



The New Black Gold:

How Can Carbon Markets Work for Forest Communities?



ONE SKY

The Canadian Institute
of Sustainable Living

ONE SKY
CANADIAN INSTITUTE FOR
SUSTAINABLE LIVING

in partnership with

AFRICAN INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (AIDEN)

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Overview

In Nigeria, there's an emerging sentiment that carbon will be the new "black gold." Not oil this time, but carbon from the forests is now being lauded as the next wave of good fortune for forest villages. Extraction of oil from the Niger Delta has not benefited villages and, in fact, has created even more damage than good. Will the carbon market take villages down this same track of unfulfilled dreams? Or, could the carbon market actually deliver on its potential goals? The key lies in the concept of "free, informed and prior consent".

The future carbon market is being lauded as a possible mechanism for 'leveling the playing field', bringing vulnerable regions some compensation for carbon emissions released elsewhere by more privileged nations. While it could play this type of role, there is no reason it inherently will do so. As such, it is worthwhile to pause, reflect and reorient action.

One carbon market mechanism in particular—the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation, REDD—carries a certain allure. More than one small village in a developing country has shared their dreams with us at One Sky about REDD saving them from poverty and environmental degradation.

Essentially REDD could enable forest communities, some of whom are in the poorest places on the planet, to be paid to conserve and protect their forest resources by companies seeking to off-set their carbon emissions. Could, but not necessarily would. In fact, the whole story presents several disconcerting facts and loop holes, and certainly gives no guarantees that it would inherently operate in a pro-poor manner. That is, the carbon market, like any market, operates on forces that don't tend to value equality or wealth distribution. Most companies are predominantly in the carbon trade for one reason and one reason only: to offset their pollution so that they can buy more time before they have to shift to cleaner technologies. Those companies, therefore, mainly need to know that those forests remain standing. That's it. When this conversation is situated in a pro-poor context, often the response is, "we're not the UN!" Many a REDD project has bailed on Africa entirely, due to the complexities of poverty and sustainability, and 'invested' their carbon offsets on safer soils like Canada.

As a result, many questions remain about how this might actually work to alleviate poverty as well as keep forests standing as carbon sinks for generations to come.

This project examines the REDD mechanism from a pro poor perspective, particularly from the standpoint of local communities. Do local communities understand and appreciate the rules as they have been developed through a distant global discourse? What are the minimum standards that forest villages would need to see in place to further engage? These are among the questions we asked in the villages of Cross River State, Nigeria.



Ekuri Research Team (from Left to Right): Etim Omini, Chief Edwin Ogar, David Cicerchi, Rose Egut, Dr. Oliver Ngodo

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Research Team

Our combined Canadian-Nigerian research team included people from One Sky and The African Integral Development Network.

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Background and Justification

The global discourse on sustainability often results in conventions and protocols that then must be interpreted at a local scale.

The REDD process in Cross River State, Nigeria is an excellent example of an unfolding process that local communities are seeking to understand and apply. The focus of this study included Cross River State (CRS), Nigeria, as well as Canadian stakeholders involved in carbon market conservation strategies. Over the past 10 years, forest communities in CRS have experimented with a series of innovative forest conservation strategies, such as Forest Management Committee structures, WWF buffer zone concepts, and community-based forestry planning. One Sky has been involved in the region using Ecosystem Based Management (EBM). The state is now seriously looking to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) as another possible strategy for forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods. The REDD process in CRS has met with strong support from the state forestry commission and is opening up a unique opportunity for civil society and

government to work together. In March 2011 the Nigerian REDD Readiness proposal to the U.N. was given preliminary approval and formally approved in October, 2011. Local community understanding, however, is limited and many questions remain on how the REDD process will work. Understanding how this process unfolds, its potential and pitfalls, is extremely useful to Canadian non-governmental organizations such as One Sky that also work with partners in Peru or other countries regarding the REDD mechanism.

REDD presents extensive and complex issues, which are far from solved and will see many studies once approved. Moreover, we realize that given that the REDD rules are pretty much set already there are barriers at this point to civil society for influencing the process meaningfully. Nevertheless, One Sky sees that there remains a need to work with local forest communities to better understand the mechanism, particularly on how the REDD could be used or interpreted as a pro-poor development strategy. We hope to document with forest communities what are (from the community perspective) the minimum set of rules (minimum payments, distribution of payments, length of the contracts, etc.) that any REDD scheme

MUST have in order to be effective in enhancing the livelihoods of poor communities that are using forest resources in that part of the globe.

Unanswered questions persist about how to balance local people's needs for sustainable livelihoods with the global need for carbon sinks and private sector interest to offset carbon emissions. The emerging carbon market runs the same risks as any other market, namely that it operates for financial gain often at the expense of those least fortunate and most vulnerable to multiple stressors. While there may not be too many evident avenues for civil society to influence this toward greater equity and sustainability, nevertheless the need remains to collect and share communities' voices on the matter. This is relevant across the developing world, as well as in forest communities in Canada, many of whom are the least fortunate in the country, such as rural, northern, and indigenous communities. This project combines the efforts of Canadian civil society and Nigerian communities to better understand how communities can use the REDD process to further environmental sustainability in forest dependent communities.



Deforestation remains the central threat for these forests and the local economies they support

Project Objectives

General objective:

- To examine and document with forest communities what they understand to be the minimum set of rules that any REDD scheme must have in order to be effective in enhancing the livelihoods of poor communities that are using forest resources in Nigeria.

Specific objectives:

- To assess knowledge gaps among community residents and leaders about carbon trading for avoided deforestation to better orient capacity building.
- To foster knowledge sharing between communities in Nigeria and Canada via creating an online community of practice through which to share and disseminate results.

Methodology

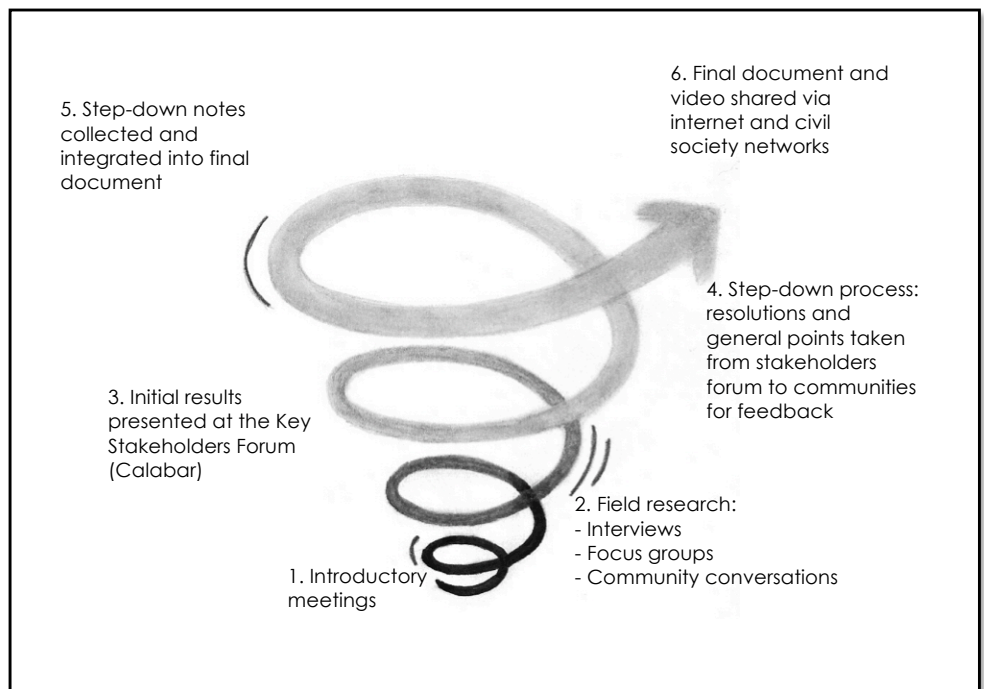
On the whole, this project used action research—research that gathers information for the use of forest communities in Nigeria in understanding the REDD mechanism better in managing their forest resources, as well as to share the results of action research with other communities elsewhere, including Canada. The methods were selected with this in mind, and operated in an upward spiral of knowledge generation (see box this page).

1. Introductory Meetings

Prior to engaging in the research there was a site visit/sensitization team visit to each community to meet in the traditional manner with the chiefs, explain the research and address ethical questions and issues regarding intellectual property rights, access to information and the sharing of results. A signed letter of understanding was distributed to the key authorities, discussed and ratified before any further research was done.

These preliminary activities also included a literature review, public engagement, and capacity building on the topic of REDD. These activities included:

- Participated in two-day National Consultation on REDD among civil society actors in Ottawa, Ontario. Liaised with other Canadian NGOs on the issue.
- Participated with CUSO, Canada in looking at REDD potential in Peru.
- Completed online literature research and hard copied and delivered documents to Nigeria for the research team.
- Traveled to Nigeria met with NGO leaders in Lagos at the Nigerian Conservation



Foundation headquarters regarding REDD in CRS and other states in Nigeria. Met with National Focal Point for REDD in Abuja

- Met with Forestry Commissioner in Calabar three times
- Presented Project at VSO NGO meeting in Abuja, Nigeria
- Research team travelled to complete sensitization meeting with chiefs in each of the three communities. Completed photo documentation of site visits. Completed video documentation and initial interview from site visits.
- Held training workshop for AIDEN researchers regarding research methodology and participatory research methods. Contributed to building local capacity for action research as well as regarding REDD.
- Set up a facebook page for participants and online community. Used online community to promote the selection of NGOCE as African Representative for UN-REDD Policy Board. Completed solar connection so that there was consistent power and internet at the One Sky office for researchers.

