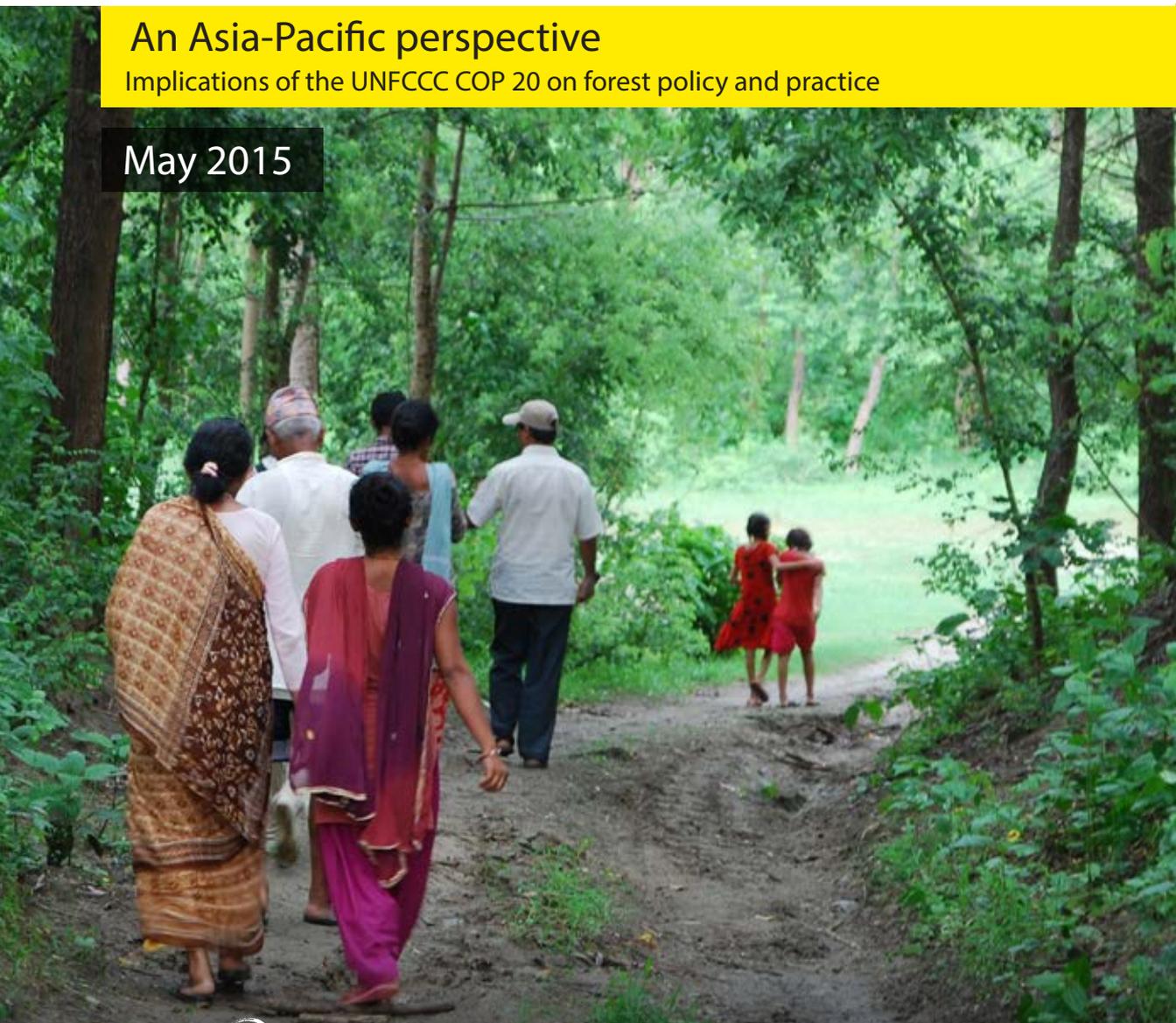


Forests and climate change after Lima

An Asia-Pacific perspective

Implications of the UNFCCC COP 20 on forest policy and practice

May 2015



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the organizers.

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Introduction

The 20th Conference of Parties (COP 20) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Lima, Peru, 1-12 December 2014. The outcomes of COP 20 are expected to have a significant impact on developments in the field of forests and climate change over the coming year. In view of this, forest sector stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific require succinct and accurate information on the implications of the COP 20 discussions and their significance to forest policy decisions and practice.

Since 2010, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests have collaborated in organizing an annual expert consultation on forests and climate change, to assess the outcomes of the UNFCCC COPs and their potential implications for Asia and the Pacific. This publication is the outcome of the sixth of these consultations, organized in Bangkok, Thailand, 24-25 February 2015, in partnership with the ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change (ARKN-FCC). Twenty-two negotiators and experts from 19 countries of the Asia-Pacific region attended the meeting. This booklet summarizes the discussions held during the consultation, which were in response to a set of 11 key questions, designed to inform stakeholders on the implications of the Lima COP 20.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of RECOFTC, FAO, ARKN-FCC or other participating institutions, and should be considered as the personal perspectives of the participating experts.



