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Evolving Deforestation Narratives in Practice: A study of the UN-REDD+ Readiness

Programme in Nigeria

Stuart Blackwell

University of San Francisco

May 2022

Masters of Arts in International Studies

Evolving Deforestation Narratives in Practice: A study of the UN-REDD+ Readiness
Programme in Nigeria

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

In

International Studies

By Stuart Blackwell

May 2022

University of San Francisco

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis
project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

Capstone Adviser

MAIS Director

Date

Date

ABSTRACT

The UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme was conducted between 2009 and 2015. The REDD+ Programme in Nigeria began once the readiness program was completed. This study conducts a document analysis of the program utilizing a political ecology lens to determine the extent to which the program adheres to or strays away from critical narratives surrounding both drivers of deforestation and inclusion and autonomy of federal, state, and local communities. By examining the entirety of the available documentation of the REDD+ Readiness program in Nigeria using a political ecological lens, this study demonstrates both an evolution of the program itself, and an evolution of reforestation efforts conducted by UN-REDD+. This study finds that while the REDD+ Programme in Nigeria began by utilizing satellite imagery to conduct its analysis of forest cover, the program later incorporated information gathered from local communities in order to form a better understanding of forest cover as well as the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Indeed, while the program began with the claim that subsistence farming was the prime driver of deforestation and forest degradation, at its conclusion, macroeconomic farming took over as the leading driver and many other drivers were added to the program's list of drivers. This study also finds that the REDD+ Programme in Nigeria was effective at empowering and giving autonomy to Nigerian actors at the federal, state, and local levels by utilizing a bottom-up approach as opposed to a top-down approach.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following professors for all their support and the knowledge they bestowed upon me during my time at the University of San Francisco: Professor Dowd-Uribe, Professor Fisher Onar, Professor Cantero, Professor Zartner, Professor Zarobell, Professor Gifford, and the late (and great) Reese Erlich. Special thanks to Professor Dowd-Uribe, for his guidance and patience through the thesis writing process. I would also like to thank the BAIS/MAIS staff that helped keep everyone grounded and made me laugh at many a coffee hour when we had to endure the challenges of remote learning due the Covid-19 pandemic. I would also like to thank my parents Clive and Diane for their support throughout my time at USF. I could not have realized this dream without you. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Katlynn Alm for her patience, her enthusiastic support, and her ability to look genuinely interested when listening to me work through my thoughts on this thesis.

Introduction

The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD+) began in 2008 as a response to the Bali Action Plan, rising global emissions, and climate change. According to the FAO, the world has seen a loss of 420 million hectares of forests since 1990. The rate of deforestation has decreased from 16 million hectares per year during the 1990s to 10 million hectares per year between 2015-2020. However, total forest cover worldwide has decreased over 80 million hectares since 1990 according to the FAO. The UN-REDD+ expanded on the work that was already underway by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Currently, UN-REDD+ work is being conducted in 65 partner countries in order to advance implementation of the Paris Agreement in regards to reduce deforestation, promote sustainable land uses, advance international cooperative approaches to climate mitigation, and mobilize climate finance in order to decrease the rate of deforestation, particularly in tropical forests.

To date, the UN-REDD+ program has utilized over \$1 billion USD in an attempt to achieve this goal. While five countries: Russia, Brazil, Canada, United States of America, and China, hold over 50% of the world's forests according to the FAO, the UN-REDD+ initiative focuses on global south countries. Their work in the global south attempts not only to curb the effects of climate change and reduce deforestation rates, but also to ensure sustainable livelihoods through climate smart development programs via reforestation work and deforestation mitigation. Currently, the FAO lists large-scale commercial agriculture as the main driver of deforestation and forest degradation, being responsible for over 40% of tropical

deforestation between 200 and 2010. It lists local subsistence agriculture as the second main driver of deforestation and forest degradation, being responsible for 33% of tropical deforestation and forest degradation.

The UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria began on September 10, 2009 when the Climate Change Network of Nigeria; a group of Nigerian civil society organizations, submitted an application to begin conducting REDD+ work in Nigeria. The purpose of the Readiness Programme was to analyze Nigeria's capabilities at implementing REDD+ and assist Nigeria at getting ready to implement REDD+ as needed. At this point, the UN's REDD+ initiative was fairly young. The concept of REDD+ itself was only approximately four years in the making. As such, the Readiness Programme in Nigeria marked one of the first Readiness programs in the initiative's history. Through consultations with stakeholders, the Readiness Programme in Nigeria adopted a two-track approach to conduct its work. At the federal level, UN REDD+ work would focus on building and developing policies, oversight committees, and technical capabilities. At the state level, UN REDD+ work would focus on implementing REDD+ strategies, institutional activities, and demonstration activities in several communities in Nigeria's Cross River State (CRS). CRS was chosen due to several factors. First, it was home to over 50% of Nigeria's high tropical rain forests. According to FAO reports, the high tropical rain forests have experienced large-scale deforestation since the 1960s. Second, CRS government officials and communities had already demonstrated forest management policies, techniques, and activities that were arguably the strongest in Nigeria according to initial UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria reports. The program ultimately lasted until 2015, two years after the original end year of 2013. At this time, both Nigerian participants in UN-REDD+ Readiness

work and members of the UN-REDD+ Programme deemed Nigeria ready to commence UN-REDD+ work.

Throughout its lifespan and in many of its documents, the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria was often referred to as a potential model not only for expansion of the program in Nigeria, but for West Africa and the continent as a whole. Because of its potential to shape UN-REDD+ work throughout Africa, the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria is an incredibly important program to examine. Because of its potential role as a model for continued and expanded UN-REDD+ work, the challenges, flaws, and triumphs of the program will potentially carry over to all future REDD+ programs in Africa. UN-REDD+ Programme has often been critiqued in its ability to be inclusive, its determination of the drivers of deforestation in a particular region, and in its ability to provide autonomy to community members in partner countries. The Readiness Programme in Nigeria marked a unique example of reforestation work in relation to international development projects because of its attempts to empower local populations and its determination of drivers of deforestation which did not always align with typical deforestation narratives in developing countries. To demonstrate this, this study will address these common narratives and examine how and when they did align with the Readiness Programme in Nigeria. This study will also examine the inclusion or lack thereof, of various stakeholders and actors throughout the timeline of the program in order to determine the extent to which Nigerians, and which Nigerians, had autonomy over such a large international development program. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to critically analyze the program's ability to change deforestation narratives and its ability to provide autonomy for federal, state, and local community actors in their ability to conduct reforestation work that is pertinent to themselves.