2. Field Research

Community conversations:

Community conversations methodology was the backbone of the project. The issue of carbon market mechanisms for forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods was taken up with forest communities. Community conversations, which is part of UNDP's Community Capacity Enhancement methodology, is used by other civil society groups like the Nelson Mandela Foundation. It is explained that, "the aim of community

conversations is to help communities identify the underlying causes of the problems they face and create their own sustainable solutions." Using this as a research methodology, while one researcher facilitated the discussion, the other researcher noted central themes that arose in the discussion, not only to ensure that any misunderstandings, awkward or difficult questions, or areas of conflict are surfaced and brought into the focus group discussions (see below), but also to assess knowledge gaps for capacity building on REDD. A third note taker backed this process up, to ensure consistency in the research results. Since some villagers and leaders in forest communities do not fully understand the ethical and equity implications of REDD, these community conversations became an important venue to ask and examine questions relating to the avoided deforestation mechanism, as well as a method to assess knowledge gaps.

Community-wide focus groups:

The research team designed and delivered three focus groups in five forest communities in Cross River State, taking into account illiteracy, gender perspectives and practices and local language, to better understand current views and understanding of terminology, lexicon, and conceptual understanding of key subjects regarding climate change and REDD. These community wide focus groups were oriented around the central issue of whether and how REDD can be carried out in a pro-poor manner. They oriented around the central question of: what are the minimum set of rules that any REDD scheme MUST have in order to be effective in enhancing the livelihoods of poor communities

that are using forest resources. Focus groups were held with three main target groups in the communities, namely, youth, women, and community leaders, to ensure that everyone's perspectives are included. Although we had existing relations with the communities already the idea in this first stage was to approach the communities specifically about the research project, its objectives and explain clearly how the outcomes are to be used and shared. A final focus group was held as a 'town hall meeting' in keeping with traditional village meetings. This included the community as a whole and the chiefs and council.

Key Informant Interviews:

Three researchers randomly selected key informants in the forest communities using a 'transect walk' and conducted a sample of interviews (23 in Okokokori and New Ekuri: 23 in Abu Police and Buanchor; and 17 in Akwa Esuk Eyamba). These interviews provided a more intimate space for gathering community perspectives, for clarifying components and probing deeper into the complexities of issues. These became key components of the research findings, as they provided 'thick descriptions' regarding climate change awareness, carbon market possibilities, and REDD in particular. They were in-depth interviews, mixing both qualitative and quantitative data. Each interview was prepared and compiled for review and analysis.

3. Stakeholders Forum

A stakeholders forum was held in Calabar with key representatives from communities and organizations. With over 40 people present, the participation was diverse and covered many of the different perspectives involved in this issue. At this meeting, villagers and community leaders shared the results of the project, articulating the key needs that any REDD must have to proceed in a pro-poor way. The results were presented to date and the group discussed general points regarding the minimum set of rules and conditions that would need to be present for communities to be involved in pro-poor REDD, and a list of resolutions was decided upon. Government officials at the Forest Commission, such as Odigha Odigha (forestry commissioner), as well as directors of other environmental NGOs were invited to participate. This stage was useful in two ways: it was important to refine the knowledge gathered in communities, highlighting the most critical components, and second, it was important for other officials and people advocating for REDD to directly hear the communities' perspectives on pro-poor REDD.

4. Step-down Process

Community representatives took the highlights of the stakeholders forum back into their communities in a step-down process whereby more feedback was solicited from communities. This was a key part of the research, to check findings and ensure that the communities' message was well-documented in the overall findings.

5. Community Feedback Integrated

This last round of community feedback was integrated into the overall projects' results and included in the documentation.

6. Sharing Results - Online Community of Practice:

One Sky attempted to introduce the idea of an online community of practice as a way to assist Nigerians in sharing their lessons learned and disseminating the results of the action research with Canadian communities and organizations. Since deforestation and climate change are global issues, increasingly we need ways to communicate about them across borders. This is particularly the case with REDD, since last year environment Canada granted several million dollars of funding to Forest Canada to work on REDD projects. Such initiatives in Canada could learn from these processes with Nigerian communities. Our efforts included creating an internet-based communication platform, setting up small internet facility for community use (with one laptop and internet connection via cell-phone) at the One Sky office, as well as a list of nearby internet cafes in or near the participating forest communities. Our intention was to create a vehicle for sharing knowledge, as well as a capacity building exercise with villagers in forest communities. Through learning how to participate in discussion on the internet, the world of communication and information opens to them. In the online community of practice, results will be presented for discussion, examination, and revision.

However, the project found that the challenges of this, given the development indicators in Nigeria such that electricity, transportation systems and communication technology is limited, was prohibitive to reasonably expect people to travel to the nearest urban centres, often involving hours walking through the forest. Some people can and have used these resources, but they are in the elite and are not the majority. There remains a need to examine and pilot other ways for North-South communication.

In the meantime, efforts to disseminate results included sharing online and actually physically taking documents back to communities.

Communities

Five rainforest communities in the Ekuri and Mbe Mountain regions, and two mangrove communities were included in the scope of research:

Ekuri:

Okokori (pop. 500)
New Ekuri (pop. 500)

Mbe Mountain:

Buanchor (pop. 10,000)
Abu Police (pop. 5,000)

Mangroves:

Akwa Esuk Eyamba (pop. 200)
Esuk Mba (pop. 400)

There were some key differences between communities, which will become more important in REDD conversations. First of all, the Ekuri communities are small and relatively unified, so REDD negotiations would benefit from this community cohesion and may be quicker. The Mbe communities are larger, more connected with the outside, and have had significant experience with NGOs, which may indicate more people with technical knowledge and capacity for REDD, but could lead to more complex negotiations. The Mangroves communities rely less on the forest, so they may be more flexible with agreements.

Factors that will affect particular village negotiations:

- Size of the community will dictate the complexity of incentives
- Degree of community cohesion will determine whether an agreement is binding on its community members and will succeed
- Strength of the local governing structures (i.e. traditional rule) will determine effectiveness in enforcement of rules
- Number of other villages within or surrounding a community who are linked to the forest will determine the risk of conflict and cost of mediating conflicts.



Results

In the following section we report on the field research data from the community conversations, focus groups, and key-informant interviews in the forest communities (Ekuri, Mbe Mountain, and Mangroves). The main themes include: 1. climate change awareness, 2. carbon credits/REDD awareness, and 3. minimum set of rules and conditions for REDD.

Following this, a discussion will weave together the main themes and discuss the findings within the context of the larger research topic.

Interviews

Ekuri Communities (Okokori and New Ekuri):

Climate Change Awareness

Although they have noticed ecological changes that are likely due to climate change, community members do not have an accurate understanding of what Climate change is.

Ekuri: 17% of respondents could define climate change, while the rest did not know.

Ekuri: 83% did not know whether there is a connection between the forests and the weather, while 9% said yes, and 4% said no.

Ekuri: 95% did not know how the forests affect climate change, while 5% said that they absorb carbon and contribute oxygen.

Ekuri: 100% said that CC will affect their community, and all of them pointed to low farm productivity. Others included food insecurity, higher poverty, cost of labor, and diseases.

Carbon Credits/REDD Awareness.

Many people in these two communities correctly understand the term Carbon credit, but do not understand the REDD program or its implications. A few key people in the community may know about REDD, such as chiefs or members of the Ekuri Initiative, but it is not generalized.

Ekuri: 100% of respondents have heard of carbon credits and 91% correctly defined the term.

Of all the communities in the study, only 13% of respondents had heard of REDD, all of them being from Akwa Esuk Eyamba.

The people are particularly interested in capacity building related to these issues.

New Ekuri Elders focus group stated this request.

100% said that they need capacity-building on REDD and carbon credit.

Minimum Set of Rules & Conditions for REDD

The community can establish and create the proper laws to protect the forest, with support from government, through the Forest Management Committee.

Ekuri: 82% responded that communal law and enforcement are required to ensure forests are conserved.

From plenary meetings: The conservation of the forests enable the forests to absorb carbon and release of oxygen for human survival; protection of streams and wildlife to ensure a balanced ecosystem, and strengthens sources of livelihoods.

People rely on the forest for income, and have little knowledge or skills for alternative livelihoods. They know that their community is threatened by pressure on the forest (from logging) and the farmland (from increasing access to markets), but they seem to be unclear as to what to do about it.

Ekuri 100% of respondents stated that the "community" earns money through the registration fees from dealers of NTFPs and farm products.

Ekuri: 100% said that their forest is decreasing, mostly due to farming and population growth.

Ekuri: 87% believed that skills development would be alternative to taking things out of the forest, while 26% said farming, 22% said employment opportunities, 4% said direct payments.

