1. Project summary

REDD+ has evolved considerably since it was introduced in 2005, in response to how it is understood in different contexts and by different actors, the absence of a new international agreement on climate change, and the numerous technical, political and economic challenges that have arisen in its design and implementation. Many countries are getting involved in REDD+, even while international negotiations are ongoing. Governments are developing national REDD+ strategies and setting up institutions to coordinate activities and manage funding. At subnational levels (i.e. in provinces, districts and villages), organisations are running pilot or demonstration projects. In this context, the results of the GCS are being used to guide policy makers, governments and projects proponents in designing and implementing REDD+.

The GCS-REDD analyzes at national and subnational REDD+ activities in 13 countries to identify challenges and enabling conditions for achieving REDD+ policies and projects whose outcomes are effective, efficient and equitable. Main findings of Phase I are synthesized in the book Analysing REDD+: Challenges and Choices, published in 2012. Phase II started in 2013 with 5 modules: REDD+ Policies (Module 1), Subnational Initiatives (Module 2), Measuring Carbon Emissions (Module 3), Carbon Management (Module 4), and Knowledge Sharing (Module 5).

2. Project information

Support period and budget frame, expenditures to date

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<tr>
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<th>Support period</th>
<th>Budget frame (NOK)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>June 2009 to June 2010</td>
<td>20,000,000</td>
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<td>June 2010 to May 2013</td>
<td>60,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase II</td>
<td>January 2013 to December 2015</td>
<td>60,000,000</td>
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Goal of the project

In Phase I, the overall objective was to provide REDD policymakers and practitioner communities with the information, analysis and tools they need to ensure effective and cost-efficient reduction of carbon emissions with equitable impacts and co-benefits (“3E+”) – including poverty reduction, enhancement of non-carbon ecosystem services, and protection of local livelihoods, rights and tenure. In the first year, we have been synthesizing existing knowledge and were building a strong platform for learning and applying REDD knowledge to achieve the 3Es+. In the second and third years, we have continued analysing and sharing knowledge and strengthening the REDD learning community. In the fourth year, we have consolidated the analysis and shared the lessons learned globally to prepare the REDD learning community to sustain itself.

In Phase II, reflecting the changing REDD+ landscape internationally and within REDD+ countries, the project comprises 5 modules with the following activity profile:
Activity profile

• **Research and comparative analysis of REDD+ national strategies and project site activities.**
  - **Module 1** integrates new work on globalized drivers of deforestation and focuses on emerging international and national policy regimes and global trade and investment patterns that can drive deforestation, including international political economy of REDD+.

• **Impact studies of individual country and project cases, including collection of primary data.**
  - **Module 2** focuses on ex post impact analysis to assess the 3E+ outcomes of REDD+ project site activities.

• **Cross-regional comparative studies to synthesise results of impact studies**
  - **Module 3** works on MRV institutions and takes a more integrated approach to MRV systems, and works on Reference Emission Levels.

• **Review of existing methods, development and testing of new methods for effective forest monitoring**
  - **Module 4** focuses on management at the landscape scale to facilitate adoption of low carbon emission policies and measures. This module will also address improved design of multilevel institutions and processes to overcome economic and policy barriers to REDD+ implementation and other low carbon land use policies.

• **Sharing knowledge with policymakers and practitioners at the international, regional, national and sub-national levels**
  - **Module 5** expands the proactive dialogue and communication activities in the GCS. It will work to build dialogue with key policy makers, and communicate research products to them, for more effective influence and impact.

**Target groups**

REDD+, forestry and climate policymakers and practitioners at all levels, from local/regional to national and international.

**Local partners and their responsibilities in the project**

CIFOR is the lead institution and implements the work through partnerships with GOs, NGOs and international organisations. The collaborators in the target countries include proponents of 23 REDD+ demonstration projects, local research and development organisations. Internationally, partnerships include the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB, As), Wageningen University, North Carolina State University, University of Leeds, ICRAF, and others. A detailed list of local and international partners is given in Annex 2.

**Other donors to the project**

AusAID, EC, SDC, DFID and the CGIAR.

