

Message for COP21

Transforming REDD⁺ and achieving the SDGs through support for adaptation-mitigation synergy

Current ambition across INDCs will not achieve globally appropriate mitigation action. Current REDD⁺ finance is inadequate for supporting the instrument as originally envisaged. Adaptation is even more urgent than so far accepted, but closely related to broader development goals. We reflected on a decade of REDD⁺ debate in this context.

We propose climate-smart landscape approaches that simultaneously embrace mitigation and adaptation policies and programs, as well as other environmental services, through addressing problematic issues that hinder REDD⁺ from taking off and flying. We argue that such landscape approaches can be strong alternatives to REDD⁺ as currently perceived through the clarification of scope and scale of problems such that means for intervention can be identified within legitimate platforms that ensure sustainability through feedback mechanisms and continued learning.



Key findings

1. **SCOPE:** Climate-change mitigation and adaptation in the land-use sector cannot be meaningfully separated.
2. **SCALE:** There is no basis for treating forests as other than part of a wide spectrum of land-cover and land-use types that are all relevant for comprehensive attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. **MEANS:** As laudable as REDD⁺ still is as a statement of intent, no widely accepted modality has emerged for generating additional external finance for a performance-based REDD⁺ mechanism in preference of other actions to meet the UNFCCC goal.
4. **PLATFORM:** Capacities are weak to link inclusive land-use planning with 'green' economy and conservation strategies but can be strengthened by negotiation-support tools and programs.
5. **FEEDBACK:** The REDD⁺ readiness experiment has provided a good return on investment if it can now go beyond REDD⁺ and become the basis of a broad land-use-based component of international co-investment in nationally appropriate climate action.

Implications for COP21 discussions

- Direct support for synergy rather than complementarity is needed in climate-smart landscapes, despite the historically different roots of mitigation and adaptation, and 'forest' versus 'agriculture' in the UNFCCC debate.
- Any reference to the specific goals of reducing deforestation and forest degradation should be embedded in a broader concept of the strongly interconnected issues of land-use change and its connection with climate through temperature, rainfall, carbon, nitrogen and hydrological cycles.
- Landscape approaches, embedded in local jurisdictional contexts, deserve support so that they simultaneously increase efficiency of resource use, reduce the footprint of traded commodities, reduce human vulnerability and increase a nested concept of sovereignty and common but differentiated responsibility within and between countries.
- Public-private-people partnerships can be facilitated through government programs for business development, responsible value-chain initiatives that include smallholders, and criteria negotiated among multiple stakeholders, with space for subnational branding.
- REDD⁺ readiness achievements in awareness, polycentric governance and internationally credible national MRV systems can support comprehensive landscape approaches consistent with INDCs.



Resilience in a landscape recovering from volcanic ash deposition offers an analogy with climate-related disasters: some trees survive and resprout, others hang on to an eroding river bank, farmers shift to sand mining. (photos: World Agroforestry Centre/Meine van Noordwijk)



In order to progress from recognized issue to implementable policy instruments, discussions and negotiations have to resolve the **SCOPE** (widely accepted policy goals that are at stake), **SCALE** (allowing root causes to be addressed rather than symptoms, including operational definitions of what's in and what's out, and how the relations with adjacent issues are handled), **MEANS** (policy instruments and financial means of implementation that are not themselves causing larger problems elsewhere), **PLATFORM** (broad support for actions as efficiency and fairness are balanced in the eyes of key stakeholders) and **FEEDBACK** (ensuring continued learning based on credible evidence of performance). The ASB Partnership for the Tropical Forest Margins has engaged with the REDD+ discussions from the lead-up to the Bali COP in 2008, as documented in Minang et al 2014a. Connecting work on the ground in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cameroon and Peru to the international negotiations, we contributed to the emergence of landscape-scale efforts to combine mitigation, adaptation and reduced human vulnerability (Matthews and van Noordwijk, 2014, Minang and van Noordwijk 2014). A specific 'forest' focus for REDD+, however, appeared to be problematic from the start, and its challenges of scope, scale and means have not been resolved.

SCOPE: Climate-change mitigation and adaptation in the land-use sector cannot be meaningfully separated; they are two sides of a single coin that links human activity to climate change. Locally appropriate adaptation and mitigation actions (LAAMA) can seek **synergy**, but at national scale **complementarity** of a mitigation plan (NAMA, INDC) and adaptation plan (NAPA) is the

best we can hope for (Duguma et al 2014a,b). Yet, trees can co-adapt with people, and people with trees (van Noordwijk et al 2011).