Foreword

According to the 5th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, the human influence on the earth's climate system has gone past the debating stage – it is acknowledged as the very likely cause of current observations of global warming. Greenhouse gases emissions have contributed to warming of the atmosphere and ocean, changes in precipitation, sea level rise, and extreme climate events among others. The concern now is how to avoid further catastrophe. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has proposed to adopt a goal to limit global warming to 2oC above the pre-industrial levels.

The UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) meets annually to determine what kind of efforts will be needed to reduce GHG emissions and work out solutions to address the impacts of climate change. However, these discussions and negotiations are rarely accessible to the professionals who are not directly involved in the negotiations. This can develop into a serious handicap if those working in the field on natural resources management remain unaware of the discussions at the global level. In order to bridge this gap in knowledge, since 2010, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests have been jointly organizing Post-COP expert consultations to identify the implications of the COP discussions to forest policy makers and practitioners. The findings of these consultations are published in a simple and succinct format, in the form of a set of key questions and responses from the experts, so as to inform forest sector stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region.

Following this tradition, the Post-COP20 Expert Consultation was held in late February 2015 in Bangkok. The Lima (COP20) Conference is quite significant as it is meant to build the momentum for further discussions in Paris (COP21) where we expect to reach a global climate agreement. At Lima a number of issues were discussed, such as the national actions to reduce emissions, guidance on the adequacy of such pledges, and the Green Climate Fund among others. It is therefore important to understand what happened in Lima so as to prepare for the Paris talks towards the end of 2015. We strongly believe this brief on the discussions that took place in Lima is of value to all individuals involved in natural resources management. Finally, we would like to congratulate all the experts for their valuable contributions, and the authors and editors who played a critical role in making sure this publication meets its objectives.

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Eleven key questions



Q1 Was COP 20 a success?

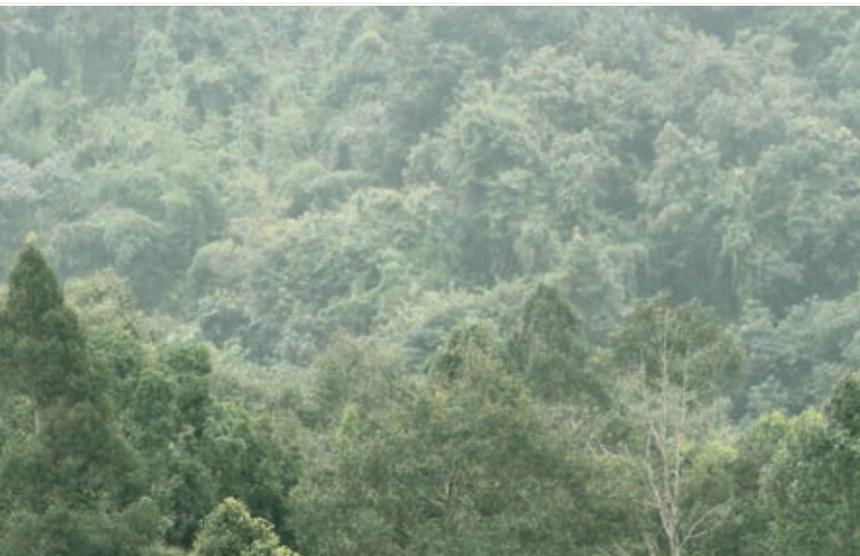
Q4 How will REDD+ figure into the considerations of broader land-use issues?

Q2 What happened at COP 20 that was relevant to the forest sector?

Q5 What challenges remain in financing forest-based climate change mechanisms?

Q3 What implications will the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) have for the forest sector and for REDD+?

Q6 What progress can be expected regarding the development of forest reference emission levels (FRELs) and forest reference levels (FRLs) in Asia and the Pacific in 2015?



Q7 How can regional and international knowledge exchange help in the development of National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) for REDD+?

Q10 Is there potential for joint mitigation and adaptation programs in the forest sector to be included in a post-2020 international climate agreement?

Q8 Do developing countries need additional guidance on safeguards?

Q11 Can COP 21 in Paris be expected to produce a credible international climate agreement? If not, what will this mean for the progress to date on REDD+?

Q9 Are non-carbon benefits (NCBs) still relevant in the UNFCCC discussions on REDD+?

