Background Report: Analysis of Risks and Benefits related to REDD+, Cross River State, Nigeria

This report is intended to provide background information and an introduction to the Risks and Benefits Analysis conducted in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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1. REDD+ risks and benefits

According to an estimate from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), land-use change, largely deforestation, has accounted for an estimated net contribution of 10% of global anthropogenic emissions in the past decade. Therefore, the management of forest carbon stocks has been recognised as an important strategy for climate change mitigation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

REDD+ is part of a global effort to incentivise developing countries to contribute towards climate change mitigation through activities related to land-use and forestry sectors (UN-REDD Programme, REDD+ Academy). It stands for *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation*, plus conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. While the main purpose of REDD+ is to contribute to global climate change mitigation, it also has the potential to deliver additional social and environmental benefits (Dickson et al. 2012).

Forests provide a range of goods and services that are crucial at all levels of human endeavour. They provide, for example, food, fuel and fibre for local communities, as well as water regulation and soil erosion control. REDD+ policies and measures (PAMs, sometimes known as actions or options) can protect or enhance these additional benefits. Specific PAMs may prevent the loss and/or degradation of forest ecosystems and their biodiversity, or provide incentives towards their restoration and/or sustainable management. Additionally, the implementation of REDD+ can deliver social benefits such as improved livelihoods (e.g. by providing alternative sources of income or access to forest products), clarification of land tenure and improved governance of natural resources.

REDD+ PAMs could also pose certain risks depending on how they are implemented. Environmental risks include the shift in pressures on natural ecosystems to areas not involved in REDD+ (also known as leakage), and the conversion of natural forest or of other ecosystems to tree plantations. Social risks could include reduced access to forested areas or resources by forest-dependent communities and limited participation of appropriate stakeholders in the REDD+ process. To address these concerns, Parties at the UNFCCC COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico, agreed on a set of safeguards, known as the *Cancun safeguards*, which should be promoted and supported during implementation of REDD+ activities to minimize these risks. In particular, Safeguard (e) states that REDD+ implementation should be used to enhance other social and environmental benefits derived from forest ecosystems.

2. Nigerian and Cross River State context

Nigeria is a large country with a surface area of approximately 1.26 million km². There are over 140 million people living within its 36 states and the federal capital territory each with complex socio-economic, cultural and political dynamics (Nigeria Census Report 2005). Each state also has important policies and regulations over its natural resources, including forest management. As a country, Nigeria is endowed with a wide range of ecological habitats ranging from coastal swamps, mangroves, montane and lowland forests in the south, to savannas and deserts in the north.

Nigeria's original forest cover has been dramatically reduced over the past decades. Nigerian forest resources, as with many other tropical areas, have before now been perceived as inexhaustible, and thus have not been sustainably used or managed. This is evident by the status of the Nigerian forest cover, the rate of environmental degradation, and the high rate of deforestation. Only about 10% of Nigeria's land area remains as forest (34% is occupied by crops, 23% by grassland, 13% is taken up by rivers, lakes and reservoirs, and the remaining 20% fall under other uses). The 10% of forest land is below FAO's recommended national minimum of 25% (FAO 2008). Further, with an annual deforestation rate of 3.5% (translating to a loss of 350,000–400,000 ha of forest land per year) and an annual population growth rate of about 3%, Nigeria may lose a significant portion of its remaining forest before 2020. Key drivers of deforestation include harmful agricultural practices, illegal logging and fuelwood collection, accounting for 87% of the total carbon emissions of the country.

Over 50% of the remaining primary rainforest in Nigeria is found in Cross River State (CRS). CRS has a land area of 2,109,373 ha, and in 2001 had a total forest cover of 862,158 ha and an annual deforestation rate of 2.2% (Conservation International 2011). The State's rainforest forms the eastern part of the lower Guinean forests, which is one of the world's 25 global biodiversity hotspots. In Nigeria, the highest rate of plant and large primate endemism is found in CRS; there are 22 primate species, including threatened and endangered species such as the Cross River Gorilla, the Nigerian Cameroon Chimpanzee, the Drill and Preuss' Guenon monkey. CRS recognizes that its forest is one of its greatest heritages. Since 2009, there has been a growing interest in Nigeria and in CRS in REDD+ as an approach to help save its dwindling forest resources, whilst simultaneously contributing to global efforts for climate-change mitigation and supporting forest-related livelihoods.