The Ekuri and Okokori communities depend heavily on the non-timber forest products, and the REDD program should not restrict them from this. Since they depend on this diminishing resource, however, they should be adequately supported in sustainable management of NTFPs and the transition to alternative sources of income.

The women and youth focus groups required that they not be restricted from gathering NTFPs. In Ekuri, 100% stated that the "community" earns money through the registration fees from dealers of NTFPs and farm products.

78% of respondents noted that in the past 10 years, there has been a reduction in NTFPs, and 48% said that rainfall has been irregular or unstable.

The people are clear that there should be a distribution of benefits across government, community and individuals: The government should get a small percentage (less than 15%), and the community should be empowered through a committee to give scholarships, undertake projects and support local business activities, as well as make yearly deposits into individual accounts.

Ekuri: 96% said that the community or the Ekuri Initiative would receive and manage the money

Ekuri: 48% responded with an emphasis on community distribution as a

whole versus individual distribution. 9% mentioned the individual.

A fundamental concern to be addressed is land tenure and financial management mechanisms. The government should undertake a process of property rights formalization. To eliminate inter-community conflict, surrounding communities should be informed of this process so that their own land is registered in a central management system. Additionally, the communities involved with REDD should set up REDD Management Committees with equal representation of chiefs, women and youths. A clear governing process should be developed and established. Communities must demonstrate that these structures are in place in order to proceed with the REDD process.

Ekuri: 100% of respondents stated that there are rules for the use of the forest.

Ekuri: 76% stated that the community makes the rules, whereas 59% stated that the Ekuri Initiative makes rules in collaboration with the community.

Ekuri: 26% believe that there is currently a dispute with Edondon or Iko Esaid. 74% said that there was a dispute with Iko Esai or Edondon but was resolved through compelling facts by community leaders.

Ekuri: 100% said that their forest is decreasing, mostly due to farming and population growth.

Since the people lack knowledge and awareness of REDD and have low technical capacity on alternative livelihoods, the government should be tasked with the goal of systematically raising awareness and training on alternatives to NTFP as a means of livelihood.

They are relatively disconnected due to poor roads and distance from city centers, so part of the funding should go into modern ICT infrastructure which would at least connect them with information from around the world. This can provide an ongoing and decentralized source of consciousness-raising, as the people can quickly begin to educate

themselves, spontaneously filling in any gaps in any externally driven training programs.

Ekuri: 70% said that they don't know, whereas 74% pointed to Ikom as the location of the internet, and that between 0-10 people from the community use it.

The more money allocated to government without specific and highly controlled results-based activities, then the more money will go into consultation fees with little effect on the general population. However, if the money were to purely go to the community, they may not have the capacity to choose wisely the methods of awareness-creation. A solution may be a demand-driven training program, where the communities themselves are in control of training contracts. In other words, there could be money allocated to the community for the

the community, so that they take responsibility for its use. Since these communities have an interest in managing its money efficiently so as to make it available to as many members as possible, it would have an incentive to demand the highest quality training available from government and contracted CSO's.

The people see that their forest is decreasing due to human pressure, yet there is a desire to complete their road to the community. The pressure on the forest, then, will only increase when the road is fully constructed. To reduce this pressure, the community should have enough capacity and awareness on REDD and alternative livelihoods, and community-members should be clearly earning enough income to reduce the need to increase farming activities.



Looking over forest and land-use maps with chiefs and decision-makers.

specific purpose of trainings, and NGOs will compete to receive contracts based on performance. A clear link between awareness-creation and forest protection/alternative livelihoods must be made. In other words, the community itself can make specific requests for trainings to the government (i.e. forest governance, animal husbandry, entrepreneurship), but any money for micro-credit or small grants should be managed by

Mbe Mountain Communities (Buanchor and Abu Police):

Climate Change Awareness.

Community members are observing patterns of change in the climate, and many of them are making connections to so-called climate change. However, a more comprehensive and scientific understanding of

*"Although many villagers don't understand the connection between the forests and the climate, and nor do people understand the scientific reasons for climate change, every person interviewed in Ekuri said that **climate change will affect their community**. All of them pointed to low farm productivity, and others included food insecurity, higher poverty, cost of labor, and diseases."*

climate change could be received here. Note that since doing the research the community was devastated by a major flooding event which displaced over 10,000 people in the area and caused a mudslide that wiped out a 2km area in an unprecedented climate event.

Mbe: 48% reported unstable or unpredictable rainfall patterns, 48% said that streams have been drying up.

Mbe: 17% did not know whether there is a connection between the trees and the weather. 65% said yes, but either did not explain why or describe the effects of the weather on the forest. Only 9% described the forest's effect on the weather or alluded to climate change.

Mbe: 26% correctly defined Climate Change as a change in weather patterns or climate instability, while 70% described it in terms of inconsistent or unstable rainfall. 1 person did not know.

Carbon Credits/REDD Awareness

These communities have been told by outsiders (government, travelers, NGOs) about carbon credits for some time now, but are confused as to why there is a delay in its commencement.

Mbe: 52% had not heard of carbon credits. Of the 48% of respondents who have heard of Carbon Credits, responses included that they have been told that money would come but they don't know how, or it is delayed.

Minimum Set of Rules & Conditions for REDD.

While these communities also depend on the rainforest and agriculture for their livelihood, they differed from Okokori and New Ekuri mostly due to their size and access to roads and larger cities. Abu Police and Buanchor also are much larger communities, anywhere from 6-10 times larger than the previous communities (depending on estimates). This situation makes equal individual payments to community-members less feasible, as the payments may be very small and therefore insufficient to incentivize forest conservation.

Mbe 43% would demand enough to meet their/families' needs. 17% would demand depending on negotiations and valuation of trees. 52% demanded arbitrary amounts,

ranging from as little as 100,000 to 500,000/month for each person, to 200 billion naira.

Also, the Buanchor community is actually made up of three small communities, each with their own chief. This creates the need to consider rivalry and village unity among the separate villages. Would the REDD committee be comprised of members of each village? Who has the popular authority to influence the people: the community chairman or the village heads?

Not all community members will readily transition to "alternative livelihood" projects, and rather are more suitable for employment opportunities by larger institutions. In order to properly incentivize the community-members to protect the forest, awareness-creation campaigns and direct payments may not be feasible nor sufficient. Also, while important, mere scholarships or alternative livelihoods projects wouldn't suffice either, as most of the community-members would not directly benefit. In such a case, it may be ideal to attract investments of large-scale industries to add value to broad-based alternative livelihood projects (indeed this was requested by community-members).

In Mbe, in order to ensure that the forest is protected, 61% would require alternative sources of livelihoods, while only 17% said communal laws. As good alternatives to using the forest, 48% said employment opportunities, while 22% said direct payment, and 13% said farming.

All three focus groups (men, women, and youth) in Abu Police, and the women focus group in Buanchor said that industries should be set up for employment of their people.

For example, ecotourism companies may be given tax-free incentives (among others) to set up operations in the community. This industry, if properly designed and guided, has the potential to raise awareness of forest conservation and incentivize community-members to protect their forest. It would hire path-construction employees, tour guides, drivers, and even marketers. A large influx of tourists, properly guided in ecological tourism principles, can support the economy and offer opportunities for healthy international exchange.

Another industry could utilize locally grown organic produce for processing, packaging, and international exportation. Organic fruits are highly valued in North America and Europe. If companies are given a supportive legal environment and transparent social context in which to invest, the land in this community can be managed sustainably by trained farmers and provide jobs for non-farmers.

The purpose of attracting large-scale value-added eco-industries to these communities is to ensure the benefits of REDD are most broadly shared to promote conservation and income generation in such a large community. This underlines the importance of scale in the REDD process: Communities with larger populations must have a more complex system for ensuring more people's needs are met.



Signing agreements with the chiefs on the research process and protocol.

Mangrove Communities (Akwa Esuk Eyamba and Esuk Mba):

Climate Change awareness.

Community members appear to be noticing ecological changes associated with climate change, but they are not aware that they are indeed due to climate change. Some community members interpret these changes through their christian beliefs.

Mangroves: In the past 10 years, 41% noted a variation in rainfall patterns. 35% said that streams are getting smaller.

Mangroves: 53% said yes, that there is a relationship between the weather and the forests, but either did not explain why or describe the effects of the weather on the forest, 35% did not know, 6% said no, and 6% said that the forests make the environment cool.

Mangroves: 47% vaguely explained changing weather or rainfall, while 29% attributed a change in weather due to God's handiwork, wickedness in the world, or the end of the world. And 12% correctly described climate change as a change of weather patterns over time or instability of weather patterns.

Carbon Credit/REDD awareness.

Akwa Esuk Eyamba is the only community where some of the respondents knew about REDD.

Mangroves: 94% Have not heard of Carbon credits. 6% heard but does not understand.

Only 5% had heard of REDD, all of them being from Akwa Esuk Eyamba.

Mangroves: 71% did not know. 12% correctly described the connection to carbon, and 12% understood that there is an effect but could not correctly explain what it is.

Mangroves: 65% Said that CC will affect their community, where 24% pointed to farming irregularities.

Minimum Set of Rules and Conditions for REDD.

The communities in the mangroves are not as forest-dependent as other

communities. They earn income from fishing, and do not claim to derive much direct benefit from the forest (although without the forest, of course the fisheries would be affected).

