

REDD & Its Implication on Community People

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1.0 Why are forests important for Climate Change Mitigation?

Forest play a crucial role in lowering the impact of climate change due to the many other important functions they play in our lives and because their destruction leads to more emissions it has become clear that we need to slow deforestation and forest degradation and maintain a healthy old growth forest system.

In an old growth forest, gases (CO₂) are constantly being absorbed and released, and overall balance is maintained. If forests are destroyed or degraded, large amounts of gases that cause global warming are released into the atmosphere. This has led to a scheme called REDD-Reducing emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation. REDD one of the planned solutions to climate change at the proposed Kyoto protocol and UNFCCC (United Nations Framework on Climate Change) negotiating table will worsen the climate chaos and threaten the survival of the human race if concrete solutions are not adopted.

Theoretically, its an idea which involves simply trying to stop forests being cut down or degraded and thereby reducing the amount of CO₂ that is released into the air. Practically, this isn't workable.

REDD as a policy idea, with the acronym **R**educing **E**missions from **D**eforestation and Forest **D**egradation in developing countries has continued to attract wide spread condemnations across the world due to some obvious leakages in methodologies. REDD projects have been known to marginalize and victimize the poor in forest bearing communities and territories of the world especially in African continent where significant risks abound with REDD.

2.0 UN-REDD Programme

The UN-REDD programme was set up in September 2008 and is run jointly by three United Nations agencies: the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The UN-REDD is explicitly promoting market based REDD. It allows pollution to continue elsewhere, causing all the usual problems of pollution.

The UN-REDD is currently supporting pilot projects in some countries: Bolivia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Tanzania, Vietnam, and Zambia.

REDD is currently being targeted in Nigeria with the Cross River state forest as a pilot project.

This is very worrisome especially when there are no critical information on what REDD truly represents.

3.0 How does REDD impact Community Peoples?

Community People remain Key in the REDD discourse, this is because, local peasant farmers and indigenous communities are the defenders of food, agriculture, water, forests, biodiversity and the environment. By history, they are part traditional owners and custodians of forests and its resources, but unfortunately, their role is hardly recognized in policy formulation as it relates to community forest governance.

These very important and eco-friendly peoples, who have depended on the forest ecosystem for survival, turn out to be the worst hit when community forest lands are allotted to corporate individuals and transnational companies. The dividend of such allotment which is usually shrouded in shady deals is pain and not gain, socio and cultura dislocation, starvation, sicknesses and diseases for community people.

Most of the forests of the world are found in Community Peoples' land. REDD has the potential to affect their rights to use, own and manage their lands, and resources therein.

REDD is being implemented in developing countries in the tropics and sub-tropics and is focusing on forest areas- in many places, the traditional and customary territories of community peoples. These forests have been inhabited by our community people for hundreds if not thousands of years. Rather than destroying them,

traditional land use and management practices have led to more diverse landscapes and thus to an increase in biological diversity.

Even though we may agree that forest conservation is in the interest of everybody, and certainly in the interest of forest community people who depend on the forest for their livelihood, we can expect, that these programs can also have a severe negative impact on community people. This is because REDD schemes will make rules about what can and cannot happen inside forests, regulating activities like farming, hunting, gathering of bush foods, medicinal leaves, firewood collection and lumber for construction or any other use of resources in the forests.

REDD-type projects have already resulted in land grabs, violations of human rights, threats to cultural survival, militarization, scams and servitude in many countries where it has implemented.

Entrusting community forest lands to multinational companies and multilateral agencies by Government has never brought development but impoverishment to community dwellers with differentiated impact on women, children and the physically challenged.

Small hold farmers are usually not considered as relevant and active stakeholders in forest management/decision making processes.

Some experts observe that REDD can only help to reduce climate change if it is based on sustainable forest management and integrated into broader carbon emission reduction strategies. Weak forest governance and the marginalization of forest dependent communities are important factors that exacerbate forest loss and degradation.

4.0 REDD: Land grab Or Development Opportunity?

With REDD, Governments and Transnational companies like Shell will take more control over community forests land without the consent or consideration of community people.

The sad news about this is that many African Governments see this 'flourishing corporate land grab' as a development opportunity. This is very disturbing!

Apart from increasing Transnational Companies and Governments sovereignty over natural resources, and its potential displacement of indigenes, REDD has a track record of undermining people's rights.

Although, REDD sounds interesting because it is meant to reduce and not to stop Carbon emissions. Moreso, it is designed to reward those who deforest, and not those who already protect the forests. However, its concept can best be defined as a "sheep in wolfs clothing".

Another issue about REDD is that only few are aware of its adverse implications. Hence, there is a problem of making informed choice.

The corporate tactics of land grabbing tramples on community peoples rights to lands and resources.

5.0 Can a Tree make a Forest?

The definition of forests by Food and Agricultural Organization FAO, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC, which includes plantations as forests is unacceptable.

Monoculture tree plantations are NOT forests! We require a definition for negotiation purposes that recognizes the native forests, jungles and the diverse ecosystems on Earth.

Replacing forests with plantations has devastating environmental consequences as well as social and economic impacts on forest communities.

A recent REDD statement released by Friends of the Earth warns that REDD funds may imply the replacement of forests with large monoculture plantations. It could also make poverty worse and deplete biodiversity even further.

Hence, Plantations are not Forests. They do not store as much Carbon as Forests do.



It is now recognized that plantations store only 20% of the Carbon that intact natural forests do (Palin et al, 1999, for CGIAR).