SCALE: There is no basis for treating forests as other than part of a wide spectrum of land-cover and land-use types that are all relevant for comprehensive attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (Minang et al 2015). An important part of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation is found outside of the 'forestry sector'. The dominant forest definition is based on institutions rather than on tree cover. Without leverage on the drivers at an appropriate scale, a program can only deal with symptoms, not with underlying causes. Specifically for Southeast Asia, a large part of the emissions is linked to peatlands, whether they are inside or outside the institutionally defined 'forest'.

Acronyms used:

COP – Conference of Parties

INDC – Intended Nationally Determined Contributions

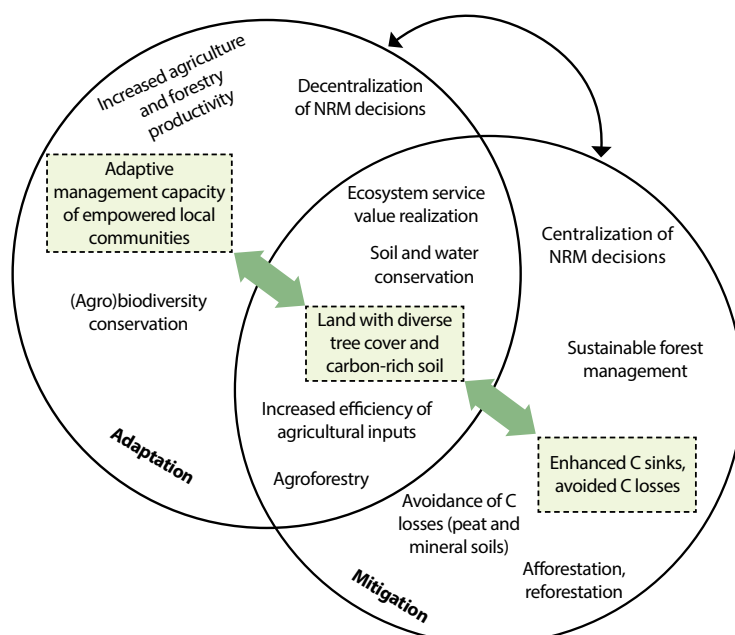
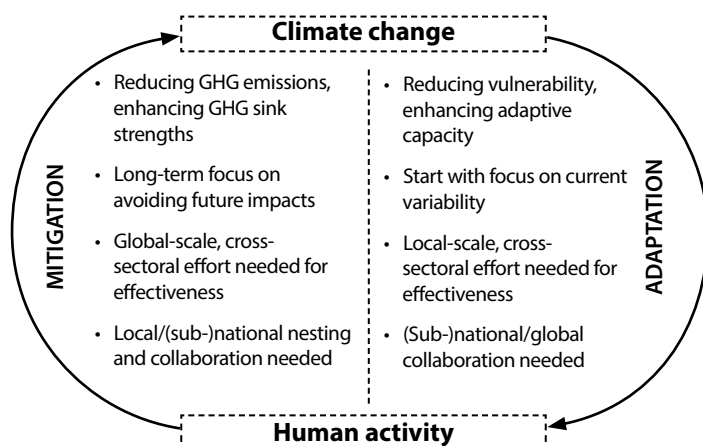
NAMA – Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions

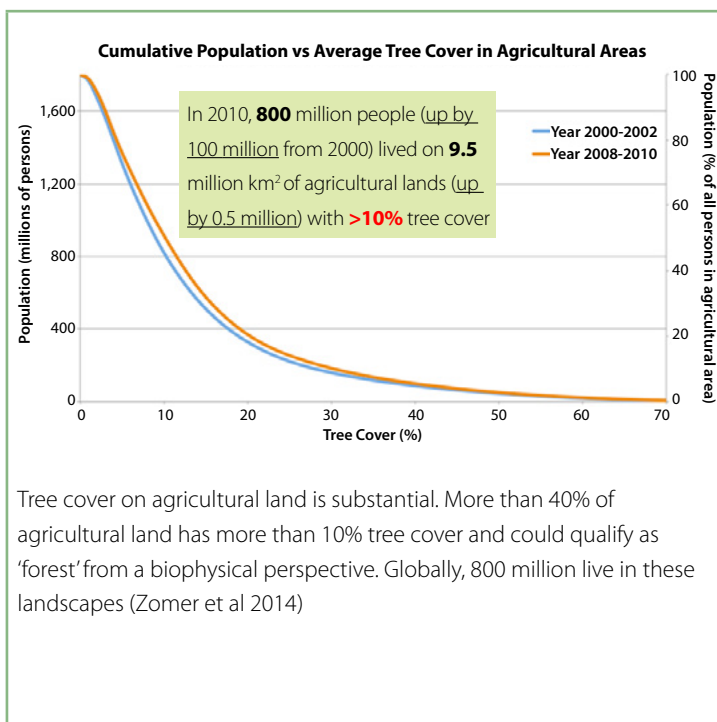
MRV – Measuring (monitoring), Reporting and Verification

