this, the Nigeria CBR+ initiative will support in addressing issues like drivers of deforestation, mainstreaming

gender equality and women's empowerment concepts into institutional capacity building, and livelihoods development for forest dependent communities to make CBR+ robust and relevant to the REDD+ process. The table below highlights the specific linkage between the key CBR+ priorities and approach, the National UN-REDD programme policy and practice and the role of the GEF-SGP in CBR+.

Key CBR+ Objectives and priorities	Link to National REDD+ process	Application and Link to GEF-SGP
Sustainable Forest Management/Biodiversity conservation	Link to addressing drivers of deforestation, support forest valuation and develop multiple benefits strategy, promote conservation, sustainable management of forests, enhancement of forest carbon stocks, and ensuring social and environmental safeguards according to UNFCCC and REDD+ standards.	<p>Significant ecosystems and species protection</p> <p>Rational and sustainable use of biodiversity</p> <p>Restoration of biological resources</p> <p>Creation of public awareness and community participation in biodiversity conservation</p>
Capacity Development to engage in climate change mitigation processes, including REDD+	Stakeholder engagement and capacity building in areas of community forest monitoring (MRV-related activities); and contribute to National Framework for UN-REDD	<p>Empowering communities to develop initiatives that mitigate against effects of climate change on food production and rural economy</p> <p>Support to community level promotion of awareness on climate change effects</p> <p>Mobilize communities to take positive actions on forest rehabilitation and restoration</p>

Sustainable Livelihoods	Address underlying causes (drivers) of deforestation, investment in forest business development, multiple benefits, social and environmental safeguards.	Community focused intervention through grants that are administered using the SGP model and with specific objectives to target UN-REDD pilot communities Attention on poverty reduction strategies in project implementation
Renewable Energy	Addressing drivers of deforestation; enhancing forest carbon stock; promoting private sector investment	Community empowerment to engage in modern agroforestry practices and alternatives sources to fuel wood

7 Potential CBR+ Projects

7.1 Sustainable Forest Management/Biodiversity conservation

Projects under this thematic area shall aim at enhancing the capacity and skills of forest dependent communities to reduce the loss of forests and promote sustainable natural resource management. Specific project activities shall include training, skills development on forest resource assessment, mapping and design of implementable community land and forest management plans with by-laws. Given their knowledge on forests, activities under this theme shall promote design of collaborative action between expert and community members including equitably both women and men on actual designation of areas for forest conservation, forest regeneration, watershed protection and management of species and microhabitats for ecosystem functioning. Thus, projects under this thematic area shall move beyond planning to supporting communities to identify/prioritise short-term activities in their plans for implementation in the CBR+ process as demonstration projects, while establishing linkages with outside sources/partners to leverage on resources that communities would require to meaningfully implementing these plans. This activity shall be strongly supported by appropriate outreach mechanism to communicate sound environmental adaptation to promote behaviour change around forest use. For a sustained impact, this activity shall include support to communities and using information gained from the process to promote evidence-based policy advocacy for legal reforms that will feed into both the State and National legal framework in support of REDD+ and forest governance in general.

Other training skills shall include sustainable natural resource harvesting methodologies, development of community based forest governance structures and development of community based enforcement tools on sustainable forest management e.g. by-laws, community fines etc. Capacity building on forest resource management shall include processes, which equitably engage both women and men, and that increase forest ecosystem productivity for human needs and livelihood improvement and those that

create opportunities for new products and materials for domestic and commercial needs of the people. Examples may include innovation and training on bee farming, honey processing, edible mushrooms and vegetable farming, snail production, bush mango, cola and bush pepper production etc. but should be based strongly on priorities that communities themselves have identified based on credible and concrete criteria; and be able to receive support for value addition and link to markets. Others may include efforts on village level tourism such as building and management community tourist lodges most particularly in areas that have potentials to receive tourists and researchers regularly. Design of group efforts on forest rehabilitation and restoration as well as associated methods of seed and nursery development technology will form an integral part of the approaches in the context of this programme. Apart from direct investment of time and resources on community training, outreach and exchange visits to other communities for information sharing and knowledge transfer shall be considered in the skill acquisition package.

7.2 Capacity Development to engage in climate change mitigation processes, including REDD+

CBR+ shall support efforts that promote further awareness on possible impacts of climate change on agriculture, water resource needs and productivity of forest for community needs and commerce. The process will encourage group behaviour change through the creation of community based forum and discussion sessions on varied scenarios and experiences with clear relevance to local conditions and evidences. In this process, gender responsive measures will be promoted to help ensure that women and men have the opportunity to actively participate, wherein information is shared and discussed in a format that is accessible and available to all community members, including those often more marginalized (i.e. women, unmarried women, disabled, youth). This thematic area shall also support direct intervention on agricultural practices that reduce stress for community members and help adaptation to change in climate e.g. practice of agroforestry, promotion of home garden systems to improve resource availability and broaden the base of food sources, engagement of water resource conservation methods such as rain harvesting for domestic use and increase in empowerment in wetlands in agriculture to expand food resource base and increase income of community members all-round the year.

