



Science solutions to policy challenges for evolving REDD+ measuring, reporting and verification requirements: report from a multistakeholder workshop

REDD+ measuring, reporting and verification – science solutions to policy challenges

10–12 June 2013, Zeist, The Netherlands

A workshop entitled 'REDD+ measuring, reporting and verification – science solutions to policy challenges' was organized by the WWF Forest and Climate Initiative, WWF Netherlands and Wageningen University REDD@WUR network from 10th to 12th June 2013 in Zeist, The Netherlands. The purpose of this workshop was to assess the status and development of monitoring approaches in light of the evolving REDD+ measuring, reporting and verification needs from different actors in the REDD+ measuring, reporting and verification process. Accordingly, the most important gaps were identified and led to the development of research priorities with focus on better linking local and national REDD+ efforts on five themes, namely: monitoring and measurement; reporting and verification; reference levels; measuring, reporting and verification of safeguards; and benefit sharing.

REDD+ overview

Loss of tropical forests is one of the major causes of GHG emissions, which threatens the world's biodiversity and the livelihoods of the indigenous and the forest dependent communities [1]. Given the importance of tropical forests, several initiatives are being taken to address tropical deforestation and forest degradation. At the international level, the UNFCCC has, since 2005, been negotiating a mechanisms to reduce deforestation and forest degradation in tropical countries (REDD). From the initial idea of just reducing deforestation and forest degradation [2], the scope has since expanded to include the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries [3]. In addition, the UNFCCC introduced considerations of noncarbon benefits when designing and implementing REDD+ activities. One of the key requirements of REDD+ is the establishment of cost-effective, reliable and robust national forest monitoring, and the measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) of the REDD+ climate change mitigation activities in developing countries.

The expanding scope of REDD+, as well as the methodological and technological challenges of monitoring and estimating forest changes and its impact, pose several challenges for the development of REDD+ MRV capacities. Key concerns include: whether REDD+ monitoring

and reporting should focus only on carbon or include other noncarbon benefits, the integration of different implementation scales (from local to international through national and jurisdictional), the ways to link to drivers and benefit sharing, and the accuracy, integrity and legitimacy of the monitoring and MRV process. These issues remain topics of discussion among interested parties, relevant multilateral and donor organizations, scientists, NGOs and other stakeholders.

REDD+ MRV – science solutions to policy challenges workshop

A multistakeholder workshop entitled 'REDD+ MRV – science solutions to policy challenges' was organized by the WWF and Wageningen University from 10th to 12th June 2013 in Zeist, The Netherlands, to discuss and address some of the challenges in developing effective and efficient REDD+ monitoring capacities. The workshop brought together 35 REDD+ experts and practitioners from a variety of sectors, including governments, NGOs, the business communities and policymakers. The purpose of the workshop was to assess the status and development of MRV processes

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against the evolving needs of policymakers, local implementers, donors and the private sector. This article provides a summary of the discussions and outcomes of this workshop. A detailed version of this workshop report is available at the Global Observation for Forest and Land Cover Dynamics land cover project office website [101].

Evolving MRV requirements: gaps & challenges

Based on the presentations made and REDD+ experiences shared among the participants, five key topics were identified for detailed discussion, and identification of gaps and challenges, and setting of key priorities; these were:

- Monitoring and measurement;
- Reporting and verification;
- MRV of safeguards;
- Reference levels;
- Benefit sharing.

Accordingly, five working groups comprising a mix of MRV experts, social and biodiversity specialists, and policymakers were created. The groups were tasked with discussing and reporting on the crucial issues to be addressed and making recommendations.