Abbreviations

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|----------------|---|
| ARKN-FCC | ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change | NTFP | Non-timber forest products |
| ASEAN | Association of South East Asian Nations | RBF | Results-based finance |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity | RBP | Results-based payments |
| COP | Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC | REDD+ | Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries, including conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks |
| CTCN | Climate Technology Centre and Network | SAARC | South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation |
| FCPF | Forest Carbon Partnership Facility | SBSTA | Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice |
| FREL | Forest reference emission level | SCF | Standing Committee on Finance |
| FRL | Forest reference level | SIS | Safeguards Information Systems |
| GCF | Green Climate Fund | SMF | Sustainable management of forests |
| GHGs | Greenhouse gases | SPC | Secretariat of the Pacific Community |
| INDCs | Intended Nationally Determined Contributions | UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change | UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| JMA | Joint Mitigation and Adaptation mechanism | UN-REDD | The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries |
| LULUCF | Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry | | |
| MRV | Measurement, Reporting and Verification | | |
| NAPA | National Adaptation Plan of Action | | |
| NCB | Non-carbon benefits | | |
| NFI | National Forest Inventory | | |
| NFMS | National Forest Monitoring System | | |

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Q1

Was COP 20 a success?

Although there were no dramatic breakthroughs at the 20th Conference of Parties (COP 20) in Lima, the Conference can be considered a qualified success as it was intended to serve as a stepping stone to the more important COP 21, which will take place in Paris in December 2015. Countries around the world have agreed to form a new global agreement on climate change at COP 21 in Paris later this year, and thus, the discussions at the Lima Conference were focused on elaborating the elements necessary for the expected agreement.

In preparation for COP 21, countries have agreed to publicly commit to taking specific actions to achieve the central objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), namely stabilizing greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system. These pledges are known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), and countries are expected to submit them well in advance of COP 21. The INDCs will form the foundation for climate action post-2020, when the expected agreement will likely come into effect. The deadline for all countries to submit their INDCs is 1 October 2015, after which the UNFCCC will be able to assess the combined ambitions of the Parties, informing the extent the possible credibility of the global agreement to come out of the December COP 21.

In addition to advancing work on INDCs, COP 20 also led to significant progress in elevating the need for climate change adaptation to the same status of urgency as mitigation. As Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, the COP President, said: "Lima has given new urgency towards fast tracking adaptation and building resilience across the developing world – not least by strengthening the link to finance and the development of national adaptation plans." For the developing countries in urgent need of assistance in adapting to the already detrimental impacts of climate change, the acknowledgement of the need for raising the importance of urgent adaptation at COP 20 provided a positive step forward.

Moreover, COP 20 produced the "Lima Call for Climate Action," which reinforced the principle of "common but differentiated" responsibilities and respective capabilities, underlined the need for an ambitious Paris agreement specifically in terms of both mitigation and adaptation, and emphasized the urgency for providing enhanced financial support to developing countries. In terms of financial support to developing countries, the Call also urged developed countries and operational entities of the Financial Mechanism of the UNFCCC to provide support for the preparation of INDCs to countries that need it.

"Every developing country is waiting to see how ambitious developed countries are with their INDCs."

Suchitra Changtragoon

Q2

What happened at COP 20 that was relevant to the forest sector?

“Those who weren’t in Lima didn’t miss much.”

Suchitra Changtragoon

“Side events played an important role in the launch of the Lima Call for Climate Action.”

Mayumi Quintos Natividad

With respect to forests, expectations in advance of COP 20 were not very high in comparison with previous COPs. For many negotiators, the progress made at COP 19, specifically the development of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (WFR), was considered sufficient until COP 21, with the exceptions of safeguards and financing in the implementation of REDD+.

Opinions on safeguards in Lima were split, with many developed (Annex 1 of the UNFCCC) countries and civil society organizations in favor of additional guidance and most developing (non-Annex 1) countries in favor of no further guidance at this stage. According to the developing countries, the progress made at previous COPs is sufficient for countries to move forward with REDD+ implementation followed by the sharing of experiences and learning before discussing whether additional guidance is necessary. No consensus was reached on this point during the Lima COP and it will be discussed further at the June 2015 meeting in Germany of the UNFCCC’s Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

Regarding the matter of financing, the central issue for countries in Asia and the Pacific remains access to funds for activities under the REDD+ readiness phase. Asia-Pacific countries require substantial and predictable flows of finance from Annex 1 countries that are sustained over several years. Although very limited progress was made on this front at COP 20, there was a positive sign in terms of pledges from Annex 1 countries to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) having exceeded the target of US\$ 10 billion by the beginning of the Conference. Some of these GCF funds are expected to flow towards REDD+ and other mitigation and adaptation activities in the forest sector. Moreover, the UNFCCC’s Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) plans to meet with REDD+ experts later in 2015 to discuss how financing for REDD+, forests and adaptation, and addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, can be better coordinated.