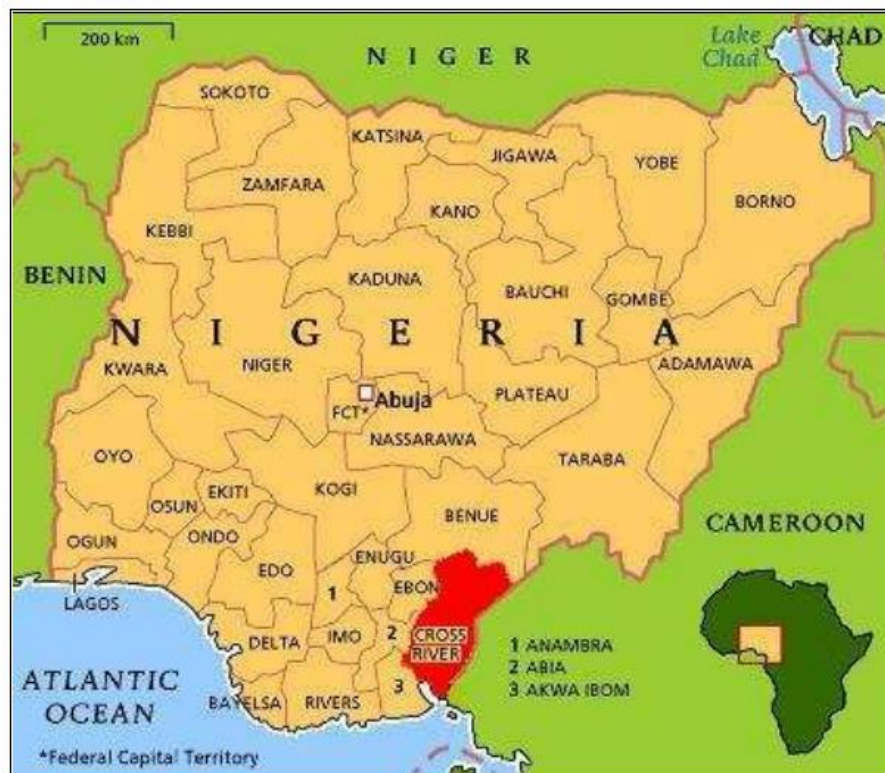


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria highlighting Cross River State. Property of UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria

Defining Terms and Abbreviations

Throughout the document “the Programme” will refer to the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria between 2009 and 2016. The terms forest dependent communities and/or forest communities is used throughout the analysis instead of indigenous people(s) because, in the context of Nigeria, these groups of people refer to themselves as such and not as indigenous people(s). The Cross River State of Nigeria has been shortened to CRS to reflect the way it is by and large referred to in UN-REDD+ documents. CSO refers to civil society organizations, a term which the Programme consistently used through its duration as a catch all for all community-based groups that were not directly part of the government, private sector, academia, media, or a larger NGO (nongovernmental organization). NPD refers to a National Programme Document, which is one of the categories of documents reviewed in this study.

Literature Review

Piers Blaikie's work in the 1980's arguably marked a major point in the study of how environments, politics, and economics interact with each other and affect one another. Political ecology, as defined by Tor Benjaminsen in the *Encyclopedia of Ecology* (second edition) 2019, is "a field within environmental studies focusing on power relations as well as the coproduction of nature and society. Theoretical inspirations are taken from different sources such as political economy, poststructuralism, and peasant studies." As R.P. Neumann points out in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 2009, ecological change is tied to societal influences, both political and economic, and cannot be properly understood without taking such societal influences into consideration. Robbins's *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*, highlights how utilizing a political ecological lens allows researchers to study the differences in the distribution of costs and benefits between various actors in environmental development work. It is through the relationships between people and their environments that policy and political decisions are made on community resource management thus changing or maintaining hegemony (Stott and Sullivan, 2000).

Indeed, this study bases itself in a political ecology framework in that it studies how economic, political, and societal influence effects forests and landscapes within Nigeria and those living within them. As political ecology has expanded, so to has it grown nuanced. Many political ecologists advocate for avoiding generalizations of institutions, communities, and participation, and instead advocate for understanding the uniqueness of the political ecology surrounding each individual conservation and/or environmental effort (Bixler et al. 2015, Skutsch & Turnhout 2018). This study itself looks at the unique political ecological

characteristics surrounding the deforestation narratives and inclusion/exclusion of the UN's REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria.

One major component of political ecology in relation to reforestation is understanding the various means by which different actors understand timelines. Fairhead and Leach work in 1995 and Leach and Scoones work in 2013 made massive strides in this realm of political ecology. They critiqued the method of measurement that has become the status quo in modern reforestation efforts: the utilization of satellite imagery to ascertain forest cover change. They noted several flaws with this method, notably that it is incredibly limited in its time range. In the case of REDD+'s work in Nigeria for example, satellite imagery only allows a researcher an understanding of land change after the 1960s. By solely relying on such a method of analysis, Leach, Fairhead, and Scoones argue that those utilizing such a method are completely neglecting other valuable and rich resources such as oral histories and local knowledge.