7.3 Sustainable Livelihoods

Livelihood enhancement and alternative income generation activities are priority projects of the CBR+ and aimed at addressing the underlying issues of poverty among forest dependent communities. This is in line with the needs expressed by communities, in line with the principles of multiple benefits and safeguards principles of the REDD+ Programme, and in line with the principles of the GEF-SGP which believes in using local empowerment on income generating activities to meet the demand side of natural resource management and greatly stir up community interest and active participation in sustainable natural resource management. CBR+ in Nigeria will promote and support initiatives in a gender-equitable manner for entrepreneurship, development of community based cottage industries, market development and financial management, including for marginalized groups (i.e. women, unmarried women, disabled, youth), to enhance sustainable exploitation, use and marketing of natural

resources, including products processing, value addition, and link to markets. CBR+ will empower communities to build local capacity on knowledge development to reduce waste and cost of investment in farm and non-farm enterprise. Group knowledge based activities such as farmer field schools, adult literacy on farming business shall be encouraged. Livelihoods improvement initiatives under CBR+ will explore opportunities for both crop and animal production (domestication) to provide for household food security and potential for increased income while reducing pressure on animal wildlife. As part of the value chain, branding and products certification will provide economic advantage for more sales locally and for export.

7.4 Renewable Energy

In line with the UN-REDD and GEF-SGP objectives, CBR+ will empower community based activities that help improve energy efficiency as a means of reducing direct impacts on forest for fuelwood, charcoal and other forms of domestic and commercial energy needs. Given that both women and men (married and unmarried) represent major forest resource users, gender responsive measures will be promoted to help ensure that women and men have the equitable opportunity to participate, engage in and take advantage of these community based activities and contribute to improved energy efficiency. Innovations and designs that promote farm residues management for energy e.g. bricks and farm processing waste, improved fuel efficient stove systems, deliberate seasonal management for fuel wood collection and local by-laws that encourage communities to make use of dried and fallen wood for energy use and discourage direct felling of wood for fuel will be encouraged. Part of this scheme would be deliberate community plans demonstrating sustainable and equitable management of their forest, regeneration of degraded areas and development of woodlots with indigenous species to meet the need for local fuel wood energy consumption.

8 Criteria for Selection

8.1 Selection of CBR+ Projects

Every CBR+ project must, in addition to GEF SGP criteria

- a) Demonstrate the projects' feasibility,
- b) Mitigation against environmental damage and address drivers of deforestation,
- c) Must add value to standing forests; and
- d) Demonstrate how lessons learned from past projects² have been integrated.

²A good example of project that some stakeholders mentioned as a learning benchmark was the USAID funded Sustainable Practices in Agriculture for Critical Environments –SPACE Project that supported cocoa agroforestry through discovery learning, sound environmental design, reduced value chain, & improved access to markets.

Generally, CBR+ projects will be selected based on their contribution to the objectives of CBR+ as outlined in this plan. Communities and other stakeholders strongly recommended that, essentially, CBR+ projects must also be those that

- Address priority problems and opportunities identified and prioritised by communities themselves based on credible criteria with recourse to both men and women – married or single. The projects must be physically situated in the target CBR+ communities and show evidence of ownership by the community members, both male and female, married or single.
- Are relevant to communities' experiences (e.g. not attempt to introduce hunting to a fishing community).
- Are economically viable with some option offering short term financial turn over.
- Avoid the pit falls of several previous projects that had failed because limited resources were spread thin across several community group members (e.g. providing 10 snails to a group of 30 community members).

8.2 Selection of communities

All target communities for CBR+ grants will be located in the UN REDD+ Pilot Sites in Cross River State. Selected communities must have experience in pro-development activities and/or are willing to invest time in the above areas of concern. The CBR+ shall prioritise activities related to development of governance for communities that require such, and gradually introduce other actions to ensure that communities have established plans to ensure good forest governance before they gain increased capacity for economic investments. Very importantly, communities that have strong governance index, demonstrated by existence of functional forest governance institutions like Forest Management Committees (or any institution with similar roles) and land use/forest management plans with evidence of implementation will be prioritised. These criteria are inputs from communities themselves, based on the need to establish safeguards against leakages that could occur when communities gain increased skills and capacity to utilize the forest for economic gains; and to encourage other communities with not-so-obvious natural resource governance index to begin to take steps in that direction.

8.3 Criteria for Selection of Civil Society Organisations

CBR+ projects will be implemented by Civil Society Organisations³, implying that communities can only access the grants through CSOs. The following will be criteria for selecting CSOs in CRS:

³For the purpose of the SGP and its grant making, CSOs refer to national and local NGOs with priority for Community-Based Organizations, indigenous peoples, farmers, scientific community, women's groups, and youth and children organizations.

