

India's REDD+ Policy

Old Wine in New Bottle

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What is REDD?

- REDD [Reduced Emission from Deforestation and Degradation(of forests)], a climate change mitigation scheme which seeks to minimize carbon-dioxide emissions resulting from deforestation, particularly in the tropical forests in the global south.
- Emerged as a carbon trading scheme where emission likely to occur from deforestation and degradation in a particular forest is reduced, that reduced/plugged carbon can be broken into individual verifiable and certifiable 'carbon units to be priced and sold in the global carbon market

REDD Contd...

- The money from carbon trading will incentivize forest protection and ensure 'no leakage'/'reduced leakage' scenarios.
- It has been said that the bulk of carbon money will go to forest communities, and thus promote more sustainable use of forests in future.
- REDD ER units will be purchased by corporations/business in the global North to prove that they are reducing their emission, while actually not doing so

REDD+ as conceptualised by India

- Talks of compensated conservation rather than reducing deforestation or emission
- Sustainable management of forests – through afforestation and reforestation – more carbon sequestration
- Eco system services of conserved forests
- More ODA and multilateral funding as compensation
- Concessional tariff for trading of forest products under WTO

REDD+ - Status and Policy

- The MoEF is still in to REDD Readiness for the fourth year running
- Conducting capacity building programmes, consultations (without forest groups or communities) in collaboration with teri.
- Initiating 8 pilot REDD+ projects in Uttarakhand (Musoorie), Uttar Pradesh (Sonbhadra), Madhya Pradesh (Chhindwara), Orissa (Angul), West Bengal (Sunderbans), Nagaland, Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- Implementing Green India Mission (GIM) with CAMPA fund – which aims at eco-restoration and increasing India's green cover
- Came up with a draft REDD+ policy in May 2014

Draft REDD+ Policy (brief)

- Continuing with sustainable management of forests (SMF) and afforestation and reforestation (A&R)
- Technical Group to develop methodologies and procedures to assess and monitor contribution of REDD+ actions
- Establishment of a National REDD+ Coordinating Agency (REDD+ cell in MoEF)
- Institutionalising of National Forest Carbon Accounting Programme
- A support network of Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) institutions for research, Forest Survey of India (FSI) and National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) for forest assessments

Draft REDD+ Policy (contd)

- specialized institutions like Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM)
- State FDs to coordinate the implementation of REDD projects and facilitate distribution of revenues in their respective states through its REDD Cell
- Forest Protection Committees (FPCs), under the JFM, constituted under Gram Sabha with the help of Panchayats, to implement REDD+ at the local level
- FD shall provide the technical guidance to the Gram Sabha, and monitor implementation of the management plan
- safeguards already in place to protect the customary rights and traditions of tribes, forest dwellers, and other local communities.

Reality of REDD+ in India...

- Compensated Conservation
 - Full control of the forest bureaucracy over national parks and sanctuaries, increasing Tiger Reserves, establishment of UNESCO and World Heritage Sites
 - Accessing funds for wildlife conservation and generating high-end wildlife tourism
 - Manipulating data to show increase in forest cover, reduced deforestation and increase in carbon sequestration
 - Where as between 1981 and 2011 (since FC Act came in to force) 1198676 ha of forests have been diverted for large development and industrial projects. Between 2007 and 2011 the forest diversion was to the tune of 204425 ha
 - The manipulated forest data shows forest + tree cover including tea and coffee plantations, mangrove and non forest trees having canopy density of more than 10%

Reality of REDD+ (Contd.)

- Demanding ODA and MFI in lieu of opportunity cost for no land use change and opportunity lost for development
- On the other hand – indiscriminate NOC and forest clearance granted by the FDs and the MoEF in lieu of NPV (the recent recommendation of 89% of coal bearing forests to be mined)
- Thereby commodifying deforestation and increasing financialisation and marketisation of forests

Reality of REDD+ (contd.)

- SMF and A&R
- Even after the enactment of FRA, REDD+ documents mention 1-34 mha of forests being encroached
- Shifting cultivation affects 10 mha of forests
- Over exploitation of forests for fuelwood and fodder
- Where as FDs continue with coup cutting felling natural forests to make way for commercial plantations
- Reducing NTFP
- Backstabbing implementation of FRA
- Continuing with the FD controlled JFM model negating the CFG and rights of communities over forest resources and the centrality of gram sabha
- Incentivisation of communities through JFM committees
- Trying to keep the tiny bit of forests under the control of the communities

A&R...

- Afforestation and reforestation and implementation of GIM from CAMPA fund generated through NPV – basically funding commercial and monoculture plantation (increasing carbon stock of forests) through deforestation
- Plans are there for providing biofuel, wood energy and palm oil
- Further displacing forest communities from their last refuge and economic activity grabbing village commons, subsistence agricultural land, and pastures

Trading in forest products...

- Export of forest products under WTO with concessional tariff will
 - Will not only bring in large scale commodification and commercialisation of Indian forests, but
 - Deprive forest communities of their rights over NTFP and minor forest products by reducing/not allowing access to forest produce (back to the IFA regime)

India's REDD+ in essence...

- Has less to do with carbon trading or carbon sequestration
- Will not reduce deforestation
- Will never support or incentivise communities
- And has nothing to do with Climate Change

Rather

Introduces a new framework for the forest bureaucracy to legitimise increasing control over Indian forests through 'controlled' commodification and financialisation of Indian forests. (No FRA and No rights holders in their forests)

A framework to further marginalise and violate the rights of the forest communities in the name of safeguarding their rights and compensating them with financial incentives.