The large-group community meeting stated that they receive "no benefit" from the forest

Land tenure would have to be adequately addressed, as this community does not have much land or buys/leases from other communities. There appears to be a neutral relationship with surrounding communities, and the community believes that its forest is actually increasing.

Mangroves: 71% emphasized individual or private ownership

Mangroves: 6% said that there will be a dispute with the Efuts when they encroach, 12% said that there was a dispute but it was resolved, and 82% said that there is no dispute.

Mangroves: 35% said that the forest is decreasing, due to cutting mangroves and nepa palm, 53% said that it is increasing, and 18% said that it is the same.

The community does not have access to knowledge regarding the international market of carbon. Internet training and access, as well as education on the meaning of carbon would allow the communities to more accurately and reasonably negotiate their demands amidst the ongoing fluctuation in prices.

Mangroves: (plenary) They will like to give the government for conservation, but will not sell it out. Government will pay yearly for conserving the forest

Regarding amount to demand from traders, 65% did not know how much to demand. 24% would demand arbitrary amounts, ranging from 1000/tree to 200 billion per year

Illicit activities in the community (like diesel bunkering) may pose a challenge to creating an equitable, effective, and functional REDD agreement. The community of Esuk Mba appears to have disregarded their traditional ruling structure and instead yielded to a small group of highly influential and apparently wealthy men, known as the "community management committee". Any REDD agreement that is approved by the community could be highly influenced in favor of the bunkering business rather than in favor of community development.

Researchers were unable to undergo focus group discussions or the large group plenary meeting because a committee prevented this from occurring, warning of "resistance" by community groups. Also, during and after a meeting with the "community management committee", the project coordinator was physically threatened by young intoxicated men thought to be security guards for those involved in bunkering.

These communities are very small, and their members often reside in Calabar or are from different states. Following the threats a letter was written to the local chiefs and the research team withdrew from the local area.



Receiving the chief's blessing
on the research project.

EMERGING QUESTIONS

Questions that arose in interviews for discussion at the regional meeting.

- 1.What strategies can ensure that the knowledge and understanding on REDD/Carbon Credits/Carbon Trading become wide-spread in the communities?
- 2.What can be done to reduce conflicts over land use and property rights between villages?
- 3.With regards to trainings and capacity-building, who should be responsible for contracting and undertaking these activities? The community? A committee? The Forestry Commission? Civil Society Organizations?
- 4.What ways can the government attract successful ecological industries into the communities?
- 5.Will it benefit the community more in the long run to invite companies and large industries to hire employees from the community, or to offer the community micro-loans and small-business development training?
- 6.If a community REDD committee were set up, how should that committee be structured so as to ensure that the benefits of REDD promote wide-spread and equitable community development? How do you reduce the risk that the committee turns into a source to leverage funds for personal gain? What specific rules should be imposed on the committee?
- 7.Are there opportunities for an ecotourism industry in your community? If so, what specific activities could your community provide for the tourist who is interested in rainforest ecology?
- 8.Do the community farmers use pesticides, chemical fertilizers, or any other additive in their agricultural production? Have modern organic farming techniques been considered?
- 9.In order to attract outside companies to invest in your community (for example to buy your bananas for export), they require transparent and reliable financial systems. How can you support and enforce such social norms?
- 10.What is your community's experience with outsiders, in particular foreigners? Would foreign companies, NGOs, and consultants be welcomed in your community in order to set up businesses or facilitate trainings?



Sun-setting over the rainforests of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Community Conversations

Forest Size and Governance

All five communities have adjoining forests that vary in size, from 33,600 Ha in Okokori and 70,000 Ha in Ekuri, to unknown large sizes in the other three regions. The land is roughly divided into a section for farm land, a section of virgin forest (within with non-timber forest products can be retrieved), and a section of regenerating forest (recovering from previous use).

The rules for governing these forests varies between communities. In Okokori it is via the Forest Management Committee, in Ekuri it is through the Ekuri community preliminary land use plan; harvesting of NTFPs on a sustainable manner and payment of fine in default. In Abu Police, it appears that there is an implicit governance system that is watched over by the community whereby community members do not farm in protected areas and people who are not members of the community cannot use the forest. In Buanchor there is no formalized ways of governing the forest, and Akwa Esuk Eyamba the village head gives permission to use the forest.

Conservation and Forest Livelihoods

Interest in conserving the forest varies in complexity between communities. In Okokori and Ekuri, there are sophisticated descriptions of why conservation is important, "The conservation of forests enables the forest to absorb carbon and release of oxygen for human survival; protection streams and wildlife to ensure a balanced ecosystem" and "The community opinion on conservation is high as its strengthen sources of livelihoods. Other communities have a general sense of conservation being a positive thing, but the reasons why were less clearly given.

Four of the five communities explained how they directly benefit from the forest, predominantly through non-timber forest products, like cocoa, banana, bush mango, plantain, and more. Others gain income from the farm products on cultivated land, as well as from levies, gate fees, donations and grants relating to the forest.

Even with conservation efforts, most communities agreed that the forest is decreasing in size and diversity due to population growth, farming and logging.

Natural Disasters and Climate Change

All the communities had experienced a natural disaster within the last 10 years: five reported windstorms, which came with an associated landslide, and one reported flooding and erosion. All have witnessed their forest streams slowly drying up over the past 10 years, as well as irregular rainfall. Some communities have noticed lower quantities of NTFP and lower biodiversity. As previously noted a phenomenal climate event devastated the Affi Mountain communities and displaced an estimated 10,000 people.

Although the specific links between the forest and the climate were not well understood by any of the communities, all the communities clearly reported that climate change is occurring and is having

deleterious effects on their livelihoods and environment. Okokori explained, "climate change causes low farm productivity, food insecurity, poverty." Ekuri elaborated, "climate change results in high cost of farm labour, scorching of farm products due drought, low farm productivity, poverty and food insecurity." Abu Police made the link between the climate changing and human activities by saying, "Yes climate change affects us negatively and will continue to affect us negatively especially if we do indiscriminate bush burning and cutting of trees." In all communities, one of the biggest concerns regarding climate change is its effect on rainfall. Rains are erratic and irregular, which disrupt planting cycles and cause erosion of topsoil.

Value of Carbon and REDD

None of the communities had a clear sense of the value of a single tree nor the value in carbon. However, the sentiment across all communities was that the REDD mechanism would positively benefit the community. As a source of income, REDD is seen to be a way to invest in education, youth training, skills development all contributing to strengthening community development. There was also a shared sentiment that this would assist in protecting ecosystem services. Along with this shared sense of the positive benefits of REDD was a common lack of clarity on how REDD would actually manage to deliver on all this. Some communities spoke of this being guided by God, and that if it were to come to pass, it would come to pass.

Rules or Conditions for REDD

Each community was asked: "Are there any particular rules or conditions that you would want the carbon trader to obey in order to buy the carbon from your trees for sale on the international market?" Okokori explained in detail, "Yes. 1. Not to carry out any activity in our forest unless a concrete agreement is made with us. And, 2. Both party must agreed on area set for REDD activities. The agreement should be renewable, and benefit sharing should be fair and equitable. Ekuri community explained, "Yes. Any international and local rules set up by us should be obeyed by the carbon trader. Also, we should be allowed to pick NTFPs in the forest unhindered and maintain our tradition and culture that are wholly depended on the forest. Abu Police gave the example of the Mbep Mountain, "Like the Mbep mountain nobody enters there." Buanchor explained, "Our set of rules will include: Firstly we will want our youths to be trained on how to measure carbon. All our families must be compensated. They should give us good road access. Sustainable alternatives to livelihood options

should be made available for us. Health centers be provided for us. They should establish for us factories and industries to boost employment for our youths. And our women be given a cassava processing machine. All of us from 3yrs old should be place on a monthly salary." Finally, Akwa Esuk Eyamba community explained, "Yes. Before anybody comes, they must have to obey the community. They have to limit themselves to what the community ask them to do. The community may ask them to pay money before they can do anything."



Reliance on non-timber forest products, in this case, the aquatic resources of the mangroves.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with elders, women and youth to attempt at a balanced view of the issues. These special groups in the community tend to have unique perspectives that are important to include. The following three questions were asked, and a summary of responses follow:

1. Please explain your understanding of Climate change and global warming (process, causes, effects)
2. Please explain your understanding of carbon credits and the REDD mechanism (origin, process, effects on the community)(if there were any significant gaps in their knowledge, the facilitator was sure to fill them in clearly and explain how the REDD mechanism will work)
3. What is the minimum set of rules that you would require before agreeing to trade carbon credits from your community?

Elders

Similar to other findings, the scientific process of global warming was not well understood at all, although everyone had noticed changes in the weather patterns over time. "The process and causes of climate change and global warming are unknown to us but we now experience unstable rainfall and intense heat."

The REDD mechanism was something unclear to most, although some have heard about carbon credits and can see the potential for it.

In terms of the minimum set of rules that would need to be in place, 2 out of the 5 communities mentioned capacity-building on REDD, 2 out of the 5 mentioned scholarships. Also mentioned basic amenities, infrastructure, employment opportunities, alternative livelihoods. 1 of the 5 communities mentioned the importance of leaving part of the forest open to exploitation by the community.