As in previous COPs, a number of countries, mainly from Latin America, advocated non-market-based approaches for REDD+, including joint mitigation and adaptation mechanisms. The emphasis on synergies between mitigation and adaptation has been reflected more recently in a first draft text of the expected Paris agreement, which emerged

from a meeting in Geneva in February 2015. However, several other Parties, including some from Asia and the Pacific, argued that the objectives of proposals for non-market-based approaches are already adequately covered by ongoing activities under the readiness phases of REDD+, and may therefore not be necessary. Nevertheless, the results-based payment (RBP) phase of REDD+, while not far off for some countries, is still several years away for others; until then, all countries will in any case employ non-market-based approaches to finance actions in the forest sector, many of which have benefits from both mitigation and adaptation perspectives.

Under the broader landscape umbrella, the agriculture roadmap is mostly adaptation-focused, though deeper links to REDD+ may emerge. Within Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) discussions, silviculture and silvopasture were identified as potential forestry activities under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), in addition to afforestation and reforestation (A/R). Further technical clarifications from the CDM Executive Board are required before these activities can be formally included in the text of an agreement in Paris.



Q3

What implications will the INDCs have for the forest sector and REDD+?

Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) will be a key part of the new legal instrument that will underpin any agreement made at the COP 21 in Paris. The pledges will also be used by the UNFCCC to calculate the potential impact of the combined actions of all Parties under a new agreement, thus indicating the scale of global ambition to address climate change.

However, the term 'INDC' is loosely defined, and may thus be interpreted in various ways by different Parties. 'Nationally determined' allows for national circumstances to determine each country's 'contributions' towards reducing anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere. For instance, countries that are not big emitters might contribute by way of finance and technology transfer that help others to reduce emissions and enable adaptation. The INDCs, moreover, are expected to include mitigation actions in all sectors and may also include an adaptation component. 'Intended', however, implies a degree of flexibility, meaning actions proposed under INDCs are not technically commitments, and are thus essentially voluntary and non-binding. This flexibility in interpretation of the terminology and principles is of particular importance for natural ecosystems like forests, where higher uncertainties make flexibility a critical requirement.

Although the drafting of the Paris agreement text has begun, the process is still at an early stage. Several meetings have already been scheduled for advancing the text prior to COP 21 in December. The current draft produced at the meeting in Geneva indicates that the finance provided for results-based payments (RBPs) for REDD+ could also be used for implementing actions under INDCs and joint mitigation and adaptation approaches post-2020.

The ultimate test for the credibility of INDCs will be in the meeting of financial pledges by Annex 1 Parties to support non-Annex 1 Parties in achieving their voluntary contributions. To date, disbursement has been very slow, and, it is essential for developing countries to gain clarity on the implications of their INDCs in terms of the financial support they may receive through other channels. That is, if a national REDD+ strategy is included in a country's INDC, developing countries are concerned that the REDD+ strategy may be interpreted as the 'contribution' making them ineligible for results-based finance to implement the INDC. The

"The communities need to be made aware of INDCs, because in the end, they will be the ones bearing the costs."

Alaya de Leon

potential for such unintended consequences is very much real, and developing countries must therefore receive very clear guidance during the INDC development process.

Forest sector stakeholders, including national governments, forest-dependent communities, the forest industry, consumers of forest products and forestry professionals, are generally in favour of including forest-related actions within national INDCs. This is in contrast to the lead up to the first and flawed global climate change agreement, the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, when few forestry professionals were involved in the negotiations. The high profile of forests in negotiations over the last few COPs, particularly after the emergence of REDD+, has led to widespread recognition of the importance of the forest sector in reducing concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, and increased involvement of actors who understand the multiple benefits that may result from inclusion of the forest sector at the heart of a future climate change agreement.



Q4

How will REDD+ figure in the considerations of broader land-use issues?

"There is often a big gap between the negotiators and the implementers."

Sangay Wangchuck

"It is important that any agreement must allow us to define REDD+ in the context of our national circumstances."

Nur Masripatin

"Learning by doing is often the only way forward. We should not assume that problems alone would emerge; solutions can also emerge."

Shahzad Jehangir

Negotiators met in Geneva in February 2015 to start drafting the text for the potential new global climate agreement as one of the first steps between Lima and Paris, and though most of this text is not yet agreed upon, one of the suggestions, specifically for 'diversified enhanced-mitigation actions', could potentially have significant implications for REDD+. Although the WFR already indicates that the new global agreement will include a dedicated REDD+ component, some Parties are keen to see REDD+ as a multi-sector, landscape-level set of diversified actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

According to the Cancun Agreements negotiated at COP 16 in Cancun in 2010, REDD+ requires a phased approach. Most countries are still in Readiness Phases 1 and 2, and very few are ready to enter Phase 3, when they become eligible for results-based finance. There is thus still time for REDD+ to evolve. REDD+ has been viewed as a mitigation tool from its conceptual beginning at COP 11 in Montreal; however, it is essentially a landscape-based approach linked inseparably with agriculture and other land uses as the key drivers of deforestation are outside of the forest sector. Many if not most drivers of deforestation and forest degradation need to be addressed through interventions and behavioural changes in non-forest sectors. Some Parties thus wish to explicitly recognize this cross-sectoral issue in the negotiations, and make REDD+ one part of a broader land-use mechanism which would need to integrate all land-based sectors: forestry, agriculture, fisheries, livestock and mining.