The Nigeria REDD+ Programme

The REDD+ Programme in Nigeria adopts a two-track approach – with implementation at the National and State level. At the state level, CRS has been selected as the first pilot State to lead Nigeria's contribution to climate change mitigation through improved forest conservation and enhancing sustainable community livelihoods. Nigeria's UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme has a budget of US$4 Million, out of which US$2.5 Million is allocated for CRS as the REDD+ pilot state in Nigeria.

Strategically, in a regional review meeting in May 2015 the Programme sharpened its focus on the four elements of the Warsaw Framework, which set out the basic requirements for REDD+ implementation under the UNFCCC. These are:
1. REDD+ Strategy/Action Plan,

2. Safeguards Information System,
3. Forest Reference Emission Level/Reference Emission Level,
4. National Forest Monitoring System

The safeguards information system is based around a set of environmental and social safeguards, known as the Cancun Safeguards[1], as the minimum internationally acceptable standards to be promoted and supported by countries during REDD+ implementation in order to reduce the potential risks and enhance the potential benefits of REDD+.

Developing Nigeria's approach to the REDD+ safeguards
The Nigeria REDD+ Programme has been building capacity and conducting work to develop a country approach to the REDD+ safeguards for several years. For example, a Participatory Governance Assessment (PGA) for REDD+ and natural resource management in Nigeria has been conducted, starting in late 2012. Piloted in CRS, a PGA committee and research team were established, made up of national, state, civil society, academia and community representatives. The team undertook research in three REDD+ pilot sites, in Afi-Mbe, Ekuri-Iko, and Mangrove communities; a final PGA report was produced in 2015.

In November 2013 a workshop on safeguards and multiple benefits was held in Calabar, with the aim of progressing work on developing social and environmental safeguards and informing priorities for REDD+ planning in CRS. This workshop was followed by a meeting to establish a Safeguards Taskforce, with participation from both civil society and Federal and State level government. During the implementation of the PGA, work on safeguards was deferred, although an activity to map multiple benefits from forests in Cross River State proceeded through 2014-2015. In June 2015, a follow-up meeting was held in Calabar to reorganise the REDD+ Safeguards Working Group (SGWG) of Nigeria, including revising the group's terms of reference, reviewing a work plan for their activities, and determining their membership, which includes representatives from Federal and State government agencies, academia, civil society, communities and the media. This was followed by another SGWG meeting in September 2015, and the launch of their work leading the development of a Risks and Benefits Analysis to support REDD+ planning.

3. Background to risks and benefits analysis

Risks and benefits analysis is the assessment of benefits and risks associated with REDD+ implementation, and/or with particular REDD+ PAMs in a particular country or location. The success of REDD+ may ultimately depend on whether significant risks have been avoided, and the provision of multiple benefits have been secured. The identification of risks and benefits is therefore an important part of the overall REDD+ planning process. Identifying potential risks and benefits of REDD+ when deciding between candidate REDD+ actions can help to reduce potential risks and deliver potential benefits, when REDD+ is implemented.

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[1] For more information on the Cancun Safeguards and country approaches to safeguards, please see:
http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_unsubjects&view=unsubject&id=1&Itemid=491

As well as informing a decision on which REDD+ actions to include in the national REDD+ strategy or action plan, information on potential benefits and risks of REDD+ actions is also relevant to clarifying how the Cancun safeguards are relevant in the national context and which policies, laws and regulations (PLRs) may be relevant in addressing and respecting the safeguards. This is a useful step in the development of a country approach to the safeguards and in informing the development of a safeguards information system.

Different approaches and tools exist for the identification of potential risks and benefits associated to REDD+ actions and developing country approaches to safeguards. The UN-REDD Benefits and Risks Tool (BeRT), for example, was developed to identify risks and benefits in the context of the Cancun safeguards, and to support the review of national PLRs to identify how these already address the safeguards and what gaps there may be.

4. Risks and benefits analysis in Cross River State, Nigeria

The final Risks and Benefits Analysis that accompanies this background report has been developed through a consultation and joint working process led by the Nigeria SGWG. The analysis focuses on the potential risks and benefits associated with eight existing and planned PAMs relevant to REDD+ in Cross River State, in order to gain lessons learned for the development of the State's REDD+ strategy. The analysis will also inform the development of a safeguards approach for Nigeria.

Based on materials and tools developed by the UN-REDD Programme (e.g. BeRT), a team from Nigeria's National UN-REDD Programme, along with the SGWG, developed a table for conducting the risks and benefits analysis. After several iterations with additional parameters added, the table provides the following information:
- Background on each PAM;
- Which driver of deforestation/forest degradation or barrier it intends to address;
- Risks and benefits relevant to the PAM;
- Measures to reduce the risks or enhance the benefits;
- Which safeguard/s the risks and benefits are associated with;
- Possible sources of information.