As an Environmental Justice Group, **Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria, ERA/FoEN**, believes that allowing rich countries to keep polluting in the North otherwise known as annex 1 (according to Kyoto protocol) or developed countries, and coming to the south addressed as third world countries to cultivate plantations for rubber, palm oil, agro fuels, and palm oil is not the answer to climate change. It is environmental racism that has put the local community people more at risk. It renders the continent the worst hit with grave and devastating environmental consequences arising from sins they contribute little or nothing to. This is unacceptable!

6.0 Carbon markets: real or false solutions?

Carbon trading is susceptible to wide abuse as there are chances that a lot of criminal minds will take advantage of the REDD schemes in Nigeria to make money for private pockets. These funds are most likely going to be hijacked by undeserving recipients without modalities in place to check who engages it, as well as who the current and final beneficiaries of REDD fund would be.

There are indications that REDD will fail even if the large sums of money being discussed are raised and distributed. Until the underlying causes of deforestation are addressed there may be no guarantee in sight to stop deforestation.

Carbon offsetting is 'Carbon upsetting'; It creates more profit for polluters and does not stop climate change.

With REDD, it is possible that the government will chose to sell carbon rights on untitled lands without reference to or

consultation with the traditional owners of those lands. This is already happening in Cross River State, Nigeria; as there is little or no consultation of forest community people within **the three (3) REDD targeted sites of:**

- a) Mbe/Afi forest block
- b) Ekuri forest block
- c) Mangrove forest reserve

REDD allows the conversion of natural tropical forests to plantations; this would increase Carbon emissions- a huge cause of global warming.

These obvious leakages in methodologies and operations make REDD a complex headache that deserves real solutions.

REDD for forest conservation should not be used as “an excuse” so that countries and corporations continue contaminating. Shell is compounding its devastating impacts on Mother Earth and Indigenous Peoples by financing REDD which may result in the largest land grab of all time and more genocide against forest dependent Peoples.

Carbon trading has proven extremely lucrative in terms of generating investor dividends, but has completely failed in reducing greenhouse gases.

7.0 REDD and its bogus Versions

REDD+, REDD++, etc could mean the inclusion of industrial logging, plantations, agro fuel cultivation in the REDD scheme. It could mean just anything provided money is attached.

REDD shows signs of repeating many of the mistakes of the past.

An expanded REDD effort, known as REDD+, falls short of considering the needs and roles of communities and other local inhabitants. REDD+ as a version of REDD, names forest conservation as a goal and sustainable forest management as a solution; But it continues to explicitly value carbon storage above the improvement of forest conditions and livelihoods.

This means REDD negotiators must sufficiently engage all relevant stakeholders within and outside the forest sector and stop an over-reliance on a "one-size-fits-all" global scheme to

address situations that are vastly different from region to region and country to country.

8.0 ERA/FoEN Position on REDD

- Our Forest is not for sale. It should not be reduced to a commodity.
- We reject REDD and its versions (REDD+, ++) with a red tag, and all other market mechanisms like Carbon trading, Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), and debt for nature exchanges.
- ERA supports forest conservation but not its inclusion in Carbon market.
- We reject any form of agrarian colonialism in disguise associated with REDD.
- REDD is a dangerous Eco-business. It enriches polluters and impoverishes forest community people who have conserved the forests over the years.
- Plantations are not Forests. Its inclusion in REDD is a crime against nature.
- We denounce the way in which the capitalist model imposes schemes and invades territories with militarized territories, evicting community people from their lands, forests, inhibiting food sovereignty and deepening socio-environmental crises.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Forest must be out of Carbon markets if there should be REDD.
- Our forest is not for sale! It is our life and source of livelihoods for millions of forest dependent peoples in forest bearing communities in Nigeria and Africa.
- World Bank, FAO, UNEP, UNDP and multinational companies like Shell should **hands off our forests**.

- Government at all levels in Nigeria should take honest, realistic and practical steps in fighting climate change by first stopping gas flaring in the Niger Delta (the number one contributor to climate change in Nigeria and sub-saharan Africa) instead of gambling and trading with our forests.
- Plantations are not Forests. REDD should reward community people who protect the forests and not drivers of deforestation and forest degradation like plantation merchants and unsustainable logging contractors.
- The Nigerian Government must actively and sufficiently engage forest community dwellers; civil society groups, in the ongoing REDD negotiation process and adopt Community forest management practices as one of the concrete solutions to climate change.
- All Civil Society groups on environment in Nigeria and Africa must deepen their struggles against environmental and climate injustices by building alliances, solidarity and sharing experiences on REDD and its ambiguous versions.
- Government must conduct Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on REDD targeted forest communities.
- Governments should engage civil society groups and forest dependent people in the entire REDD process.
- Allowing rich countries to keep polluting in the North otherwise known as annex 1 countries and coming to the south addressed as third world countries to cultivate plantations for rubber, palm oil, agro fuels, is not the answer to climate change. This is unacceptable.

- Developed countries owe us an ecological debt as a result of colonialism and inequitable use of global commons and disproportionate contribution to emissions that have resulted in climate change.
- Awareness should be raised at all levels on the implications of REDD as there is little or no concrete information on the subject matter.
- Unless all sectors work together to address the impact of global consumption, including growing demand for food and biofuel, and problems of land scarcity, REDD will fail to arrest environmental degradation and will heighten poverty.
- Adopting crucial and inexpensive options like, afforestation program placing a ban on deforestation and deforestation moratoria, sustainable timber harvesting, and strengthening community forest management methods can be considered as the only concrete solutions.

10.0 Conclusion

Our Forests is our Life. Our Forest is not for sale!

Protect our forests to avoid dangerous climate crisis.

It is not asking for too much, it only requires a political will.

We can make that positive change, only if we are willing.

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