3. **Justification of project**

*CIFOR's GCS provides evidence-based, empirical foundations for evaluating REDD+ policy and practice 'on the ground’*

**Providing policy analysis at national and international scale:** To realise carbon-effective, cost-efficient, and equitable REDD+ strategies that deliver co-benefits there is an urgent need for evidence, information, guidelines and tools that inform decision makers. Although in theory, policy making should be evidence-based and solution-oriented, political realities rarely match these expectations, either because there is limited interest in evidence and solution-oriented action or because evidence is not produced or made available. The process of policy learning for improved REDD+ policy design, linked to global UNFCCC guidance and local projects, needs evidence and knowledge brokers. By developing tools and analysis in close partnership with national civil society actors, research institutes, state institutions and private sector actors, our research is supporting old
and new agents of change in their capacity to identify root causes of deforestation and forest degradation and the constraints on wider practice of conservation and sustainable forest management, to inform the design and implementation of appropriate responses to these problems in an effective, efficient and equitable manner. CIFOR and its partners are supporting countries in their move through the three phases of REDD+ (REDD+ readiness, policy reforms and result based actions), by providing tools and analysis of how to design, implement and measure the results of REDD+ action.

Analyzing REDD project practice: Module 2 of GCS-REDD focuses on sub-national REDD+ initiatives and is conducting a counter-factual, longitudinal study in six countries, 23 projects, 150 villages, and 4,000 households on the ability of REDD+ to be effective in sequestering carbon, cost effective, equitable in distributing the benefits and costs of REDD+, and able to attain various co-benefits (uphold rights, maintain wellbeing, protect biodiversity). The approach, called “before-after/control-intervention” (BACI; cf. Figure 1 below) has collected baseline (“before”) data in the period 2009-2013 (Phase 1). In Phase 1, Module 2 has focused on describing REDD+ subnational initiatives, measuring early outcomes, and predicting eventual (post-impact) outcomes on the basis of early evidence. Among the kinds of products of this work are the analysis of how REDD+ compares to past efforts to stop deforestation; publications on the nature, location, and geography of REDD+ projects; a web-based catalogue of REDD+ projects around the world; methods publications on the BACI approach and measurement of carbon effectiveness; and publications on a variety of social issues including: tenure; safeguards; benefit sharing; local hopes and worries; and conflict. In Phase 2 (2013-2016), Module 2 will collect impact (“after”) data on the effect of REDD+ performance-based incentives, as well as other interventions. Comparison of villages and households outside of REDD+ (control) with those inside project boundaries (intervention) will provide robust, counter-factual evidence of REDD+’s ability to achieve its goals.

Developing approaches to sound MRV: A specific emphasis in the GCS is on monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) and the establishment of forest reference levels (RLs) and reference emission levels, to identify ways to enable better carbon accounting so that emission reductions can be reliably measured and verified.

REDD+ will be implemented in phases to allow countries to participate in the mechanism in a way that considers their national circumstances. Most REDD+ countries are currently in Phase 1: the
development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, capacity-building and demonstration activities (Phase 1: readiness phase). The focus of Phase 2 will be the implementation of national policies and measures and national strategies or action plans that could further involve capacity building, technology development and transfer, and results-based demonstration activities (Phase 2: results-based demonstration activities). Transitioning into Phase 3 will involve moving to more direct results-based actions, i.e. emissions and removals that should be fully measured, reported and verified (MRV’d) (Phase 3: MRV’d results-based actions). As countries move through these phases, they have to develop forest RELs/RLs and they have to develop a national forest monitoring system that quantifies emission reductions.

Our objective is to support countries in this endeavour by presenting a stepwise MRV framework (Herold et al., 2012) for setting forest RELs/RLs and for measuring REDD+ emissions reductions and GHG removals in light of the provisions of decision 12/CP.17. Over the past three years, we have developed a stepwise framework for MRV (summarized in the Figure below). The basic concept behind the stepwise approach is simple: countries should start with what they have, build on strengths, and fill gaps as they progress through the phases of REDD+ implementation. A stepwise approach will provide a MRV roadmap for countries to design and develop their MRV systems.

![Figure 2: The stepwise approach to establishing RELs/RLs](image)

4. Results

**Evidence for impact of the GCS**

**Country profiles inform national policy design:** Module 1 is working with national partners to produce REDD+ country profiles. These follow specific guidelines and aim to provide a comprehensive picture of the context in which REDD+ is supposed to emerge, including drivers of deforestation, the institutional and distributional structure, the political economy driving degradation and deforestation, and the policy actors and policy proposals for the country’s REDD+ design. Our partners, most of them from civil society organisations, are successfully linking to national strategy formulation processes, and through the development of country profiles, are providing evidence to inform national REDD+ policy design. The availability of evidence, its transparency, and alignment with national policy process windows is key to facilitating transformational change away from business as usual scenarios.