It also summarises the key risks and benefits identified and outlines recommendations. The list of PAMs included in the analysis was drafted in the second half of 2015 by the Cross River State REDD+ Secretariat and the SGWG. The table was then filled out during two consultation processes:
- By working groups of a range of stakeholders during the REDD+ Stakeholder Forum held in Calabar on 8-9 December 2015.
- By the SGWG during their meeting during 4-5 February 2016, following some initial feedback provided by UNEP-WCMC and the UN-REDD Programme Safeguards Coordinator.

Once a draft of the analysis had been developed, a small working group session, including participants from the SGWG, the Cross River State Forestry Commission and the Cross River State REDD+

Secretariat, facilitated with assistance from UNEP-WCMC, was held during 8-12 February 2016. This working group filled some remaining gaps in the table and began drafting recommendations based on the analysis. The final draft Risks and Benefits Analysis and recommendations were then shared with the entire SGWG and other relevant stakeholders, including the global UN-REDD Programme Safeguards Coordination Group, for their review in late February 2016.

Following consolidation of all comments received, the Risks and Benefits Analysis was presented formally to the Cross River State REDD+ Technical Committee for their consideration in June 2016. Following a validation process during this meeting, all comments and recommendations were addressed in a working group session, and the final version prepared. The analysis and its recommendations have helped to inform the strategy development process for the State and the development of the country's approach to the safeguards, including feeding directly into the development of safeguards principles and criteria (P&C). By including analysis of possible sources of information and relevant PLRs, the analysis can also contribute to the development of a safeguards information system in the future.

Key recommendations and discussion points that have emerged from the Risks and Benefits Analysis and associated discussions are shown in Box 1.

Box 1: Key recommendations from the Risks and Benefits Analysis

Presented here are general or overarching recommendations from the Risks and Benefits Analysis of planned and existing PAMs relevant to REDD+ in Cross River State, developed between September 2015 and June 2016 through consultations led by the National Safeguards Working Group. For more detail, including a full list of recommendations related to each PAM, please refer to the full Risks and Benefits Analysis.

Participation in the REDD+ Programme should be increased, with a focus on:
- Forest communities (including those outside of the current REDD+ pilot sites)
- Civil society organisations (CSOs)
- Vulnerable groups

This includes fostering participation in the work of the Safeguards Working Group (SGWG) and the REDD+ Technical Committee (RTC) (e.g. in strategy development, analysis of PAMs, assessing risks & benefits, and in further safeguards work).

There should be an increase in the information flow in the Programme, from the National REDD+ Secretariat down to the community/grassroots level and back up.

This risks & benefits analysis has examined existing PAMs or PAMs currently being planned; in the future, it should be extended as needed to cover the PAMs proposed for the State's REDD+ Strategy. If new PAMs are proposed, more analysis may be needed.

No PAMs related to infrastructure development were included in this analysis. However, large-scale infrastructure development is emerging as a potentially significant driver of deforestation and forest degradation in the State. Therefore, it should be considered in the drivers' analysis and REDD+ strategy development process to determine its potential impacts and discuss potential solutions.

Through this analysis, recommendations (relevant to multiple PAMs) emerged on the need to revise the Land Use Act and the National Park Act, as some aspects are considered outdated. The difficulties in revising legislation are recognised; if revision is not possible, there still needs to be a review of current land tenure, customary law and natural resource management challenges, among others. Solutions to these issues may still be sought within the current legal and institutional framework.

The recommendations in this analysis focused on how to increase benefits and reduce risks in the implementation of the selected PAMs. However, these recommendations also need to be considered in light of practical circumstances. When PAMs are being designed for REDD+, what can be done practically and efficiently?

There is a need to strengthen synergies with other agencies and actors, especially for REDD+ Strategy development and the identification and design of PAMs. This will allow for a more effective and efficient design of PAMs, and build on the experiences and lessons learnt by others in the State.

About this report

This report is intended to provide background information and an introduction to the Risks and Benefits Analysis conducted in Cross River State, Nigeria, through a multi-stakeholder process during 2015-2016, with support from the UN-REDD Programme.

The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations Collaborative Initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) in developing countries. The Programme was launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The UN-REDD Programme supports nationally-led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation.

The UN-REDD Programme provided technical support for this work from the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). UNEP-WCMC is the specialist biodiversity assessment centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the world's foremost intergovernmental environmental organization. The Centre has been in operation for over 30 years, combining scientific research with practical policy advice.

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