Women

Women in 3 out of the 5 communities reported that scholarships are an important minimum set of conditions for engaging in REDD. Two out of the 5 communities report that companies should enter the community and employ the people and that payments should be made at the individual household level (not for the general community due to the potential for corruption and inequality of dispersing the funds). Others emphasized that the collection of NTFPs and electricity production should be allowed.

It was important to hold the focus group with the women alone to hear their perspectives. Although parts of the discussion were quite limited, and the women explained, "As women we don't have what to say we depend on our men." However, women in each location emphasized the need for their access to the forest to collect NTFP and also stressed the importance of scholarships and education for women. This alone adds an important perspective to the overall findings.

Youth

In the focus groups with youth, it was found that 3 out of the 5 communities knew about Climate Change, and 2 out of five understood about Carbon Credits. However, none knew about REDD as a possible mechanism.

Youth in two of the five communities spoke about how a possible REDD would need to permit youth to use NTFPs and spoke about the requirement of salaries and investing in hospitals. Others included that the forest should be leased instead of sold, youths should learn how to measure carbon, industries should employ youth, roads and water should be guaranteed, and consultations should be required and under review over time.

Do you have any questions for us?

These are actual questions that have been transcribed. The number to the right indicates the number of times such a question was asked).

- How will carbon credit involve the women in the community and how sure that the men will not take all the money? (x3)
- How will carbon credit involve the children? (x2)
- How will carbon credit involve everybody and will there be equity in benefit sharing? (x2)
- When will payment for Carbon Credit commence (x2)
- How will REDD involve everybody in the community and will government not take all the money emanating from our forest leaving us in further penury?
- How will be everybody be involved on carbon credit and
- Will the community still have access to their forest? (x2)
- How do we engage in our farm activities now that they are asking us not to cut down the forest and farm?. (x2)
- What will happen to those who have been farming in the forest? (x2)
- What happens when the international community fails to pay for the carbon? (x2)
- What is the value of a tree and how can carbon be quantified in a standing tree? What is internet and it uses?
- Will REDD or carbon credit allow us practice our culture as we solely depend on the forest for our cultural need?
- Is it possible to learn about the Internet
- If they come and survey the forest and we are not well treated what will we do?
- What does the REDD program have as a package for an alternative livelihood to keep the trees standing?

Do you have any other comments or things that you want the world to know?

Okokori and Ekuri

- All 23/23 said that they need capacity-building on REDD and carbon credits.
- Other comments on capacity building needs: skills development on sustainable forest management, free, prior and informed consent
- We have vast forest which we have conserved and need payment for the standing forest;

Abu Police & Buanchor

- One, we have stopped clearing our forest. We are telling the world that they should not allow us to die of poverty and hunger. We need roads (x2), We need free education. We need equipment and staffs in our health centers
- Abo/Buanchor needs a school (x3), government has forgotten us and good source of drinking water
- The world should know that we have a very large rain forest that has not been depleted (x2)
- We don't have [cell phone] network [let alone internet], we are cut off from the outside world, we renovate our school ourselves, no empowerment, Government does not take care of us
- What I will want the world to know is that we need internet, the community donates money to put infrastructures
- Lack of cell phone network and bad road is killing the tourism potentials of the community
- We want the world to know that this part of the world is blessed with forest that absorbs carbon and also promote tourism
- No employment opportunities
- Without the forest we will not survive
- They should ensure the train some of our children to be able to measure carbon *The should be very careful not to put the money in one persons hand because money brings problems.
- The world should know that Buanchor has the highest forest in Cross River State
- Buanchor is a region that doesn't kill or destroy its forest and we welcome strangers
- If the world likes the forest of Buanchor they should come to our aid because we don't have access road, they should improve our life style
- That Buanchor has a big forest; we have the Drill Ranch and Afi mountain wildlife sanitarium
- We are people who have suffered for birth from absence of good roads, communication, poor educational facilities and health
- Our concern is that we are expecting the carbon credit as we have desisted from harvesting our forest
- How long shall we wait for these carbon credit you all are telling us about?

Esuk Mba & Akwa Esuk Eyamba

- We have no good road (x5)
- We need employment hospitals schools (x2)
- We are very badly cheated in this part of the world.
- things are very expensive
- The world should know that we have been filling forms but the real thing has not reached us.
- I have nothing to sustain me live a good life.
- The world should know that there is no factory/industry. There should be industries to engage our children.

If you were given money to protect ALL of your forests and NOT cut down any trees (through the REDD process), would you be able to achieve this?a.

18 out of a total 63 interviewees said NO 45/63 said YES for achieving forest protection through REDD

What would you do in order to ensure the forest stays standing?

Ekuri 19 of 23 interviewees responded with communal law and enforcement to ensure forests are conserved

Mbe 14 of 23 interviewees would require alternative sources of livelihoods, while only 4 out of 23 said communal laws

Mangroves: 10 of 17 interviewees required communal law and enforcement to protect the forests

Stakeholder Forum

Approximately 30 participants gathered in the One Sky office in Calabar on April 23rd 2012 for a Stakeholders Forum Regional Meeting on the minimum set of rules and conditions to be included in any REDD agreement, from the perspective of the forest communities. Participants represented all the communities involved in the research, as well as several NGOs involved in this issue.

Results of the research were presented for discussion. Then, a long discussion ensued on a generalized minimum set of rules and conditions should be included in any REDD agreement to maximize incentives for conservation and promotion of community benefits (see side bar this page).

Finally, a list of resolutions were passed by everyone present at this meeting (see below).

These results were written up and distributed to the community representatives who then carried out a 'step-down' process in their communities, further soliciting reactions, reflections and feedback on what came out of this stakeholders forum.

Resolutions of Stakeholder Regional Meeting

Government is too slow to enforce conservation and should be responsive

Awareness should be strengthened in the communities to 'ginger' them and government to be more active at conserving the forests

Government should provide enabling environment for conservation throughout the State

Communities should establish Community Forest Association in line with the new forest laws of the State

Network of all forest communities should be formed to harmonize all forest activities

REDD should be managed properly to avoid "land-grabbing"

Communities should be involved more, and give their own consent, instead of the government.

Government should link up with international bodies for interventions in communities.

Government should meet with the communities from time to time to establish effective working relationship.

Community land use management plan is necessary to ensure forest conservation

Carbon, biodiversity, watersheds, agro-forestry and landscape are ecosystem services for payment in the State.

"Community champions" could learn this and communicate to communities.

Participants and their community or affiliation

Chief Jacob Offiong, Akwa Esuk Iyamba
Miss I.E. Asuquo, Akwa Esuk Iyamba
Rev. A. O Essien, Akwa Esuk Iyamba
Chief Stephen Oji, Ekuri
Mr. Manus Olory, Ekuri Initiative
Chief Abel Egbe, Ekuri
Madam Lawrencia Agbor, Ekuri
Chief Edwin Ogar, Ekuri
Chief Sylvanus Ekuri, Okokori
Mrs Virginia Iferi, Okokori
Mr. Nicodemus Akparawu, Okokori
Madam Helen Ndim, Buanchor
HRH Out Henry Osang, Buanchor

Mr. Thomas B. Onwan, Buanchor
Mr. Louis Nkonyu, WCS
Mr. Francis Okeke, WCS
Mrs Lilian Oyamo, SCI
Mr. Peter Bette, Biakwan
Mr Benard Ogar, Ekuri
Prof. F. E. Asuquo, UNICAL
Mr. Ferdinand Akomante, Abo
Glory E. Asu, Abo
Asuquo Edet, UNIYO
Mr. Solomon Agbor, RWAYDI
Mr. Emmanuel Ukandi, BPG
Mr. Godwin Ugah, CREN

Generalized minimum set of rules and conditions to be included in any REDD agreement to maximize incentives for conservation and promotion of community benefits

(approved by all stakeholders during the stakeholders forum):

Stringent enforcement of conservation laws

To be undertaken by relevant community-based conservation organization, (where government provides an enabling environment)

Establishment of a community-based forest trust fund

A percentage of the proceeds from REDD+ meant for the community will go toward the establishment of a community-based forest trust fund (for projects, scholarships, small grants, microcredit, and other activities determined by the community).

Establishment of ecologically friendly gainful employment for community members

For example, ecotourism enterprises, organic produce exporters, value-added agricultural processing facilities.

Community decision-making

Each community may decide to set aside a percentage of their accrue to be shared among individual members of the community.

Government and international development agencies should provide direct financial support
The government and international development agencies should provide direct financial support for infrastructure and technology that facilitates conservation.

Free, prior, and informed consent at the community level.

Free, prior, and informed consent should be given by the communities themselves, in addition to the federal government.

Step-down Process

Representatives from each community took back the results from the stakeholder meeting for further reactions, reflections and feedback from local people.

This process included ten questions on the larger context in which REDD activities might take place. These questions began to get a clearer sense of the local context for other income-generating activities, for governance and decision-making, and for the systems of equitable allocation of resources to all community members.

The nature of action research allows for this shift in focus. Just discussing REDD would not have gotten at the heart of some of the larger issues of how proceeds and payments from REDD might then become operationalized in the communities in effective ways. Merely doling out money to each family, for example, might have more deleterious impacts than intended. Whereas a community-wide investment in infrastructure, micro-loans, ecotourism industries or eco-friendly companies might provide a more resilient and ultimately sustainable platform for development.