The forest sector on its own is very different from one country to another. As attractive as a broad land-use mechanism may be to some negotiators, the complexity of binding such diverse countries to globally standardized methodologies may discourage many technicians and policymakers from implementing such a scheme. Any global-level guidance on such a mechanism would thus need to be at a very general level because national implementation would be tailored to specific national circumstances.

The landscape approach concept was first introduced into discussions under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Its sister convention, the UNFCCC, sought to learn lessons from these discussions. However, different land-use sectors have very different mandates and objectives;

for example, the agriculture sector has food security as its primary goal, while forests are expected to meet multiple needs including wood, biomass energy, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and a range of ecological services. These goals sometimes prove to be incompatible and a landscape approach must thus be able to deal with these tensions and trade-offs effectively. The existing political and administrative structures within countries also tend to heighten these tensions and this complexity is only likely to increase as the approach is expanded to the global scale.



Q5

What challenges remain in financing forest-based climate change mechanisms?

Issues relating to finance are now mainly centered on the dispersal of funds under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the deliberations of the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF).

The GCF gets its mandate from the UNFCCC and must function within the bounds set by the COP decisions. Funding pledges from Parties to the GCF are from public finance. But solely relying on public funding is considered inadequate and thus the GCF is expected to be supplemented by private finance in the future. It is the task of the GCF to create enabling conditions to optimize such inflows through its resource mobilization process and its private sector facility.

The SCF was set up to assist the COP to improve the coordination of climate finance. It produces biennial assessments to inform countries and other actors on the various sources of money for climate finance. Its most recent assessment reported total pledges of US\$8.67 billion for REDD+ and forests in 2014, of which bilateral financing from 21 donor countries accounted for a little over US\$4 billion; financing through six multilateral mechanisms, including the GCF, totalled US\$3.14 billion; and another US\$0.9 billion came from private investments. Although these figures do not add up to the scale of finance that REDD+ readiness efforts require, they do suggest increased predictability of financing for forests and REDD+, particularly compared with past years.

The money the GCF and the SCF have reported is in the form of pledges, however, and it is also not yet clear how much of this money will actually land in the coffers of the GCF or other funding mechanisms. In the past, translating pledges into real, additional finance has not been straightforward. It is also not clear what proportion of GCF funds will be allocated for REDD+. Now that some countries have submitted their first forest reference emission levels and reference levels (FRELs/FRLs), a sense of competition is emerging among them, as it seems increasingly unlikely that there will be sufficient finance available through the GCF to meet all potential demands for results-based payments. While new guidance to the GCF on results-based payments for REDD+ is not expected in the immediate future, there will be calls from applicant countries for the Fund to grow through creative resource mobilization and the linkages between REDD+ and adaptation as recognized by the fund. There will also be strong pressure from recipient countries for the GCF to coordinate financial distribution without inequity or a lack of transparency. However, the demands from some stakeholders for a reporting mechanism on access to finance were viewed with caution by potential recipient countries, particularly as REDD+ countries will already have substantial reporting burdens even without such additional measures.

“Demands for an additional reporting mechanism for GCF financing are being made without concern for the costs involved.”

Elizabeth Philip

Q6

What progress can be expected regarding the development of forest reference emission levels (FRELs) and forest reference levels (FRLs) in the Asia-Pacific region in 2015?

"Transparency in the development of FRELs should never be compromised."

Delux Chhun

"The only way one can learn how to make a FREL is to do it. Just jump in and learn to swim!"

Nur Masripatin

The first forest reference (emission) levels (FRELs/FRLs) were submitted to the UNFCCC in December 2014, and substantial progress has been made in some cases already. Brazil's FREL for instance, has already been assessed and approved by the UNFCCC technical expert committee. Brazil took a simple approach, limiting its submission to avoided deforestation only. In Asia and the Pacific, Nepal has gained some valuable experience in setting sub-national FRELs/FRLs as part of its proposal to the Carbon Fund under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). Indonesia has also drafted a sub-national FREL for the Carbon Fund, as well as a national FREL that is ready for submission to the UNFCCC, and several additional sub-national FREL/FRLs through other initiatives. Malaysia has become the first country in the region to submit its FREL/FRL to the UNFCCC and is the first in the world to base their submission on sustainable management of forests (SMF). The feedback these countries receive from the experts' committee will be of great interest to other countries in Asia and the Pacific, a region where emission reductions from SMF and reduced degradation, which are harder to measure than those from avoided deforestation, are likely to figure prominently in many other FRELs/FRLs. The need for transparency in setting up an FREL cannot be overemphasized. Proactive steps are needed to make quick progress in establishing FRELs, for which developing national capacity is essential.