To ensure that evidence is generated in-country, we designed our research in such a way that national partners are the key vectors to bring evidence into national decision making arenas. National partners generate the evidence and disseminate it. CIFOR’s role is to (a) strengthen the scientific capacity of our respective partners, and facilitate the quality management of research outputs; (b) provide a framework for exchange of REDD policy analysis and experiences across countries and regions; and (c) support dissemination efforts by publishing findings in national
languages, and by providing support for peer reviewed publications. Since 2010, country profiles have been published for Brazil, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Mozambique, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, and Vietnam. The profiles for Laos and Peru are forthcoming.

A comparative analysis of these country profiles and additional research with our partners shows that three factors — actors, existing governance structures (e.g. institutional and policy path dependencies) and mechanisms (e.g. discursive practices) that enable or constrain REDD+ policy change —, and the interplay between these three governance elements, shape the direction of REDD+ policy developments. Trajectories of change that lead away from business-as-usual scenarios are still under development in all the countries studied. Of concern for those seeking to realise a REDD+ mechanism is that the voice of coalitions challenging BAU remains muted, and the prevailing focus continues to be on international REDD+ debates rather than on direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and domestic governance structures and related obstacles to realise an effective, efficient, and equitable REDD+ (Brockhaus et al 2013; Korhonen-Kurki et al 2013 forthcoming; Sehring et al. 2013 forthcoming; May et al 2010; Dkamela 2010; Indrarto et al. 2012; Pham et al. 2012; Babon et al. 2013; Sitoe et al. 2012.; Paudel et al. 2013; Mpoyi et al. 2013). The country profiles are a key component of ensuring that REDD+ policymakers and practitioner communities have the information, analysis and tools they need to ensure effective and cost-efficient reduction of carbon emissions with equitable impacts and co-benefits — including poverty reduction, enhancement of non-carbon ecosystem services, and protection of local livelihoods, rights and tenure.

**Most REDD+ projects are ill-prepared to move ahead because tenure challenge so large:** In-depth interviews with 22 proponent organizations show that, considering all possible challenges faced in setting up REDD+ on the ground, making tenure clear and secure is the biggest problem. Tenure at REDD+ project sites tends to be unclear and this is no surprise because of the long legacy of state *de jure* control of forests yet *de facto* local control. Tenure is also unclear and insecure in part because of external claims on local forests, and either weak or non-existent enforceable rights of exclusion.

Related findings at 17 project sites showed that more than half the study villages are experiencing tenure insecurity in at least a portion of village lands. In almost two thirds of the study villages, local forests are being used by an external agent (person or company). In one sixth of villages local people have attempted to prevent this external use and failed. But in a quarter of the villages the external use of local forests is actually prohibited. In more than half the villages, compliance with local forest management rules is rated low to moderate. All proponents are making an earnest effort to address tenure issues, so proponent interest is not the obstacle in overcoming problem. Instead, the main problem is that proponents are attempting to resolve at the local level tenure pre-conditions that are landscape-wide and have their origin far beyond project boundaries. A key premise of REDD+ is therefore that the right holders to the future stream of benefits are clearly identified, and that only then can responsibilities for improved forest management be secured. In many projects, the current realities undermine this arrangement.

**Stepwise approach to RLs/RELs enables countries with different starting positions to enter REDD:** MRV systems require several types of input data: activity data, emission/removal factors and data on drivers of deforestation. IPCC has laid out a framework for the first two types of data. Activity data — usually data on land areas under different types of management – static and non-spatially explicit; dynamic and non-spatially explicit; or they can be spatially explicit, dynamic, and disaggregated by management regimes. Emission/removal factors can be global factors that IPCC presents as part of its Tier 1 inventory guidelines for major land use systems, country or region specific factors, or based on more complex modelling efforts. Integration of data on drivers of deforestation is required for setting REL/RLs and for improving the efficiency of inventory data collection. REL/RLs should use information on drivers of deforestation to modify historical deforestation and degradation trends for
better projections of business as usual (BAU) emissions. These data can also help institutions responsible for REDD+ GHG inventories to collect data more efficiently on activities that result in emissions and removals and to prioritize the development of Tier 2 and Tier 3 emission factors. In the development of RELs, countries need to make adjustments for national circumstances, using data on activities and drivers, among other information. Where little data on drivers are available, countries need to use simple rules for adjustments. Where there are national data on key drivers countries can develop appropriate methods for interpolation and extrapolation. As countries progress, they should begin collecting quantitative, spatially explicit data on drivers and these data can be used for more sophisticated and spatially explicit adjustments to REL/RLs.

