

## ABSTRACT

The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which many observers welcomed as historic, emphasized the forestry sector as a significant contributor to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The agreement also emphasizes conservation and sustainable management of forest carbon stocks, including creating global financial incentives to facilitate national-level policy change, through the mechanism to reduce deforestation and degradation (REDD+), which has been under negotiation in the UNFCCC since 2005. This paper uses a theory-guided case study on aspects of UNFCCC REDD+ negotiations and supporting processes to analyze the key dynamics, challenges, and innovations of the REDD+ negotiation process to provide insights into how parties to the Paris Agreement reached consensus on forests and REDD+. The study identifies which negotiation dynamics most constrained and most enabled the agreement process, both in UNFCCC negotiations and in supporting multistakeholder processes. The study also explores how some negotiation dynamics were leveraged to overcome challenges in others; and how supporting external REDD+ processes interacted with formal UNFCCC REDD+ negotiations. REDD+ negotiations may provide insights into other multilateral public policy contexts and prove useful to facilitating other international agreements.

**Keywords:** [En] climate change, forests, international negotiations, REDD+; [Fr] changement climatique; les forêts; négociations internationales; REDD+.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Forests, which cover nearly one-third of the earth's terrestrial surface, are an essential natural heritage, an economic resource that sustains the livelihoods of billions of people, and a stabilizer for the global environment. They account for almost half the terrestrial carbon pool and thus play a significant role in regulating the earth's climate. Tropical forests are particularly important in the global carbon budget because they contain as much carbon in their vegetation and soils as temperate and boreal forests combined. Forest disturbances—mostly through deforestation—have serious economic, environmental and social consequences, including accounting for nearly 20% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions (UN-REDD Programme, n.d.).

During the last three decades, a variety of international actors have attempted to implement, monitor, and enforce agreements to improve protection and sustainable use of forest resources around the globe, but the lack of coordination capacity and mechanisms has resulted in a suboptimal system of global forest governance. Hoogeveen and Verkooijen (Hoogeveen and Verkooijen 2011) concluded that the main challenges for global forest governance are: a) the complexity of issues, inter-linkages, fragmentation and proliferations of arenas; b) the complexity of actors, lack of cooperation and coordination; and c) the complexity of instruments and lack of implementation. Nevertheless, the debate about how to effectively govern global forests has continued unabated around three interrelated focal areas: issues, actors, and institutions.

The last decade of the 20th century witnessed growing interest—from civil society organizations and then governments—in curbing tropical deforestation as an effective option to mitigate climate change and a potential opportunity to provide additional financial resources for developing country national governments and local communities to invest in health, education, and sustainable development (Lubowski 2008; Eliasch 2008). Ultimately, a framework for reducing emissions

from deforestation and degradation (REDD+)<sup>1</sup> was adopted in the form of the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC. Conference of the Parties Twenty-first session 2015) under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was arguably one of the most advanced international forestry-related agreements of its time.<sup>2</sup>

Forests and REDD+ featured more prominently in the Paris Agreement than other greenhouse gas emitting sectors such as energy, transportation, and agriculture. A myriad of factors contributed to this result: starting in 2006 with Nicolas Stern's recommendation that reducing tropical deforestation was an economically and technically feasible approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Stern 2006) and spanning over eight years of multilateral negotiations (UNFCCC) and multistakeholder discussions in supporting REDD+ forums and processes (Roelfsema *et al.* 2015).

At its essence, REDD+ is a mechanism by which donor (developed) countries incentivize and fund reduced deforestation and degradation in tropical forested developing countries (REDD+ countries). To demonstrate the geo-political, socio-economic, technical, and financial complexities of reaching an agreement on REDD+, it is worth noting some of the major topics of negotiation. These included: **baseline**, the level of emissions that would occur in the absence of a forest carbon policy (used as a reference case for quantifying mitigation performance); **monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV)**, verifying how much carbon is in fact sequestered and the effective reduction of deforestation; and **scale**, the REDD+ mechanism primarily followed a national or country-driven approach but projects would nevertheless be "sub-national" (Hufty and Haakenstad 2011). Having sub-national pro-

1. The internationally agreed definition of REDD+ is "Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries". For a short history of the framework see: Den J.W. Besten, B.J.M. Arts and P. Verkooijen, "The evolution of REDD+: An analysis of discursive-institutional dynamics" (2014) 35:1 Environmental Science & Policy 40-48.
2. Article 5 of the Paris Agreement states that "Parties should take action to **conserve and enhance** as appropriate, **sinks and reservoirs of GHGs** [greenhouses gases] as referred to in Convention Article 4.1(d) **including forests**;" and, "Parties are encouraged to take action to implement and support, including through results-based payments, the existing framework as set out in related guidance and decisions already agreed under the Convention for policy approaches and positive incentives for activities relating to **REDD+**, and **alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests**, while reaffirming the importance of **incentivizing**, as appropriate, **non-carbon benefits** associated with such approaches".

jects raised issues such as **leakage**, shifting deforestation from one part of a country to another; **additionality**, reduced deforestation should be greater than would have otherwise occurred without the incentives; **permanence**, maintenance of forests and their carbon sequestration capacities over time; **governance**, the design of the mechanism at all levels, norms-setting procedures, related legal and informal institutional arrangements, and interactions between involved state and non-state actors (Angelsen *et al.* 2008). Further discussions on these issues raised the topic of **safeguards**, or social aspects such as conflict over local and community land tenure, indigenous people's rights, restricted access to forest resources, and unfair distribution of carbon revenues. Finally, **funding**—the incentive that tropical forested developing countries would receive for their efforts to reduce deforestation—proved to be one of the most contentious issues throughout REDD+ negotiations as the annual estimated costs for halving emissions from forests ranged from US \$7 to \$33 billion (Eliasch 2008).

The actors and institutions involved in developing the REDD+ mechanism and the processes that fostered participation in REDD+ included: country negotiators from both donor- and tropical forested-countries; civil society organizations; international organizations; Indigenous Peoples' Organizations; and members of the scientific community. These actors navigated the above set of issues through both formal multilateral negotiations under the UNFCCC and multistakeholder discussions in supporting REDD+ processes which this study refers to as Parallel Complementary Initiatives (PCIs). As the results will show, PCIs can be further delineated into two categories: Early Implementation Platforms (EIPs) (e.g., the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, UN REDD Programme, among others); and Informal Policy Dialogues (IPDs) (e.g., REDD+ Options Assessment Report consultations).

## 2. OBJECTIVES, INTEGRATED NEGOTIATION DYNAMICS MODEL (INDM), AND RATIONALE

This paper aims to understand the REDD+ negotiations and supporting REDD+ processes in an integrated, multidisciplinary manner. The study aims to identify the most constraining and enabling negotiation dynamics, or variables, in relation to parties' ability to reach agreement on forests and the REDD+ mechanism. This analysis includes identifying relationships between those dynamics (i.e., which variables were more constraining or enabling than others, and how challenges in some dynamics were overcome by leveraging other dynamics). The study also explores the relationships between the formal