The sole use of satellite imagery does not take into account the fact that these forests may have been created before the invention of such technology by the communities residing in and around them. As Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones work shows, speaking with local communities and reviewing local histories paints an entirely new picture: that some forests are possibly expanding as opposed to diminishing and have much different histories than what can be understood through a narrow timeline. A researcher's understanding of a forest, and therefore their determination of what has caused/is causing deforestation all depends on the timeline utilized by the researcher and the resources they use to set such a timeline.

Another aspect of this study and political ecology is feminist political ecology which was developed in the 1990s (C. Radcliff, *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 2009). A major contributor to feminist political ecology is Dianne Rocheleau, who in 1996 outlined three

key aspects of feminist political ecology: gendered knowledge, gendered resource and environmental quality rights and responsibilities, and gendered environmental politics and grassroots activism. The first of these; gendered knowledge, states that men and women hold different positions and do different work thus producing a different understanding and different knowledge of the environments with which they interact. The second; gendered resource and environmental quality rights and responsibilities, states that women and men are provided different access to resources and environments. Land ownership is a typical example of this in that in many parts of the world one's gender dictates whether or not they can own land and/or what land they can own. The third; gendered environmental politics and grassroots activism, states that the method that one utilizes to enact environmental change is also dependent on one's gender. It also states that the environmental issues that individuals engage with politically, also differ based on gender. Indeed, gender dynamics play an important role in the inclusion and exclusion of actors when it comes to community resource management. Although community resource management development work may frame itself as inclusionary, it can exclude major portions of the population such as women (Agarwal, 2001). This study will analyze, to the extent to which is possible, the inclusion or lack thereof of women and gendered knowledge.

Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries, or REDD+, began as a concept in 1997 during the Kyoto protocol negotiations. However, it was not formally recognized until 2007 during the UNFCCC 13th Conference of the Parties under the Bali Action Plan. As mentioned in the introduction, the REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria began in 2009. At its core, REDD+ is a "financial incentives-based climate change mitigation strategy proposed by the UNEP, World Bank, GEF,

and environmental NGOs seeking to integrate forests into carbon sequestration schemes” (Beymer-Farris & Basset, 2012).

Since REDD+'s inception, it has been highly critiqued amongst scholars. Indeed, Beymer-Farris and Basset note in particular REDD+'s potential ability to take control of resources and management away from local actors and give it to global actors through a top-down power structure. Interestingly enough in some instances, while control of resources and management of them is removed from communities and given to global actors, the burden of conducting REDD+ work is typically placed on the very same local communities (Skutsch & Turnhout, 2020). However, exclusion appears to not occur in every country where REDD+ is conducted. For example, Devkota's study of REDD+ in Nepal showed quite the opposite. Devkota's study of REDD+ in Nepal's Terai region showed that REDD+ actually enhanced deliberation of “disadvantaged groups such as the poor, Dalits, women, and indigenous groups [and that they] have secured their position in decision making structures” (Devkota, 2020).

Much like Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones, Beymer-Farris and Basset also note that REDD+ utilizes short timelines to measure forest loss and utilize narratives forest loss, which often are insufficient and neglect the true history of a forest. For REDD+, the most common narrative surrounding forest loss and therefore a country's need to implement REDD+, is that deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries are caused by subsistence agricultural expansion and practices which REDD+ views as the prime driver of deforestation and forest degradation (Brady, 1996, Butler, 1980, Myers 1992, Meyers 1993, Phanthanousy, 1994, Schuck et al. 2002, and Varma 2003). Many academic studies have shown this to be an inadequate analysis and instead view macroeconomic agricultural activities as being responsible for the same phenomenon (DeFries et al. 2010, Ferretti-Galon and Bush, 2014, Kissinger et al.,

2012, McAlpine et al., 2009, Rudel, 2007, Rudel et al., 2009). Indeed, the Readiness Programme in Nigeria began with the same “understanding” and listed subsistence farming as the main cause of deforestation and forest degradation as demonstrated by the program’s initial analysis.

