

A CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTION?

Backed by growing international consensus, the UN-REDD Programme continues to support efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, says Dr Yemi Katerere



Forest area in Kalimantan, Indonesia

■ As the world weighs in on the results of COP-15 and the Copenhagen Accord, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD+) stands stronger than ever, as one of the most cost-effective ways of mitigating climate change in the short-term. In December 2009, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the World Bank president Robert Zoellick defined REDD+ as, an essential element of tackling global climate change. During COP-15, Australia, Britain, France, Japan, Norway and the US jointly announced \$3.5bn to support developing countries that produce comprehensive plans to slow and eventually reverse deforestation. The global demand and support for REDD+ is unprecedented and the UN-REDD Programme, together with other multi-lateral REDD+ initiatives, remains committed to playing an important role in supporting REDD+ readiness efforts around the world.

How REDD+ works

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has estimated that deforestation and forest degradation contribute globally to approximately 17 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions. The potential to make money from forests, through trade in forest products or conversion of forests to bio-fuel plantations, means that protecting forests is both a difficult but vitally important goal, with tremendous potential to abate climate change. If managed in a sustainable way, experts agree that forests could contribute significantly to the climate change solution.

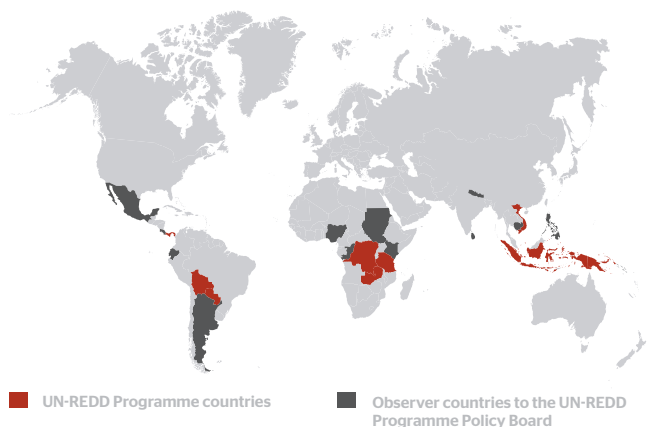
REDD is a mechanism that creates incentives for developing forested countries to protect, and better manage their forest resources, thus contributing to the global fight against climate change. REDD+ goes beyond reducing deforestation and forest degradation solely for the purpose of emissions reductions, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in REDD+ strategies. REDD+ strives to make forests more valuable standing than cut down, by creating a financial value for the carbon stored in standing trees. When fully operational, payments for verified emission reductions and removals, either market or fund-based, provide an incentive for REDD+ countries to pursue climate compatible development.

REDD+ is a contribution that developing countries can, and are willing to, make towards global efforts to mitigate climate change. Developed countries on their part have agreed to fully compensate the costs of such actions, making REDD+ a great opportunity to combine climate change mitigation, sustainable management of forests, biodiversity conservation and income provision for forest-dependent communities.

There are, however, many unanswered questions about REDD+. How can forest communities and Indigenous Peoples participate in the design, monitoring and evaluation of national REDD+ programmes? How will REDD+ be funded, and how will countries ensure that benefits are distributed equitably among all those who manage the forests? How will countries monitor the amount of carbon stored and sequestered as a result of REDD+ efforts? REDD+ will provide payments for the reduction of CO2 emissions from deforestation, but can it reward governments or communities that are already fully protecting their forests?

The UN-REDD Programme, a joint collaboration of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was launched in 2008 to support efforts

to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. With \$75m in funding from Norway, Denmark and Spain, the programme supports nine pilot countries in Africa, Asia and Latin American and has welcomed more than a dozen countries to be observers to the programme's policy board.