- a. Familiarity with REDD+ and CBR+ concept and acceptance of REDD+ principles;
- b. Familiarity with GEF-SGP Nigeria's requirements for accessing grant and acceptance of the rules and regulations for project implementation;
- c. Explicit linkages to key thematic areas of the REDD+ programme;
- d. Demonstrated success in implementing forest resource management and biodiversity related projects;
- e. Demonstrated success in working in the geographical area or similar high rainfall environment;
- f. Evidence of community participation in developing the concept note;
- g. Sustainability plan for the proposed initiative;
- h. Evidence of registration with relevant Nigerian authority (Local, State, or Federal Government) as a criteria of the SGP projects in Nigeria;

8.4 Selection of Approach

- a. Demonstrated extensive consultations and input by direct target communities/beneficiaries
- b. Demonstrated cost effectiveness/efficiency (e.g. overhead) cost in mobilizing and operating in Cross River State;
- c. Good CBR+ concept note and proposal including detailed analysis of the problem(s), strategies to address them relevant to REDD+ readiness;
- d. A good CBR+ project proposal should demonstrate how gender issues will be addressed and taken into account in planning, implementation and reporting
- e. A good CBR+ project proposal should demonstrate how lessons learned from implementation would be documented and shared to support development of best practices and replication to other areas.
- f. Show how the proposal addresses the Stakeholders recommendation in annex 1 of this plan.

Annex 1: Recommendations of CRS Stakeholders on Community-Based REDD+

Following are recommendations of stakeholders made during CRS REDD+ Stakeholders' Forum on December 18th, 2014 regarding the implementation of the Community Based REDD+. The Forum was held from 17th to 19th December, 2014 at the Mirage Hotel in Calabar, Cross River State.

1. The stakeholders accept CBR+ as a crucial means to engage with local communities to build their capacity for REDD+ implementation while addressing the issues of poverty and poor management of forests among forest dependent communities.
2. The plan to implement CBR+ through Civil Society Organisations working in close collaboration with communities and community groups is acceptable and fundamental to the success of community projects.
3. Among other engagement plans of CBR+ it is the recommendation of stakeholders that the programme closely involves affected Local Government Councils and Traditional Rulers to transfer skills and help develop and sustain institutional as well as policy support for the programme.
4. CBR+ projects should address priorities that communities themselves have identified. These priorities should be clearly stated in the guidelines for the calls for concept note and proposal. It is necessary that CBR+ clearly articulates community needs and priorities, and provides adequate guidance to CSOs to enable them respond appropriately in designing interventions that are meaningful to and address the priorities of forest dependent communities.
5. For increased participation in the management and advisory roles of committees formed to support CBR+ implementation, stakeholders recommended close links and frequent communication between the CBR+ Steering Committee, which is nationally constituted and CRS CBR+ Sub-Committee, being one of the working structures and part of the overall CRS REDD+ Technical Committee.
6. Considering the relevance of these two committees, it is also the recommendation of stakeholders that both committees participate in the development of the calls for concept note and proposal to ensure proper guidance to interested communities and CSOs; and as well in the subsequent selection of responses to the calls based on criteria recommended in the CBR+ Plan.
7. Usually, programmes like CBR+ should have dedicated staff that is/are accountable for effective programme delivery. Stakeholders recommend such staff for the CBR+ implementation. Such staff should possess the relevant experience and located close enough to target communities/project sites for effective monitoring and hands-on technical support to CSOs and communities while implementing approved activities.

8. The criteria for projects, communities, and CSOs (with preference for CBOs) selection stated in the CBR+ Plan should be followed to ensure that the right organisations are implementing the right projects in the right locations.
9. The stakeholders, particularly CSOs also recommended that part of getting the CBR+ process right will be the training of CSOs early enough to enable them understand REDD+ and CBR+, the links between them and relationship with the Small Grants Programme. With many actions and organisations, it is very easy for stakeholders and implementers to become confused and inadvertently derail the process, a risk that is easily avoidable through the recommended training and information sharing right from inception.

Annex 2: Summary table of consultation events

Nigeria UN-REDD+ Programme

REDD+ and CBR+ Stakeholder Consultation Update for 2014

S/n	Date	Activity	Location	Number of participants
1	28th April - 2nd May	Community Sensitization/consultation	Local Communities	Over 2,000 community members (youth, women and men) in 28 communities in REDD+ Pilot Sites
2	2nd - 7th June	CSO consultation/Training	Old Ekuri	25 participants+ 2 community town hall meetings
3	9th - 12th June	Meeting with Conservation Association of Mbe Mountains - CAMM (A community based conservation association involving 9 communities around the Mbe Mountains)	Wula 1	90 participants involving 9 communities, 3 CSOs, 1 Local Government Council (Boki), CRSFC, National Park Service, Tourism Bureau, REDD+ Sect. etc.
4	18th - 19th Sept	Consultation with Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)	Tinapa, Calabar	90 participants
5	24th Oct	Consultation with Media	Calabar	43 participants
6	1st & 2nd Dec	Afi/Mbe Cluster meeting	Ogoja	80 participants from 25 communities
7	3rd Dec	Consultation with academia	Calabar	30 participant
8	8th - 9th Dec	Ekuri/Iko Cluster meetings	Akamkpa	73 participants from 14 communities
9	10th & 11th Dec	Mangrove cluster meeting	Akpabuyo	80 participants from 31 communities
10	13th Dec	Consultation with the Private sector	Calabar	35 participants
11	17th - 19th Dec	Stakeholder Forum/PGA+ CBR+ draft plan Validation	Calabar	120 participants