However, this did change over time.

One of the main critics of the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria in regards to the inclusion of local populations is Emmanuel Nuesiri. Nuesiri argues that local populations were not substantively represented in the program due to the lack of inclusion of local government representatives (Nuesiri 2016, 2017, & 2018). Nuesiri uses this point of view to declare the program a failure in regards to representing local populations and even makes the claim that by doing so, the Readiness Programme in Nigeria fails to promote a democratic approach to REDD+ work. Interestingly enough however, Nuesiri’s own analysis of the REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria shows that not only were local populations represented at Readiness proposal meetings in 2011, but that they were actually the largest group that was represented at the meetings. Out of 101 people in attendance at the first meeting, 36 of them were representatives of local populations. The next highest represented group was the CRS Forestry Commission with 26 people in attendance.

A similar proportion of representation can be seen at the second meeting in August of 2011. Out of the 73 people in attendance, 44 of them were representatives of local populations. However, Nuesiri does not believe that these people sufficiently represent their communities as they are not elected officials and notes that local government councils were not in attendance at either meeting. Finally, Nuesiri argues that the Readiness Programme failed to empower local communities by failing to empower local government officials. The researcher of this study finds it curious that Nuesiri considers this to be the only way for local communities to gain

empowerment and that Nuesiri views including corrupted local politicians in developing environmental policies as beneficial to a democratic process (Nuesiri 2017).

This study, conducted through a political ecology lens, continues the examination and discussion of REDD+ work as it pertains to and affects the autonomy and knowledge of local communities, state governments, and national governments in Nigeria during the implementation of the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria between 2009 and 2015. This study will analyze not only the starting point of the Readiness Programme, but how narratives surrounding deforestation changed over time. In addition, this study adds to the discussion around conflicting ideas around the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, how information is gathered to form these ideas, and which actors/stakeholders are responsible for implementing solutions to the problem of deforestation as determined by the UN's REDD+ program. This study also adds to the political ecology discussion surrounding community empowerment, who's voices were heard, and the extent to which Nigerian communities were engaged. While discussing these topics, this study will note where the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria maintains these narratives, pertaining to both academic critiques and in practice, as well as where and how it challenges and/or departs from them. In doing so, this study will show that the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria maintained and also broke away from many of the common critiques of REDD+ development work.

Methods

This study was conducted in order to gain a better understanding of how the UN-REDD+ Programme's reforestation initiative interacts with and talks about native and local populations in relation to roles in deforestation and reforestation. This study utilized a document analysis methodology to review 83 UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria documents in order to provide reflection on the program's narratives surrounding deforestation in Nigeria, the extent to which Nigerian stakeholders had ownership of the program, and the amount of inclusivity of a variety of stakeholders the program demonstrated while conducting its work. In doing so, the study hopes to explore power dynamics at play between international organizations such as the UN-REDD+ program, national actors, state actors, and local populations. over the course of environmentally centered international development initiatives such as UN-REDD+.

This will be done by determining and analyzing several factors such as what the program considers to be the driving causes of deforestation and forest degradation; what groups of people included and excluded from consultations, meetings, and policy making (for example: women, youths, government actors, village leaders, etc.); where consultations, meetings, and policy making procedures are held; the level of engagement with various groups; and incorporation or lack thereof of local knowledge in regards to forestry. The analysis of these factors over the span of the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria will shed light on the extent to which the knowledge, interests, and experience of local populations were taken into consideration when and where REDD+ work was conducted in Nigeria.