These questions, and the answers compiled from each community, are included below.

Forest Community Step-down Meeting Report

What strategies can ensure that the knowledge and understanding on REDD+/Carbon Credits/Carbon Trading become wide-spread in the communities?

Both Okokori and Ekuri spoke about the need for greater capacity building for community members to know what REDD+, carbon credit and carbon trading is all about and how it could benefit the communities. Participants in Buanchor explained how the indigenes of Buanchor community need to be trained to know about carbon credit and to instill people with confidence. They spoke too about the need to explain to the layman in the village what carbon credit is all about in the local language, helping the community understand the benefits of carbon credit/carbon market trading. A final strategy that was mentioned was the introduction of infrastructural development to boost the people's confidence.

What can be done to reduce conflicts over land use and property rights between villages?

Various approaches were suggested for how to reduce land use conflicts and demarcate community land boundaries more clearly. Both Okokori and Ekuri spoke about reducing intercommunal violence through dialogue by creating new community governance bodies. Okokori suggested a committee be inaugurated by the chiefs council when conflicts over land use and property rights arise between villages. This committee would then resolve such situation through dialogue instead of allowing it to escalate into violence. In Ekuri, it was suggested that the community should institute a Community Forest Association to replace the Forest Management Committee (FMC) currently saddled with the responsibility of handling forest matters vis-à-vis land use and property rights between villages. This new association, it was said, could then reduce conflict with neighboring communities through dialogue instead of resulting to violence. Abo ogbagante discussed how mutual adjustment and agreement on the boundary by affected communities may be achieved through inviting the government to assist in boundary demarcation. Buanchor participants said they should retrace their ancient boundary lines with proper demarcations and laying of "bekon" (i.e. concrete and pillars) and also report encroachment by neighbouring communities to traditional rulers council, government and law enforcement agencies to avoid conflicts. Like Okokori, participants also said that a local boundary adjustment committee be set up to promptly check in internal land disputes and resolve them. Other suggestions were to use billboards / signpost at any boundary with neighbouring communities to check trespassing and to set up the Forest Management Committee to always inspect the forest to avoid encroachments. Finally, it was said that alternative sources of livelihood such as employment opportunities/loans and grants would also help to reduce pressure on the forest. Finally, in Akwa Esuk Eyamba participants discussed the need to obtain relevant documents, such as survey papers and the agreements leading to the certificate of ownership. Also suggested was the idea for the local government and the Civil Society Organizations to team up to assist the community and individuals to map out areas for special project and reservations.

With regards to trainings and capacity-building, who should be responsible for contracting and undertaking these activities? The community? A committee? the Forestry Commission? Civil Society Organizations?

In Okokori and Ekuri, participants spoke about the need for training and capacity building of community members to be done by the community-based organization, The Ekuri Initiative, unless on technical issues which would be taken to the forestry commission or another designated organization to do so. In Abo Ogbagante, participants said that the community should carry this out. Participants in Buanchor agreed that the community be primarily responsible, with assistance from the civil society organizations. Participants in Akwa Esuk Eyamba said forestry commission and civil society organization would be the ones to do this work.

Will it benefit the community more in the long run to invite companies and large industries to hire employees from the community, or to offer the community micro-loans and small-business development training?

Okokori, Ekuri, and Akwa Esuk Eyamba emphasized the need to Offer the community micro-loans and small business development training rather than rather than investing in large industries that would destroy the forest and result in environment and ecological problems. However in Abo Ogbagante and Buanchor, participants spoke about their preference for companies and large industries as long as they are sustainable and environment-friendly to reduce unemployment and pressure on the forest.

What ways can the government attract successful “ecological industries” like ecotourism, organic cocoa or banana export companies, or agricultural processing facilities, into the communities?

Since Okokori Community has no tourist site apart from one cave, participants said that the government should somehow attract more ecological industries, such as organic cocoa (there is a cocoa association in Ikem) and banana export companies. In New Ekuri the government should showcase the rich natural resource and ecotourism sites that abound in Ekuri which includes the Agamdugun peak, waterfalls and caves. Participants in Abo Ogbagante said that this best be done by creating an enabling environment by government. In Buanchor, participants emphasized skill acquisition and training/empowerment, creating a business friendly environment and also encouraging mass production of quality agricultural produce and services. They also spoke about the provision of infrastructural facilities such as good access roads, market, ultra-modern health facilities, and communication systems. In Akwa Esuk Eyamba, participants said that the government and the relevant agencies should create awareness and sensitize the people to take advantage of such opportunities, as this is less well understood in that area.

If a Community Forest Association were set up, how should that association be structured so as to ensure that the benefits of REDD promote wide-spread and equitable community development? How do you reduce the risk that the committee turns into a source to leverage funds for personal gain? What specific rules should be imposed on the committee?

The communities described elaborate structures for how to do this. Okokori explained how, “The community forest association (CFA) is to open community account on REDD+ benefit, take statistics or head count of our sons and daughters who are at home and those outside the community in a transparent manner in ensuring equitable benefit sharing of REDD+ payment as will be decided by the community.” In Ekuri, it was agreed that, “the Community Forest Association (C.F.A) should be saddled with the use or responsibility to open up a community account for the purpose of payment on REDD+ then decide on how the payment would be done transparently, honestly and equitably, focusing on gender balance in all ramifications.” In Abo Ogbagante, participants said, “communities should constitute committees with membership reflecting the families and interest groups in the community to manage such benefits.” In Buanchor, currently credible, transparent and dedicated people are elected into the Forest Management Committee (FMC) whereby members must cut across the three arms of the community for adequate representation. “In addition to this,” it was explained, “we need to set up an audit committee to check and balance quarterly and for the forest management committee (FMC) to submit monthly report to the joint town council and council of chiefs. Anyone found guilty of fraud will be fined, sanctioned and compelled to refund such frauds.” In Akwa Esuk Eyamba, “such a committee should have a representative of all the interest groups and or the existing institutions, and that their activities and withdrawals be monitored by CSOs.”

Are there opportunities for an ecotourism industry in your community? If so, what specific activities could your community provide for the tourist who is interested in rainforest ecology?

There is ecotourism opportunities in Okokori vis-à-vis the cave and the community forest and so the willingness to take tourists to our forest and the cave and the promise to continually preserve and protect these natural resources endowed to our community. The community of Ekuri have one peak, four waterfalls that can generate hydro power electricity and three caves. Participants agreed that tourism would generate income for the rural people and therefore reduce the pressure on the community forest for agricultural activities. In Buanchor, yes there are opportunities for ecotourism industries in the community that could provide secure accommodation, hospitality, cultural and social entertainment and guided access to the forest.

Do the community farmers use pesticides, chemical fertilizers, or any other additive in their agricultural production? Have modern organic farming techniques been considered?

In Okokori, people do use pesticides, chemical fertilizers (for cocoa) since organic farming techniques have not been introduced. In Ekuri and Akwa Esuk Eyamba, the community members do not use pesticides, chemical fertilizers or any organic and inorganic component of manure. In Buanchor, approved chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides are used although organic practices have been considered.

In order to attract outside companies to invest in your community (for example to buy your bananas for export), they require transparent and reliable financial systems. How can you support and enforce such social norms?

Okokori participants described how they have been selling our food and economic crops at give-away prices. However, if anybody could add value to our effort in buying our food crops and cocoa for export, “a committee would be set up to generate income from registration of buyers of these crops, and then give detailed accounts of which is generated and each funds will be used for community development projects that would benefit the community members generally.” In Ekuri, participants described how, “Transparency is the watchword of the community and that is why there are many who give detailed financial statement to the community at the end of the year. The community frowns over financial impropriety.” Abo Ogbagante participants did not comment on this question. Buanchor participants said, “We should enlighten and sensitize the people on the ills and danger of corrupt practices. We should make laws that severely punish offenders, demand and enforce refunds where necessary, and also create favourable business environment. Akwa Esuk Eyamba said that their strategy would be to offer cheap labour and friendly atmosphere.

What is your community’s experience with outsiders, in particular foreigners? Would foreign companies, NGOs, and consultants be welcomed in your community in order to set up businesses or facilitate trainings?

Okokori said that, “the community accommodates strangers and foreigners, companies and NGOs whose mission is friendly with the community and so would appreciate and welcome any training by any agency or organization who tries to build the capacity of our people in any way designed by them in their development plan.” In Ekuri, participants explained, “The Ekuri people are known for their hospitality and always give outsiders or foreigners warm reception and so anybody can set up a business as we guarantee a conducive business environment for business to thrive and there ready and willing to accept training by any body that would come for that purpose.” Buanchor participants explained how, “We always have a cordial relationship and they are always welcome with open arms to stay. Yes, our door is always open to all law abiding foreign investors.” And, participants in Akwa Esuk Eyamba simply said, “Yes.”

Discussion

This research looked carefully on how REDD might work for forest communities and specifically what minimum set of rules or conditions would be needed from the communities' perspectives. In this following section, we make sense of the findings in this project, weaving together some themes. We also make some suggestions here on how we as a planet may endeavor to take REDD in a pro-poor direction as a carbon market mechanism to conserve our world's forests and contribute to poverty alleviation.