Data on drivers and activities are also essential for developing policies and measures to reduce deforestation. CIFOR research shows that countries and demonstration projects generally lack data on deforestation and degradation drivers, and this is leading to ineffectual demonstration activities (Brockhaus et al., 2013). Finally in setting REL/RLs and in accounting for emissions and removals, countries need to quantify uncertainty of their estimates. Simple estimation methods for REL/RLs and for inventory methods require simple default uncertainty estimates. However, as data get more country specific and disaggregated, countries should quantify more rigorously the uncertainties in the REL/RL estimates and in their estimates of emissions and removals. The idea of a tiered approach for establishing RL/RELs was initially proposed by Huettner et al. (2009). In 2011, CIFOR accepted a small project (the CIFOR GCS and DECC/DEFRA side project) to apply our GCS research results to the problem. DECC’s Jim Penman, also UK negotiator and lead EU negotiator for REDD, supervised this project. CIFOR developed a stepwise approach and presented it to countries at an expert workshop (SBSTA). The stepwise approach was adopted in UNFCCC decision on RL/RELs in Durban. A CIFOR policy brief followed. The approach has since been generalized to MRV discussions in UNFCCC.

5. Learning experiences

Issues of scale matter significantly in the establishment of REDD+

**Informing the design of REDD+ across levels and scales:** National ownership over the REDD+ policy process is one of the key factors that hamper or enable REDD+. But often we found in our studies in Module 1 that information and data of key elements of REDD+, e.g. deforestation, mitigation potentials, distributional aspects, etc., were, if available at all, scattered and need to be translated into relevant and comprehensive information for the design of national REDD+. The country profile guidelines provide support to generate a more comprehensive and fact-based picture. In addition, our scientific capacity development efforts have been time and resource intensive, but are showing clear signs of payoff: national partners are connecting with and influencing national REDD+ policy processes by providing high quality information. In some cases, such as with our partner ICEL in Indonesia, the national project partners were invited to be part of the REDD+ strategy formulation process, and could feed straight into the process their work in developing a national REDD country profile. In other cases, such as in Vietnam and PNG, in-country dissemination of country profile findings took place during workshops attended by decision makers. Reports from partners indicate that decision makers were very receptive of the information provided during these workshops. We anticipate that the generation of knowledge by our partners, and the closer integration of those partners into national level REDD+ policy processes will lead to a greater use of in-country-generated evidence on REDD+ by policy makers in informing their decisions.

**Tenure arrangements for REDD+ must be secured through national, cross-scale policy efforts:** A key lesson from the research in Module 2 is that national and project-level efforts to resolve tenure challenges must be integrated across scales. Among study countries, this is only being done in Brazil.
The Brazil experience shows that, while essential, this step is not necessarily sufficient. Other policy efforts to resolve the tenure pre-conditions for REDD+ should involve the following:

- Improve the performance and scope of national and local REDD+ consultations.
- Resolve statutory and customary claims on forest lands, as well as other forest tenure conflicts.
- Incorporate local participatory mapping into national land tenure institutions and processes.
- Enforce tenure laws and regulations that are pro-poor and pro-community and which tend to be ignored, such as rights of exclusion.
- Achieve legal clarity on forest carbon ownership without side-stepping related forest land and tree tenure issues.

**Building capacity step by step:** Before the idea of a stepwise approach was promoted through research in Module 3, determining RELs posed technical hurdles and policy makers did not have clear ideas on modalities for countries to determine RELs. By acknowledging that countries work under different circumstances and have different starting positions, some being more advanced than others in their readiness for the MRV required to successfully establish 3E REDD+ strategies, the stepwise approach enables more countries to feel confident to join the debate and the policy process that leads to REDD.