As previously stated, the method of research utilized in this study is a document analysis. This method was chosen for several reasons. First, the study is analyzing past actions over a historical timeline. The documents analyzed in this study explore the history of the UN-REDD+

Programme's work in Nigeria as published over the span of 2009 to 2020. While the readiness programme ended in 2015, UN documents pertaining to it continued to be published up until 2020. By analyzing these documents over a period of time, the study is able to note any changes in language and/or strategy used by the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria in reference to forest dependent communities, when and where these communities are included in the Programme's work, and the level at which these communities are, or are not, engaged with. The document analysis was conducted by noting any mention of "drivers of deforestation" to see when these descriptions were similar or different, noting names of presentation givers and participant lists in order to determine who was present and which groups were being represented, and by reading through each document carefully to denote changes in overall narratives. Second, the study was conducted during a period of time during which COVID-19 made international travel not possible for the researcher. The researcher of this study recognizes that this analysis is limited to document analysis of written reports and that no field visits, interviews, or discussions with community members were able to be conducted. It is the hope of the researcher that this historical analysis lays a foundation for in-person work to be conducted in the future.

The study analyzes the language used and narratives present in 83 documents as it pertains to the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria interacting, or not interacting with forest dependent communities. The data set is limited to 83 documents because that is the total number of documents published by the UN-REDD+ program at the time at which this study was conducted. The quantity of documents provides for a thorough analysis of the work conducted by the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria.

The documents were gathered from two UN REDD+ document databases: the UN-REDD Programme Collaborative Workspace and the UN-REDD Programme Document Library. With

only two exceptions: Nigeria Readiness Preparation Proposal and Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan, all documents found on the Document Library were present on the Collaborative Workspace. The study chose these two document databases for two reasons. First, they are official document databases which belong to the organization that is in part the focus of this study: the UN-REDD+ Programme. This guarantees authenticity of the documents and removes concerns regarding bias of the source. The second reason these two databases were chosen is for the sake of replication of the study due to their ease of access as they are in the public domain. Everyone and anyone with internet access can view these documents whenever they wish and conduct their own analysis of them through the same lens.

The study begins with analysis of a document from September 14, 2009 and concludes with a document from October 23, 2020. This start of this timeline was chosen because the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria traces its roots back to 2009, when government officials in the country asked the UN-REDD+ Programme for Nigerian participation in the REDD+ initiative. The end of this timeline was chosen for a simple reason: the latest available document on the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria was published on October 23, 2020.

The study analyzes a variety of documents provided from the two UN-REDD+ databases. The documents under analysis consist of UN-REDD+ annual reports, national program documents (NPDs), program summaries, workshop presentations, witness assessments, Nigeria country plans, Nigeria REDD+ readiness proposals, proposal presentations, funding releases, financial surveys/statements, consultation reports, stakeholder analyses, participatory governance assessments, and posters. The variety of these documents allows the study to view information and dialogue from the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria in different formats allowing the researcher to note omission and inclusion of certain information amongst varying documents.

Another benefit of analyzing a variety of types of documents is that they are not all written by the same person or even the same organization and not all documents are written for the same audience(s). Yes, all of these documents are part of the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria, but some are written by people conducting consultations or giving presentations in the field with or to local communities while other documents are directed towards higher-ups back at the UN REDD+ headquarters. Still, other documents, such as funding releases, simply show where money for the program came from and is going to.

As previously mentioned, the study analyzes the UN-REDD+ Programme's work conducted in Nigeria, and specifically Nigeria's Cross River State, starting in 2009 and ending in 2020. Nigeria, Cross River State, and this reforestation initiative was chosen for several reasons. The UN-REDD+ is a massive reforestation effort that works alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the UN Development Programme, and the UN Environment Programme in over 65 partner countries. According to numerous UN-REDD+ reports, Nigerian forest and woodland cover declined from 1978 to 1995 from 23 million hectares to 15 million hectares and has had a deforestation rate over approximately 3.5% annually since 2009. This has made it a prime candidate for such large-scale reforestation efforts by massive international organizations.