Overall, after several years of uncertainty on the topic of FRELs/FRLs, there is a flurry of activity, which will certainly intensify as COP 21 approaches. Several more countries in the region, including Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Viet Nam, are likely to make submissions before the end of the year. During 2015, these countries will require intensive capacity development in order to meet their objectives. It will not be appropriate for these countries to entirely outsource the drafting of FRELs/FRLs since these baselines will determine the scale of result-based payments that the countries may receive under REDD+, and thus require national understanding and ownership. Several different approaches to developing the baselines are being piloted, all of which may have useful lessons for the wider region. For some countries, it may be possible to address the vast majority of emission reductions through a FREL/FRL concentrating on just one REDD+ activity, such as reduced deforestation. However, for many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the

situation is more complex, and two or more of the five REDD+ activities may potentially be included in a FREL/FRL.¹ Yet the inclusion of multiple such activities raises challenges, mainly because it is technically challenging to measure some of the 'plus' activities. In such cases, countries can begin with activities that are currently easier to measure, and then expand the FREL/FRL to include other activities at a later date as skills develop with both training and practice. Malaysia is adopting such a 'stepwise' approach. Its FREL is national in scale and is based on historical emissions using data from existing time series. Malaysia expects to move on from its SMF-only FREL to encompass other activities in the future. Indonesia has developed its national and sub-national FRELS using historical time series data and some secondary data with Norwegian and German support. Myanmar has also started with a pilot FREL at sub-national level for the teak forests of the Bago Yoma region. Several of these experiences will be shared at a UN-REDD regional workshop in Cambodia in May, which the host will use as an opportunity to advance its own FREL. There are several other such South-South learning events planned for this year on FRELS/FRLs.

¹ According to the Cancun Agreements, the five REDD+ activities are: 1) avoided deforestation; 2) reduced forest degradation; 3) conservation of forest carbon stocks; 4) sustainable management of forests; and 5) enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Q7

How can regional and international knowledge exchange help in the development of National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) for REDD+?

"We must not reinvent the wheel, particularly for complicated issues like NFMS."

Sangay Wangchuck

"Use the existing bilateral agreements between Asia-Pacific countries to deepen intra-regional cooperation."

Promode Kant

"Small Pacific island countries' negotiators are skeptical of developed countries' motives and interest in the non-carbon benefits that regional REDD+ programmes can offer them."

Christine Fung

Asia and the Pacific is home to several prestigious institutions that are leaders in the field of forest inventory and monitoring. Several countries, moreover, contain a pool of highly-skilled forest technicians. This high level of human and institutional resources can facilitate quick and relatively low-cost capacity development across the region to help set up and strengthen Asia-Pacific countries' NFMS. Dozens of formal bilateral agreements on cooperation in the fields of environment and forestry already exist. For example, among the ASEAN member states there is formal cooperation on forest investment programmes through the ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network (ARKN). India has also signed agreements on cooperation in the fields of forestry and environment with Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal among other countries. However, most of these agreements are underutilized, and there is significant potential for external agencies or multinational bodies to build on the agreements to enhance cooperation within the region.

The Forest and Climate Change branch of the ARKN (ARKN-FCC) performs such a role in Southeast Asia, for example. ARKN-FCC specializes in coordination and mobilization of intellectual resources in the fields of forests and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Forestry Centre, with its Secretariat in Bhutan, has a similar function in that sub-region. FAO, through the UN-REDD programme, is helping to develop the capacity of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to facilitate regional approaches to forest monitoring with Pacific Island countries. At the global level, the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and Climate Technology Center Network (CTCN) of the UNFCCC provide technical support in all sectors, including the forest sector, and many developing countries have already begun taking advantage of these processes.

For the many small island states in the Pacific, the effort required in developing a national REDD+ strategy may be hard to justify considering the limited forest areas of these island states. However, among other factors for consideration, their forests often include high proportions of mangroves, offering opportunities for significantly enhancing resilience while achieving mitigation and other adaptation measures. Moreover, there are few forest and environment professionals in these countries, and they are therefore often dependent on foreign consultants for technical expertise, which increases the risk of national interests being

superseded by global concerns through the potential excessive reliance on international experts. This raises the need for more systematic and intense national capacity development of a local and regional expert pool on REDD+ monitoring activities. In these island states, most land is formally owned by local people, which could also help lead to a source of lessons regarding the inclusion of local communities in forest monitoring activities. However, although such participatory approaches may reduce costs for the state, and may potentially increase transparency of information, they may not necessarily be of use in generating data for the national-level reporting required by NFMS for REDD+ under the UNFCCC.



Q8

Do developing countries need additional guidance on safeguards?