The monitoring and measurement process was particularly challenged by a lack of commitment from some national governments to move beyond ideas and strategies, and actually implement REDD+ activities. Lack of available data and transparency was also identified as another problem affecting the process. The working group on reporting and verification noted that reporting schemes vary according to REDD+ administrative requirements and donors. Key challenges identified included identification of a proper scale of reporting and verification, limited availability of guidance in the process and gaps in capacity in particular to engage at the sub-national level. The development of MRV safeguards was reported to be challenged by the use of different standards from local to national level implementation, acknowledgement of indigenous people's rights and integration of their knowledge in the MRV process. The working group on reference levels identified the lack of coherence in baseline establishment between the local, subnational and national levels as a key challenge. Considering that reference levels have different objectives depending on the scale at which they are developed, the integration of those different scales appeared to be a major and very topical issue. Finally, the working group on benefit sharing identified technical difficulties in directly linking

measured reductions in deforestation with compensation mechanisms and distribution of benefits among communities, noting also that there are many stakeholders outside the forests who might also need compensation or incentives. The workshop also noted a number of cross-cutting challenges. Scaling up of local to national activities, and vice versa, was identified as one of the most important cross-cutting challenges.

Outcomes: proposed roadmap

Following the group discussions and presentations, the workshop developed a roadmap to assist in dealing with the evolving REDD+ monitoring and MRV requirements, and the identified challenges. Recommendations were made on what to address first, how to approach the issues, when to execute actions and who should be involved in the process. The recommendations made emphasized the need for linking local and national REDD+ MRV activities and deliverables as the single most important issue. Thus, conducting studies, preparing country specific guidance and harmonization of activities were recommended as necessary to bring integrity into the local and national MRV process. The importance of government commitment was recognized as vital for full operation of REDD+. Furthermore, increasing data availability and data sharing mechanisms via portals, as well as sharing of experiences via interactive engagement, were considered crucial for ensuring a robust MRV process.

The recommendations made under the five themes were as follows.

Monitoring & measurement

- Increasing data sharing and availability through establishment of national REDD+ data infrastructures and portals;
- Assuring data harmonization and standardization between inventories made from local to national levels, as well as between organizations;
- Identifying appropriate data extent and resolution required for monitoring purposes;
- Developing the technical human resources to effectively measure the impact of REDD+ activities.

Reporting & verification

- Avoiding confusion in the reporting and verification process by studying and identifying a series of minimum requirements for reporting and verification;



- Preparing country specific documents that are informative of the reporting and verification processes regarding safeguards, reference emission levels (RELS) and benefit sharing;
- Foster interactive exchange and databases both at national and international levels that allows sharing of knowledge and experiences on the MRV process;
- Working on capacity building to effectively report and verify REDD+ activities.

▪ Safeguards

- Conducting a study on 'MRV for safeguards' that can reach governments, project developers, the private sector and other interested parties;
- Conducting a comparative study on safeguard standards that are being used from local to national levels;
- Conducting and sharing of internal studies from WWF regarding on-ground experiences regarding carbon and safeguards.

▪ Reference levels

- Making an inventory of worldwide existing REL proposals from project to national level;
- Performing technical analysis on RELs, focusing on areas where nested REDD+ programs are under development;
- Collecting stakeholders opinion on the issue of RELs different scales combination;
- Identification of compatibilities and incompatibilities of project to national RELs;
- Organizing workshops and side-events during the next COP meeting for communicating the findings of this workshop and acquiring further recommendations on tackling this issue;
- Producing webinars to share experiences on REL establishment and local to national integration.

▪ Benefit sharing

- Preparing a publication on options for a national framework for integrating benefit distribution within REDD+ monitoring;
- Analyzing implementations and testing of cases. For instance, focusing on the experiences of Mexico, Indonesia and Guyana.

Next steps

The participants showed strong commitments to take on these issues as a collaborative effort under the leadership of the WWF–Wageningen University partnership. This partnership will help to bridge research with local and national implementation, and communicate emerging messages at the policy and political level. Furthermore, the outcomes of this workshop are aimed to be further communicated to international policymakers, where it is expected to contribute to current negotiations on REDD+ within the UNFCCC. Furthermore, the evolving requirements and roadmaps indicated are intended to contribute to the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice text [102]. This is expected to provide concrete solutions in tackling REDD+ monitoring and MRV constraints faced by the actors involved in the process.

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