The UN-REDD+ Programme, along with Nigeria itself, identified the country's Cross River State as a starting point for REDD+ efforts in 2009. This area was chosen partially due to the fact that it is home to around 50% of Nigeria's rainforests, and also due to expressed interest in conducting REDD+ work by the state itself. The UN-REDD+ Programme adopted a unique two-track approach to conducting REDD+ work in Nigeria: one on a federal level and the other on a state level. The work being done directly affects millions of Nigerians that have been, currently are, and will be affected by the impacts of climate change. Most importantly, the UN-

REDD+ Programme in Nigeria, and specifically in Cross River State, was chosen because it is viewed by the UN-REDD+ Programme as a model for future REDD+ work both within Nigeria, and West Africa as a whole. Therefore, the success and failures of the work conducted will have large impacts for all other work done by the UN-REDD+ Programme throughout that region of the African continent. Furthermore, the Programme's work in Nigeria will set the precedent for the amount to which the voices, knowledge, and experience of local, forest dependent communities is included or excluded during future UN-REDD+ work conducted in West Africa.

Document Type	<u>Number of Documents</u>
Request Form	2
Survey	1
Presentations*	25
Media	6
National Program Document	29
Event Notes	7
Submission Form	2
PGA Document**	8
Job Posting	1
Regional Report	1
Information Note	1

Figure 2: Chart of UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria document types reviewed in this study

*Official UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria Presentations

**Participatory Governance Assessments

Analysis

This study's analysis will explore the narratives of the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria. While the program took place over eight years; 2009-2016, the span of the analysis will be confined to the range of the Programme's documents: 2009-2020. The narratives being explored pertain to the following larger themes: narratives around deforestation and forest degradation and an inventory of actors. The narratives surrounding deforestation and forest degradation are directly linking to how one measures such a phenomenon because one can only discuss deforestation in a particular region after they have taken an inventory and determined a deforestation rate. Therefore, how deforestation is measured: what is counted, what areas are monitored, what information is used to determine change of forests over what time line, has a direct effect on how it is then discussed. By examining these narratives, the study hopes to provide insight into arguably one of the most important reforestation efforts conducted by REDD+ in terms of its past, present, and future impacts on landscapes and people(s). The Programme and lessons learned from it will be used as a model and reference for future UN-REDD+ projects throughout Nigeria, West Africa, and the global south.

The first section: narratives around deforestation and forest degradation, examines the method by which deforestation statistics were gathered throughout the program, what various documents discuss as prime drivers of deforestation and degradation and where they place emphasis, and how these narratives change and/or remain the same over the course of the Programme's lifespan. The inventory of actors section will discuss who is and is not included throughout various stages of the Programme, the extent to which these actor's voices are heard, and how these change over the course of the Programme's lifespan.

Narratives around Deforestation, Forest Degradation, and Reforestation

Methods of Measuring Deforestation

One of the most important documents reviewed by this study in terms of narratives surround deforestation, forest degradation, and reforestation is the Nigeria Preliminary Assessment REDD Context from 2010. This document lays the foundation for how deforestation, forest degradation, and reforestation are discussed in all major UN-REDD documents throughout the duration of the Programme. The primary method utilized by the preliminary assessment to denote deforestation is through LandsAT TM satellite imagery and subsequent analysis of that imagery in order to classify and quantify forest cover throughout Nigeria.

The preliminary assessment compares and contrasts satellite images from 1991 and 2001 and marks a decrease in forested areas from 7,920 km squared in 1991 to 6,406 km squared in 2001. The satellite imagery is further compared and contrasted to Nigeria's Federal Department of Forestry assessment on agricultural areas between 1978 and 1995 which notes that agricultural areas increased by roughly eight million ha while natural forests decreased by roughly 8 million ha. The preliminary assessment, using this information in conjuncture with satellite imagery analysis, assumes a correlation between these numbers and therefore arrives at the conclusion that agriculture is the prime driver of deforestation in Nigeria. Following the same method, the preliminary assessment notes a deforestation rate of 3.5% annually in Nigeria. Interestingly enough, the deforestation rate was placed at 3.7% in the rest of the Programme's national documents as seen in the Draft National Programme Document Nigeria which was published March 2011, four months after the preliminary assessment was published (December 2010). It is important to note that the areas that were viewed via satellite imagery were not explored in person by those conducting the preliminary assessment. This would have, at the very least, been

a valuable way to fact-check their assumption of land use change from forested land to agricultural land.

