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Dealing with locally-driven degradation: a quick start option under REDD+

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Dealing with locally-driven degradation; a quick start option under REDD+

CIGA-REDD+ Working Paper Series: no 1

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Summary

The paper reviews a number of challenges associated with reducing degradation and its related emissions through national plans for REDD+ under UNFCCC policy. It proposes that in many countries, it may in the short run be easier to deal with the kinds of degradation that result from low-level community over-exploitation of forest for livelihoods, than from selective logging or fire control. Such degradation is low-level, but chronic, and is experienced over very large forest areas. Community forest management programmes tend to result not only in reduced degradation, but also in forest enhancement; moreover they are often popular, and do not require major political shifts. In principle these approaches therefore offer a quick start option for REDD+.

Developing reference emissions levels for low-level locally driven degradation is difficult however given that stock losses and gains are too small to be identified and measured using remote sensing, and that in most countries there is little or no forest inventory data available. We therefore propose that forest management initiatives at the local level, such as those promoted by community forest management programmes, should monitor, and be credited for, only the net increase in carbon stock over the implementation period, as assessed by ground level surveys at the start and end of the period. This would also resolve the problem of nesting, since communities and others at the local level would be rewarded only for increased sequestration, leaving the state the right to claim credits for reduced degradation in the long run when credible national reference levels for degradation can be determined.

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