The Potential

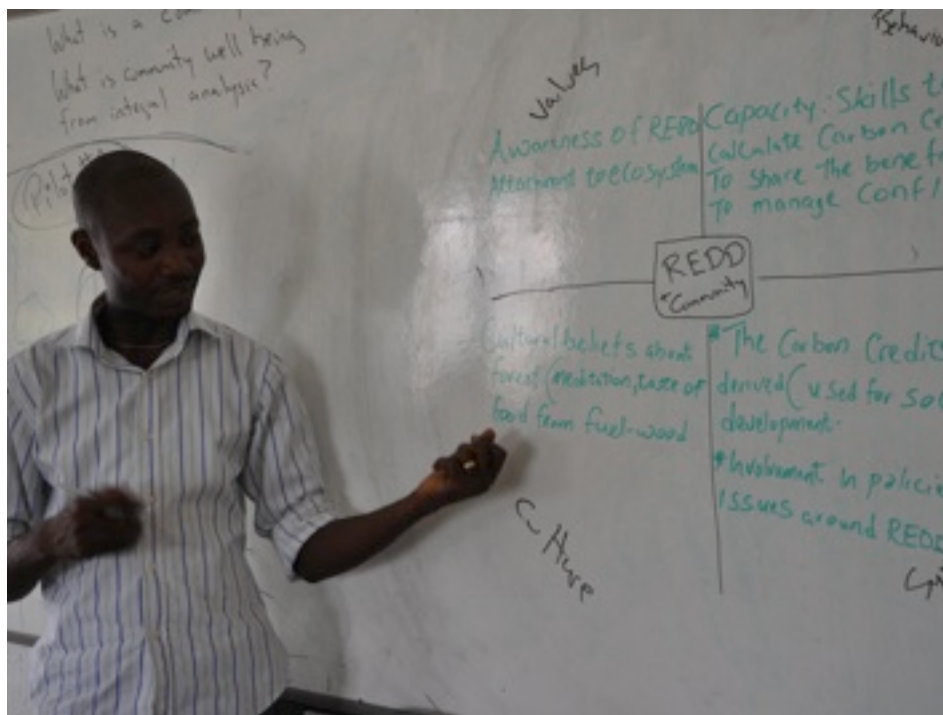
It became evident throughout the research project that REDD holds a certain degree of potential in the region and has many people excited by its possibilities. Communities who have largely been 'forgotten' by the state may now actually have something of value to the country (indeed, the world). The glaring hope across all these communities is that, as they negotiate the carbon trade for reducing emissions from deforestation, they will then receive the financial means to build and maintain the systems that currently do not function: electricity, road access, health care and hospitals, adequate schools, and more. These are communities that have fallen through the cracks in the Nigerian society and remain on the fringes of the national and global economy. The gleaming hope in everyone's eyes regarding REDD is that finally they have identified a value in their land that is marketable. This is their inroad to the market forces by which they can finally get a leg up out of the cycle of poverty they currently find themselves.

In our research, it became clear that while that is the hope, it comes with some evident concerns.

Land Disputes

First of all, for REDD to work, communities need to have a crystal clear sense of land title. Currently, there are many inter-community disputes over land title and community boundaries. Every year this evokes inter-community violence and it is far from being solved. Land ownership between communities and even within a community is somewhat complicated, and may not present a perfect environment for REDD investment.

In Ekuri, for example, 91% of respondents explained that any virgin forest cleared by an individual belongs to that individual and is inherited by the family. This juxtaposes pressure for land ownership for the rights to the ecosystem



services from the carbon market, against the pressure to not cut down the forest to maintain them as carbon sinks. The risk the community runs with this type of land ownership model, is that they may not be able to ensure that the forests remain standing to a carbon trader seeking to invest in REDD.

That said, compelling evidence from the interviews suggested that there are effective measures being taken at the community level to resolve any disputes that exist. In the example above, in Ekuri, 74% of respondents said that although there was a land dispute with two neighbouring communities (Iko Esai and Edondon), these were being amicably resolved by community leaders. This research flags this as a potential area of concern, while also recognizes the current steps being taken to mitigate it.

Poverty and Deforestation

The second set of concerns is in regarding the impacts of poverty on surrounding forests. At present, the mere livelihood needs of families in these communities exerts a pressure on the standing forests: people rely on agriculture to live and as there are more and more families and less and less arable land available, new arable land comes from the surrounding forests. In Mbe, for example, over 87% of people's livelihood comes from agriculture. Sadly, poverty and deforestation go hand in hand. and this is one of the main reasons a carbon trader may opt to invest on, for example, Canadian soil instead of Nigerian, since the risk of poverty obliterating their carbon

sink 'investment' by deforesting it is much much less.

Equity and Transparency

The third concern relates with the current context of distrust in current wealth distribution systems in Nigeria. With rampant corruption, people are wary of proceeds intended for the community becoming syphoned off into the pockets of a few. Perhaps even pockets of people not even living in or near the forest. Even within the community, the current systems for sharing resources may or may not be equitable, and many concern were raised that this would further become exacerbated as access to more money tempted people further into corruption or prebendalism, which is a unique form of official corruption that is very particular to Nigeria. Richard A. Joseph, director of The Program of African Studies at Northwestern University, is usually credited with first using the term prebendalism to describe patron-client or neopatrimonialism in Nigeria (1987). Joseph used the term to describe the sense of entitlement that many people in Nigeria feel they have to the revenues of the Nigerian state. Elected officials, government workers, and members of the ethnic and religious groups to which they belong feel they have a right to a share of government revenues. This translates into a context in which people distrust their upper level officials to equitably share the communal resources, and has led to an enormous grassroots pressure for greater transparency and ethical conduct. While there have been incredible improvements in this regard in Nigeria over the last decade,

it remains a major concern in local people's minds. Adding payments from REDD into this context without adequate measures taken to ensure equitable compensation is unwise. More, it could take these forest communities down the same path of another major Nigerian natural resource: namely, oil.

New Black Gold

This is not a far stretch of imagination to consider the pressures that land disputes, poverty and corruption could wield on the budding potentials of REDD. In fact, oil has almost exactly manifested the concerns noted above, with the rich getting richer, while the poor communities around with the oil is retrieved get yet poorer every year. This "black gold" has become both the future for Nigeria as well as one of the major barriers to its sustainable development.

In our own project, for example, one of the two mangrove communities had to be let go from the research design since individuals in the community were illegally bunkering oil, and had created a very heated environment to be talking about potential mechanisms for wealth distribution from natural resources. Largely out of misunderstanding, people were distrustful of the REDD process and us as researchers, and some of the youths even threatened our researchers in such a way that we were concerned for their wellbeing. Even in Buanchor, in the course of the research conflicts began to arise around money with people saying, "White people what are you going to give us?!" and causing people to bicker amongst themselves. *All this, and there isn't yet any money on the table from a REDD scheme.* Add money in, and surely you are guaranteed to have an explosive mix.

In other words, carbon could become the "new black gold" for the region, presenting more problems and inequity than it does solutions.

Added to this, there are ample voices speaking loudly and clearly against this as a mechanism worth investing in, given that it may merely hide the issues of rising global carbon emissions under a veneer of good intentions. Sure some forests remain standing, while the polluters can continue to pollute and to irreparably contribute to a changing climate.

Potential, Nevertheless

These issues have not gone unnoted by the Nigerian civil society organizations. In fact, there is extensive awareness about the pros and cons of REDD, but on the whole, the key players nevertheless feel that there is ample reason to proceed with this as a strategy for sustainable development and avoided deforestation. This is the shared sentiment for many communities and regions in the Global South. At One Sky, we have heard again and again and again over the



last decade from local communities and NGOs in Nigeria as well as in other developing countries that REDD could be a way to assist in long term goals for sustainable development. In this small but meaningful research project, we asked the questions necessary, we feel, to embark on this equitably, ethically and well. That is: what are the minimum set of conditions or agreements that would need to be in place for this to work, from the perspective of the forest communities?

Ethics are not Rocket Science

Large volumes of work has gone into how REDD and other carbon market

mechanisms could benefit the poorest of the poor. How it might be that this could truly become one of the world's great leveler of wealth inequity. The idea for how is evident and the possibilities have had people in the developing world excited for literally over a decade. But issues remain and there are actually very few actualized REDD projects in the developing world.

Fortunately, the ethics of equitably sharing wealth of an areas' natural resources is not rocket science. It's not all that

complicated what's actually happening at this present moment, and what we want to avoid in manifesting the REDD mechanism. That is: currently, there are hundreds of forgotten communities across the country of Nigeria, like every other African nation. Communities that are without road access, cut off from the transportation systems of that nation, without communication technology as simple as cell phone coverage, and without adequate health care and education facilities. If they are to trade the carbon locked up in their forests for 'payment from ecosystem services' through the REDD mechanism, then simply put: they need to be ethically compensated to do so.

There should be no question of that: it shall be equitably shared. But questions do remain on how would this best be carried out. David Cicerchi, one of the main field researchers, explained, "The evidence of this research and also my intuition on all this, having experienced these different communities, is that there may be better ways to do this rather than just money. Instead it could be as development projects, enterprise investment, microloans, all of which lead to a more sustained economic development for the region."