No new guidance on safeguards emerged from COP 20.² Ahead of the conference in Lima, many civil society organizations and Annex 1 countries had prioritized the need for further progress on safeguards guidance. However, in the opinion of most non-Annex 1 Parties in Asia and the Pacific, the environmental and social safeguards formulated in 2010 as part of the Cancun Agreement developed at COP 16 are adequate for REDD+ implementation to begin. The discussions in Lima similarly reflected this difference in priorities between Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 countries. And although there is probably room for a middle road to be taken, through additional detailed text on the interpretation of the safeguards as well as a clarification of the voluntary nature of any safeguards reporting mechanism, the issue of safeguards guidance tended to be a polarizing one in Lima and led to a stalemate in discussions. In an unprecedented move, 'Rule 16' of the Convention was applied, which meant that all discussions on the topic of safeguards at this COP were deleted from the records. The discussions will start again from the pre-Lima position at the next meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) in June.

The safeguards requirements of multilateral and most bilateral funding agencies are also essentially based on the Cancun Agreement text, although the World Bank (WB) obliges FCPF countries to follow additional WB-specific conditions on safeguards. Some bilateral funding agencies also emphasize particular concerns relating to gender and indigenous peoples. It is possible that some social and environmental risks could be further emphasized as the pilot implementation (Phase 2) of REDD+ proceeds. This phase includes development of monitoring protocols to provide the necessary feedback that could form the basis for revising safeguard guidance.

"The discussions were intense and heated. Rule 16 was applied in REDD+ negotiations for the first time, and the entire session was erased from the records."

Nur Masripatin

"Practices of development partners are sufficient guidance for safeguards during the readiness phase."

Shahzad Jehangir

"Additional guidance on safeguards is not needed, but we do need support to ensure an efficient process and effective outcomes."

Suchitra Changtragoon

² 'Safeguards' in the REDD+ context were introduced into UNFCCC negotiations to safeguard against any potential negative impacts from the implementation of REDD+. The seven types of safeguard are defined in the Cancun Agreements (Decision 1/CP.16, Annex 1).

Equally important to the need to strengthen safeguards is the need for the capacity development of national implementing agencies to enable them to understand the various dimensions of safeguards, why safeguards are needed, and how safeguards can be addressed and respected. The design of safeguards information systems should be nationally driven with a view to continuous improvement. However, it is important to recognize the limited capacities of forestry professionals in some countries in the Asia-Pacific region with regard to safeguards, and it is in this area that regional exchange and capacity development programs can be of great help. Meaningful participation of local communities in the design and operation of safeguards information systems is also very important, and can itself be considered a requirement under the Cancun Agreements. Deciding whether such participation is 'meaningful' is context-specific, however, and thus for this aspect of the safeguards (as well as for several other aspects), only nationally-defined indicators would be appropriate. In countries with high internet penetration, it may be useful to set up an online platform to exchange information on safeguards.

Q9

Are non-carbon benefits (NCBs) still relevant in the UNFCCC discussions on REDD+?

“Water issues assume special significance as NCBs in drought prone areas.”

Anura Sathurusinghe

“On a narrow interpretation, results-based payments are only for carbon; however, some consider that on a broader definition they may include non-carbon benefits.”

Stephen Leonard

“Climate change adaptation may sometimes be the most important NCB.”

Stephen Leonard

If REDD+ is understood primarily as a tool for climate change mitigation, then non-carbon benefits (NCBs) can be viewed as co-benefits of REDD+ covering all benefits other than those related to carbon. Carbon is fundamentally an abstract concept, and is best understood as an indicator for global GHG emission reductions, rather than as an actual benefit itself. NCBs are therefore the set of multiple benefits that forest sector stakeholders, and the global community at large, could enjoy as a result of REDD+ implementation. This might involve a range of economic, social or environmental benefits, including those related to climate change adaptation.

NCBs should therefore be defined in the national context before identifying whether and how they can be incentivized through REDD+ or other climate change-related initiatives. Indonesia, for instance, has developed national standards and methodologies for assessing NCBs with a focus on biodiversity conservation. It is suggested that certain biodiversity values assessed through these methodologies can also be used as a proxy to determine a broader set of NCBs generated as a result of REDD+ initiatives. In the context of climate change adaptation in drought prone forests, indicators related to water availability and use could similarly be used as proxies.

NCBs may be understood as a logical extension to the concept of REDD+ safeguards. By definition, a safeguard is a measure to ‘do no harm’ or to minimize the possibility of negative impacts, whereas the ‘benefits’ inherent in NCBs go beyond just protecting against negative impacts and through the active generation of additional benefits. However, the practical implications of seeking to link NCBs explicitly with the development of safeguards systems may quickly become overly complex. Regardless of whether NCBs are linked with safeguards, the recognition and description of the range of potential benefits of REDD+ initiatives may make engagement in REDD+ more compelling for forest-based communities.

Another issue for NCBs is regarding how they would be paid for. In the context of results-based payments (RBPs) stipulated under the UNFCCC, ‘results’ must be directly relevant to the Convention’s ultimate objective of reducing the levels of GHGs in the atmosphere. As NCBs do not contribute to this objective, they should not, therefore, be paid for by

a UNFCCC mechanism such as REDD+, but from other sources. There may be ways, other than RBPs, that REDD+ initiatives can incentivize NCBs for forest-dependent people, but no agreement on this was reached at COP 20.

