FRONTIERS OF CHANGE

REDD+ AND FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION STAKEHOLDER VIEWS AND POTENTIAL SYNERGIES







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Background

Deforestation and forest degradation account for approximately 11 percent of global carbon emissions. Forests are crucial in the response to climate change and in preserving biodiversity. They play an essential role in the

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Projected potential contribution of natural climate solutions (NCS) to keep the global temperature rise below 2°C over the next 30 years. Source: Griscom et al. (2017)

carbon cycle (approximately one-third of global carbon emissions is absorbed annually by forests). Therefore, halting global forest loss and degradation, while stepping up forest restoration, are important solutions to meet the Paris Agreement.







These publications can be downloaded free of charge from IUFRO's GFEP webpage.

Session content

Based on the recent publications Forest, Climate, Biodiversity and People: Assessing a Decade of REDD+ and A Decade of REDD+: Stakeholder Perceptions of its Implementation prepared by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations' (IUFRO) Global Forest Expert Panel (GFEP) Programme, we will showcase the effects that more than 10 years of REDD+ implementation have had on forests, carbon, biodiversity and people. Moreover, the panellists will describe and explain potential synergies between Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation considering conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+). They will also provide insights on how local stakeholders perceive REDD+ implementation.

The session will present the general findings from these publications. These are based

on the scientific studies related to REDD+ at global scale and the views of stakeholders in Asia and Latin America working at local scale. It will also discuss experiences with capacity development in FLR as a multistakeholder social process and intervention in a socialecological system, and FLR policies, practices, impacts and ways forward. The session aims to show the innovative potential of combining REDD+ and FLR, rather than focusing only on REDD+ development and results.

Key questions

The side event will bring together experts on REDD+ design and implementation, experts on FLR application and local experts, as representatives of relevant stakeholder groups. They will address questions such as: How has REDD+ implementation impacted forests, carbon, biodiversity and people? What are potential synergies between REDD+ and FLR? What is the local stakeholders experience of **REDD+** implementation?



Cross-learning between REDD+ and FLR

Eleven years after it was first defined and projects had been initiated, FLR gained momentum as a political process in 2011 with the launch of the Bonn Challenge. This was probably in large part because of its relevance to REDD+. A review of Nationally Determined Contributions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) found that some form of restoration is present in 122 of the first set of 165 (Roe et al. 2019). Sharing challenges and lessons across REDD+ and FLR serves to illustrate some commonalities and highlight opportunities.

Challenges associated with FLR that are relevant to **REDD+**

FLR has acquired popularity as a promising approach to restoring forests. The initial intention was to encourage a long-term

process that would restore the functionality, goods and services that benefit people and nature that forests provide in a landscape. However, in practice, since its inception there have been numerous interpretations and applications of the term that do not necessarily reflect its intended dimensions and principles. The broad-scale, top-down definition of priority restoration areas via maps and other mechanisms that do not consider local socioeconomic and ecological realities have been a major source of criticism (e.g., Veldman et al. 2015; Fagan 2020). More generally, there is a broadening debate around restoration and reforestation (e.g., Lewis et al. 2019; Bond et al. 2019; di Sacco et al. 2021). Criticism reflects a frequently unidimensional (and unidisciplinary) approach to restoration, rather than a more comprehensive one. While FLR was initially set up to promote the twin goals of ecological integrity and human well-being, the Bonn Challenge in 2011 began shifting FLR towards a climate agenda.

Over time, easily quantifiable and measurable targets have been favoured in FLR leading to potentially simplistic and unsustainable outcomes. While calls are being made to restore up to 1 billion hectares (Sewell et al. 2020), in practice these targets are fraught with obstacles, notably related to several governance factors, such as conflicts over tenure, perverse incentives or contradictory sectoral priorities (Mansourian 2017). An emphasis on tree planting has led to inappropriate species being used under the guise of FLR in some instances (Nef et al. 2021). Financing has typically been affected by vertical integration challenges. While significant amounts of international funding have been committed for restoration activities, the amounts reaching local populations have been minimal, even though these populations bear the opportunity cost of restoration and they have the most at stake (e.g., Wiegant et al. 2020). Similarly, the scale of funding committed or even disbursed at higher levels (e.g., through



the Green Climate Fund) is not reflected in the funding reaching local populations. An emphasis on technical forest-related measures has overshadowed the importance of the human dimension. Governance factors, such as ensuring cross-sectoral integration in landscapes to be restored, have not been adequately considered. Real, effective and respected local decision-making mechanisms related to land use and forest restoration are still few and far between. These are all the more important in tropical countries with significant proportions of their population being rural and forest dependent. The limited role of local communities and poor engagement and participation in FLR has been highlighted (Elias et al. 2021). Although the first FLR principle identified by the Global Partnership on FLR refers to engagement of stakeholders, in practice, this has often been a shortcoming.

Challenges and lessons from REDD+ of relevance to FLR

The growing remit and the complexity of REDD+ has brought in new actors and diverse interpretations of the scope of REDD+. FLR is facing a similar challenge. This has led to non-FLR interventions being called FLR, with ensuing criticism of the entire approach (Mansourian et al. 2021). Tenure was identified as a major issue in REDD+ early on and efforts were rapidly focused on addressing some key tenurial issues. In contrast, it has taken many years for FLR proponents to acknowledge the relevance of tenure to FLR implementation. Although participation of non-state actors such as civil society, private sector, Indigenous groups and forest-dependent communities is weaker than that of international non-governmental organizations, donors and government agencies, the existence of an institutional set

up for REDD+ at the national level facilitates such inclusion (Fujisaki et al. 2016). While FLR strives for engagement of stakeholders (its first principle) in practice, FLR, like other restoration efforts, often falls short on real engagement of local stakeholders (e.g., Elias et al. 2021). Cross-sectoral collaboration is also facilitated by using REDD+ institutions as an umbrella for regrouping different state agencies. More generally, the development and application of safeguards in REDD+ might be something that FLR could benefit from in the future.

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