Clearly how communities should be adequately and fairly compensated is a much more difficult question that *whether*. All of which is additionally more complex given the contextual issues listed above around land disputes, poverty, and existing situations of corruption.

Models for a Pro-Poor REDD

Much of our action research in the communities, particularly via the step-down process after the stakeholder meeting, focused on these larger contextual issues, attempting to hone in on the way a pro-poor REDD could function in the region. For example, how should REDD consider the land

ownership disputes? How might REDD consider the existing decision-making processes and wealth distribution processes? What other social and economic issues need to be considered for effective and sustainable REDD?

Some ideas that arose were to have the income made from REDD not go to individual families in the form of a monthly payment and rather have it go into the larger economic investment into the community. Such as setting up micro-loans, skills-training institutes, and other long-standing economic drivers that would stimulate and sustain sustainable growth.

That said, complexities exist in how to make this work in the different communities. For example, the Buanchor community is actually made up of three small communities, each with their own chief. This creates the need to consider rivalry and village unity among the separate villages. Would the REDD committee be comprised of members of each village? Who has the popular authority to influence the people: the community chairman or the village heads?

Also, it was explained in the interviews from Mbe communities that not all community members will readily transition to "alternative livelihood" projects, and rather are more suitable for employment opportunities by larger institutions. In order to properly incentivize the community-members to protect the forest, awareness-creation campaigns and direct payments may not be feasible nor sufficient. Also, while important, mere scholarships or alternative livelihoods projects wouldn't suffice either, as most of the community-members would not directly benefit. In such a case, it was suggested that it may be ideal to attract investments of large-scale industries to add value to broad-based alternative livelihood projects.

The Focus Groups with elders, women, and youth all suggested scholarships be made available for the increased education of community members, and women and youth particularly emphasized the need to retain the rights to collect non-timber forest products (NTFPs) since so much of their livelihood relies on these products. In the community conversations, four of the five communities explained how they directly benefit from the forest, predominantly through non-timber forest products, like cocoa, banana, bush mango, plantain, and more. Finally, youth suggested that they be trained in how to measure carbon, thus giving them an active and meaningful role as the guardians of these forests and the carbon therein.

The Role of Conscientization

Another overarching challenge for enacting a pro-poor REDD in this region of

Nigeria will be the conscientization of local people regarding deforestation, its role as a sink for carbon emissions, its links to climate change, and then about the system of carbon trading.

At the present time, although many villagers don't understand the connection between the forests and the climate, and nor do people understand the scientific reasons for climate change, *most people say that climate change will affect their community.*

People in all the communities in this project are observing patterns of change in the climate, and many of them are making connections to so-called climate change. However, a more comprehensive and scientific understanding of climate change is needed—particularly on this relates with carbon emissions, where those emissions come from, and why forests play a role as a sink for taking in those emissions and stabilizing the changes in the climate. People don't make these connections. Instead their concerns largely relate with the erratic effects on rainfall that disrupt traditional planting cycles. Since doing the research the community of Mbe was devastated by a major flooding event which displaced over 10,000 people in the area and caused a mudslide that wiped out a 2km area in an unprecedented climate event.

Understanding the links between climate change, carbon emissions and deforestation will be an important basis upon which to build capacity for REDD projects.

This conscientization process should also include the technical side of the carbon trading mechanism: namely, how to measure carbon in a forest, the importance of retaining that carbon and ways to do so, and how carbon trading would be administered. Bringing this into a pragmatic and clear description for communities, at least for a smaller committee who would be in charge of this, seems critical for any further work.

General Set of Rules and Conditions

What this project sought to arrive at was a list of rules and conditions regarding REDD. At first this seemed almost too ambitious for such a small research grant, and yet it was easily achieved through the selection of methods used. The list of rules and conditions was distilled down to six crisp points which was approved by all stakeholders during the stakeholders forum and also ratified in the community step-down process. These rules and conditions are as follows:

#1 Stringent enforcement of conservation laws.

To be undertaken by relevant community-based conservation organization.

#2 Establishment of a community-based forest trust fund.

A percentage of the proceeds from REDD+ meant for the community will go toward the establishment of a community-based forest trust fund (for projects, scholarships, small grants, microcredit, and other activities determined by the community).

#3 Establishment of ecologically friendly gainful employment for community members.

For example, ecotourism enterprises, organic produce exporters, value-added agricultural processing facilities.

#4 Community decision-making.

Each community may decide to set aside a percentage of their accrual to be shared among individual members of the community.

#5 Government and international development agencies should provide direct financial support.

The government and international development agencies should provide direct financial support for infrastructure and technology that facilitates conservation.

#6 Free, prior, and informed consent at the community level.

Free, prior, and informed consent should be given by the communities themselves.

Reflections on the Methodology

To pause, at this point, and reflect briefly on the project methodology is important. Did we achieve what we'd hoped through the selection of methods we used?

One question arose regarding the random sampling of the interviewees (key informant interviews): was the sample large enough to be useful? Upon reflection, the research team agreed that this may not have been as representative as it could have been had the research grant been larger, nevertheless the message was so consistent across everyone who was randomly sampled—there were so few outliers—that we believe it's sufficiently representative. The "mixed methods" combination of larger community conversations with smaller focus groups groups with individual interviews helped to triangulate the data. A question arose about the possibility of bias by one of the researchers doing research in his own community. However, that potential for bias was worked with and, we feel, effectively resolved. All in all, the team agreed that the "mixed methods" approach, combined with an action research orientation to continually circulate findings back to communities and stakeholders, was found to be very effective for this type of research question.

Conclusion

One Sky and its partner Aiden Nigeria found that this project, albeit small was extremely useful at this particular juncture of the REDD readiness process in Nigeria. No other player had asked these particular questions nor carried out research in this manner, and so the research findings will find a unique place in the conversations that continue from this point on.

The conversations on REDD readiness is fairly advanced in Nigeria, with an increasingly enabling environment for carbon traders being set up. However, at the village level, the research found that the understanding of climate change, its links to carbon emissions, and connections to avoided deforestation was not necessarily high. While certainly some individuals understand these processes exceedingly well, many do not. While they are experiencing the impacts of a changed climate with changed rainfall patterns and more frequent climate-related natural disasters, few could really make these links between climate, carbon and forests. This seems to be an important basis upon which to build REDD capacity, let alone the very technical discussions about carbon, how to measure it, how to ensure it remains locked up in standing forests, and how to in fact 'trade' it.

Though at first the objective of arriving at a minimum set of rules that any REDD scheme must have in order to be effective in enhancing the livelihoods of poor communities that are using forest resources in Nigeria seemed ambitious, in fact it was something that people were very keen to discuss. Through the mixed methods we used that included a sample of individuals through key-informant interviews, through to small focus groups and larger community conversations, through to larger town-hall style meetings and the stakeholder forum, we managed to

include the many voices in this important topic and to hone in on six important rules and conditions that any REDD scheme must have.

In this process, the research also uncovered three contextual issues that are critical to consider in proceeding with REDD. Firstly, land disputes between communities complicate the REDD process; if communities themselves are not clear on their forest boundaries how can they be compensated adequately by the carbon trading scheme. Secondly, unclear wealth distribution systems must be clarified in order to ensure equitable and effective sharing of financial resources if and when carbon trading ensues. In many cases this was unclear how to best go about this: direct payment to individuals, to families or to a community fund, and if the latter, how could this financial compensation be most effectively and equitably shared for sustained economic development in the region? And finally, existing situations of corruption and prebendalism have created an atmosphere of distrust in communities and need to be carefully considered moving forward.

Also coming out of the research was the concern that carbon follow a similar path as oil in the Nigeria Delta, provoking prebendalism, violent conflicts, and continued inequity and poverty at the community level. Carbon, in this way, could become the 'new black gold' of the region, creating more problems as solutions.

Part of this risk can be addressed up by asking the very questions that this project sought to answer. Through the mixed methods used, various ideas arose for how to mitigate the three above concerns and thus not follow the path that oil has taken.

In conclusion, this project was well worth the time, energy and funds. The project itself built capacity not only regarding REDD, both with the researchers at One Sky and AIDEN, but also with the community participants, and also built capacity for how to conduct action

research. The findings will be very useful to the ongoing discussions on REDD and provide a perspective that to date has been missing. The means to disseminate results—a final document, video, and online forum—are a good beginning for how to ensure these findings work themselves back into the REDD process in Nigeria and beyond.

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On the cover...

This photo is of a young girl in Ekuri community, Nigeria, taken by Michael Simpson, Executive Director of One Sky.

About this photo: "What you cannot see in the photo. It looks like a poor kid in some African country. But a poor kid like her grew up in the exact same village of

Ekuri and grew up to lead the village in community forestry work, win a United Nations award for their efforts and now lead the fight against climate change by being one of the first REDD pilot project sites in Nigeria...itself one of the only REDD readiness approved countries in Africa. His name is Chief

Edwin and he is one of Nigeria's great grass roots leaders. He was sitting beside me when we both looked at this kid and talked about the future...I snapped it because I was thinking about the door, the future and this kid. Who knows what it will bring but despite the rags this kid is not as poor as she looks."

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