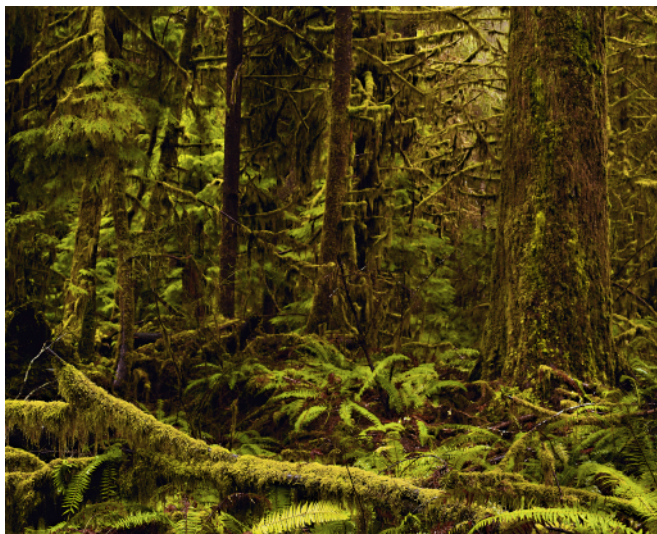


Pilot Countries of the UN-REDD Programme: Bolivia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Indonesia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia. Countries with observer status to the UN-REDD Programme Policy Board: Argentina, Ecuador, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines, Republic of Congo, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

SUPPORT FOR REDD+

The UN-REDD Programme's primary goal is to support country-led REDD+ efforts, and works at both national and international levels to provide technical advice on ways to address deforestation and forest degradation, as well as provide important methods and tools for measuring and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions and forest carbon flows. It is also essential that Indigenous Peoples and Civil Society participate in the design of national REDD+ strategies, and the programme is deeply committed to supporting countries in that process. For example, in the DRC, a Climate and REDD Civil Society working group has been formed to inform their REDD+ processes and Civil Society representatives are part of their Negotiation Task Force.

REDD+ efforts have the potential to create significant financial benefits and the UN-REDD Programme works with countries to ensure these benefits will be fairly distributed. In Vietnam, the programme collaborated with the government to help coordinate a comprehensive



Bolivian forest area, rich in bio-diversity.

Benefits Distribution Systems study between September and November 2009, to identify what Vietnam needs to do in order to ensure benefits arising from REDD+ efforts are shared in an equitable way. Other areas of work for the programme include assisting countries in the design and implementation of REDD+ strategies that ensure forests continue to provide multiple benefits for livelihoods and biodiversity, while storing carbon at the same time.

On an international level, the programme seeks to build consensus and knowledge about REDD+ and raise awareness about the importance of including a REDD+ mechanism in a future climate change agreement. It also provides opportunities for dialogue between governments, civil society organisations and technical experts, to ensure that REDD+ efforts are based on science and take into account the views and needs of all stakeholders.

The programme brings together technical teams from around the world to develop common approaches, analyses and guidelines on issues such as measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of carbon emissions and flows, remote sensing, and greenhouse gas inventories. During COP-15, Google Earth announced a new application that enables observation and measurement of changes in forest cover and the UN-REDD Programme has agreed to work with Google to test their prototype in Africa. The programme has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Brazil's Space Agency to jointly develop a land monitoring system using remote sensing data that will help individual countries establish MRV systems.

PARTNERSHIPS

The programme works in close coordination with the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the Forest Investment Program (FIP) at both the international level, to harmonise REDD+ readiness work and organise joint events, and at the national level, where joint missions and sharing of information result in coordinated, and cost-effective support to countries. The programme also works with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, in supporting the implementation of UNFCCC decisions. The programme intends to strengthen its partnership with the UNFCCC Secretariat, as well as the Global Environment Facility and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in 2010.

Working toward COP-16 this December in Mexico, the UN-REDD programme is more encouraged than ever by the widespread and growing consensus around REDD+, as a key element in global climate change mitigation. The programme will continue to work with countries to develop strategies aimed at tipping the economic balance in favour of sustainable management of forests and the improvement of livelihoods. ◇

Dr Yemi Katerere is Head of the UN-REDD Programme

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CASE STUDY: PANAMA

The Kuna Yala province in Panama has some of the largest expanses of forests in Mesoamerica.

The new REDD Committee in Panama was launched in September 2009 under the joint agreement that ANAM (the National Environmental Authority), COONAPIP (the National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples of Panama) and the programme would work in close collaboration, with support of the Smithsonian Institute, towards the elaboration of the UN-REDD Panama National Programme. COONAPIP designated six indigenous representatives to support a coordinated review by 65 individuals, who would study the draft programme document and provide input. These representatives, whose time and work were compensated, represented various technical expertise, including gender specialists and legal experts. By the end of October, the UN-REDD Panama National Programme Document was presented to the Programme Policy Board meeting in Washington, DC, where the president of COONAPIP participated alongside the representative from ANAM and funding allocation for the Panama National Programme was approved. Without the capacity, expertise and input from this group, reflected Dr Santiago Carriosa, REDD Regional Technical Adviser for Latin America and the Caribbean, we would not have been able to achieve this outcome.