REDD+ – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change





(Photo: World Agroforestry Centre/Robert Finlayson)

Despite REDD+ investments and a forest+peatland moratorium in Indonesia, the 2015 fire season has led to CO₂ emissions that surpass the USA national level, while the immediate damage to health, education, transport and economic development exceeds 100 \$/t CO₂, costs borne by Indonesian society and its neighbours. See also Tata et al 2015 and <http://blog.worldagroforestry.org/index.php/2015/10/27/dehazing-indonesias-effort-to-support-sustainable-timber-production-and-self-sufficiency-in-food-energy-and-water/>

MEANS: As laudable as REDD+ still is as a statement of intent, no widely accepted modality has emerged for generating external finance for a performance-based mechanism for this in preference of other climate-change actions. From the start of the REDD+ discussion, there was a concept of initial investments based on bilateral, public funding that would prepare the ground for a 'carbon market' that might deliver the needed billions of dollars per year (Matthews et al 2014). There are a number of reasons, and a spectrum of opinions, on why this did not materialize (some will say 'yet'). One important reason amongst them is, however, the lack of additionality. Carbon markets are shorthand for tradable emission rights, implying that the money used to reduce emissions in one place (e.g. tropical forest) is derived from an increase (or reduced reduction) of emissions elsewhere. Increased global awareness of the urgency of real emission reductions has made it less morally attractive to accept funding derived from such emission-trading schemes, while the globally-agreed level of ambition to reduce emissions has declined. In terms of carbon price, the system has nearly totally collapsed.

PLATFORM: The motivation to engage with REDD+ has evolved in interaction with the policy instruments that can be used and the expected funding streams (van Noordwijk et al 2014a, b). The initial 'fuzziness' of the forest definition helped to increase the political appeal, when many stakeholders could think that their perspective of forest would prevail. In practice, however, the choices alienated large groups from the process, and disappointment became the mood. Meanwhile, efforts continued for a broader landscape-wide approach that interacts with greening-the-economy ideas. Capacities are weak to link inclusive land-use planning with 'green' economy and conservation strategies at sub-national levels but can be strengthened through negotiation-support tools and programs (Dewi et al 2014, 2015; Leimona et al 2015).

FEEDBACK: The REDD+ readiness experiment has provided a good return on investment if it can now become the basis of a broad land-use-based component of international co-

investment in nationally appropriate climate action. This conclusion is largely based on a special issue of the journal, *Climate Policy*, on REDD+ Readiness progress across countries (Minang et al 2014b). Some of the papers explored to what degree REDD+ readiness activities have contributed to more comprehensive approaches (Agung et al 2014). Important feedback was obtained on social safeguards and the way the concept of 'indigenous people' have been linked to mappable space rather than ways of living (de Royer et al 2015).

Way forward

On the way to COP21 in Paris it is becoming clear, as predicted, that the sum of INDCs is not yet enough for Globally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (GAMA). But are current national plans locally appropriate? At local levels, adaptation needs to be fully integrated with mitigation actions to have a local platform. The way the 2015 fire season has wiped out any progress that Indonesia appeared to have made towards voluntary plus externally supported emission reduction is reason for real concern. Indonesia will compete with China for being the top emitter of 2015 due to these fires. In Papua and Sumatra, most of the fires occurred (94 and 66%, respectively) in the top three subdistricts in locations where industrial timber development dominates. In Kalimantan, the top three subdistricts accounted for 33% of fires and a larger area was involved, with stronger connection to oil-palm expansion. Clearly, national policies and international pressure on the value chains that currently rely on products from converted forest will only be effective if they reach all subdistricts, not just setting a few nice examples. To get to that point requires clear heads and programs that build local platforms of support with sufficient co-investment. Preventing local damage to health, education, transport and economic activities represents a much larger value than any carbon-based funding has ever done. Common but differentiated responsibility applies within countries, as well as between them. The INDCs will need to be based on Locally Appropriate Adaptation plus Mitigation Actions (LAAMA) that are supported by monitoring schemes that build

on existing accounting approaches, methodologies, guidance and guidelines and integrate with the SDGs at large. Such local plans and commitments to sustainable livelihoods will be a real incentive for the private sector to become involved and invest in the process, seeing that it secures value chains that stand up to scrutiny at the consumer end. Given the need for locally adapted options, work needs to continue on a portfolio of practices that promote synergy.

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Authors

Meine van Noordwijk, Peter Minang, Sonya Dewi, Lalisa Duguma and Florence Bernard

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Contact us at:

ASB Partnership for the Tropical Forest Margins,
P.O. Box 30677 - 00100 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. +254 20 7224000
Email: asb@cgiar.org
<http://www.asb.cgiar.org>



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