Discussions will continue on how NCBs could be integrated and incentivized under REDD+, but it is important that this conversation does not derail progress on the REDD+ mechanism as a whole: agreement on general guidelines and methodologies for NCBs may yet emerge. Association with REDD+ Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) – particularly with reporting requirements – should be avoided, however. One possibility for proceeding without including in NCBs within REDD+ MRV is the recognition of voluntary integration of NCBs into a package of incentives for REDD+ interventions, and the development of some standard guidance and methodologies for this purpose. Bhutan, for instance, is exploring the possibility of channelling resources generated through REDD+ to incentivize NCBs. Other countries in the region may learn from such experiences, or may explore the possibilities of NCB-linked finance through other Conventions such as CBD and the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD).



Q10

Is there potential for joint mitigation and adaptation programs in the forest sector to be included in a post-2020 international climate agreement?

"JMAs focus on sustainable management of forests resulting from long-term mitigation and adaptation."

Ruth Turia

As the planet warms and the climate destabilizes, adaptation for countries in Asia and the Pacific to these detrimental changes is becoming of paramount importance, particularly for local communities highly dependent on forests and other ecosystems for their livelihoods. There is also a growing recognition by the international community of the need to support the adaptation of these ecosystems themselves, and the role that local communities might play in such work.

Some effort was made in Lima to raise the profile and importance of climate change adaptation in the negotiations, at least to the same level of priority as mitigation. Parties explored potential synergies and trade-offs between the two tracks, most notably through the proposed Joint Mitigation and Adaptation mechanism (JMA). There was support for a JMA from some non-Annex 1 countries because the mechanism is not perceived as linked to markets, and a proposal from Bolivia for some form of a JMA as an alternative to REDD+ attracted particular attention. However, the support for a JMA, or lack thereof, appears to be somewhat region-specific to Asia and the Pacific. Negotiators from the region did not express enthusiasm for the concept, preferring to continue building upon progress already made under REDD+.

Separate provisions for REDD+ (with safeguards) and for the inclusion of the forest sector in National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) may be a more practical strategy than a JMA for many Parties and observers of the negotiations. There are significant opportunities for forest-related initiatives specifically to serve as models for linking adaptation and mitigation, for example, through initiatives involving mangroves, agroforestry and community forestry. Incorporation of specific adaptation elements within REDD+ and other forest mitigation initiatives could be designed to contribute to NCBs and to ensure that social and environmental safeguards are met. The draft negotiating text for COP 21, drawn up in Geneva in February 2015, contains significant and frequent references to the linking of adaptation and mitigation. For instance, paragraph 22 of the text states: "Parties may take into account joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for integral and sustainable management of forests as an alternative to results-based finance." However, although this statement builds upon decisions made in the two preceding COPs, the breadth of support from Parties will only become clear in Paris in December.

Q11

Can COP 21 in Paris be expected to produce a credible international climate agreement? If not, what will this mean for the progress to date on REDD+?

While the COP 20 in Lima was relatively uneventful, it promoted the gradual progress that led that the initial drafting of text in Geneva, which suggests an evolving consensus in the international community that effective action on climate change is now likely and essential. This was evident even at COP 19 in Warsaw when the concept of INDCs was accepted by all countries including non-Annex 1 countries as a means to demonstrate each Party's ambition towards reducing anthropogenic GHG emissions and enhancing the removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere. Some Parties, particularly the European Union (EU) and Japan, have shown leadership by initiating ambitious climate change actions within their territories and through their willingness to extend financial and technological support to developing countries. Other Parties, like the United States, have played a relatively more constructive role than in the past.

Increased financial flows from the developed countries to the developing world have also helped improve trust in the feasibility of a future climate agreement. This development has been reflected in the reduced opposition to climate change mitigation actions in developing countries, which has given more political and economic maneuvering room to their leadership in negotiations. Simultaneously, the Annex 1 countries are becoming more willing to see adaptation – a core concern of many developing countries – embedded within decisions, including those relevant for the forest sector. However, the issue of timely access to adequate finance continues to be problematic. Advances in the discussions within the SCF, on financing methods within the GCF, and in transfer of technology are all critical if Parties are to make progress towards a new global climate agreement in Paris this December.

There is already enough basic guidance available regarding methodologies for safeguards, results-based payments, reference emission levels, and measurement, reporting and verification. Overall, the current situation bodes well for REDD+ and for all forest-based interventions under a new climate agreement. In contrast to Kyoto, there is near-universal acceptance of the importance and feasibility of using forest-based initiatives to address climate change. As long as local communities' needs and concerns are effectively met and safeguarded, and the trade-offs between mitigation and adaptation successfully navigated, this consensus is likely to last until Paris and moving forward.







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