This method: the comparison of satellite imagery over a relatively short time span, is the method heavily utilized when determining the rate of deforestation, total area of deforestation, and land-use change throughout the entirety of the Programme. In 2015, a second assessment of satellite images was conducted by the National Space Research and Development Agency in tandem with a FAO report which monitored land cover change from 2000-2007-2014. This report maintains that agricultural extension is the primary driver of deforestation. However, unlike the preliminary assessment conducted in 2010, the Programme not only utilized satellite imagery, but also conducted participatory social surveys in order to gather their information. This allows for on the ground research to take place and therefore provides more information on the drivers of deforestation and created a new, and arguably more accurate, baseline for the Programme to work with. It is important to note that throughout the course of the Programme various documents; such as Concept Note for initial phase of the PGA 2011, Nigeria Readiness Presentation Proposal (RPP) 2013, and UN-REDD PB15 Annex 7 Nigeria National Programme Semi-Annual Progress Report 2015, state that more “data for REDD+ is needed to identify the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, to help design appropriate interventions to tackle these drivers...” (Concept Note for Initial Phase of the PGA, 4).

Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation Timeline

In the buildup to the implementation of the REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria, a brochure and a presentation; Carbon, Biodiversity & ecosystem services: exploring co-benefits Nigeria Preliminary Results 10/2010 and Nigeria Presentation PB511/2010 respectively, discuss the drivers of deforestation. While they both include agriculture and fuelwood usage as primary

drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, the brochure includes overgrazing, bush burning, and oil exploration as secondary drivers. However, the presentation given in November of 2010 notes that logging, poverty, weak policy, and weak institutional capacity. Both the brochure and the presentation gave information, albeit differing slightly in what was included, on the findings of Nigeria Preliminary Assessment which came out in December of 2010.

The Nigeria Preliminary Assessment conducted in 2010 formed the foundation upon which much of the narratives surrounding the drivers of deforestation in Nigeria and CRS built off of. Using satellite imagery and land-use change information provided by the Nigerian government, the assessment concluded that the drivers of deforestation could be divided into two categories: direct and indirect (Nigeria Preliminary Assessment REDD Context, 2010). The assessment lists the following as direct drivers: agricultural expansion including pasture development; unsustainable wood extraction for timber, fuel wood, and charcoal; infrastructure extension for roads, settlements, pipelines, open pit mines, hydroelectric dams, etc.; and forest fires caused by annual bush burning. The Programme's preliminary assessment labels agricultural expansion and commercial logging as the largest drivers of deforestation: "even though all the above-mentioned drivers of deforestation have a significant impact on forests, unsustainable agricultural intensification and commercial logging practices respectively tops the lists of deforestation drivers, while urbanization and domestic energy uses follow (Nigeria Preliminary Assessment REDD Context, 45). They note this not only for Nigeria on the whole, but also for CRS. Indirect drivers include macro-economic factors, governance factors, outdated forestry laws, weak capacity at state and federal level, demographic factors, and technological factors amongst others. The direct and indirect drivers listed in this document are often quoted

directly over the course of the Programme throughout various documents as justification of REDD+ efforts in Nigeria as a whole and CRS.

The Draft National Programme Document Nigeria (published in March 2011) and the Nigeria National Programme Document (published in September 2011) both reflected these drivers and listed them almost verbatim in their respective sections on the drivers of deforestation. What is important to note about the discussion in these two documents is their emphasis on subsistence farming and home fuel-wood usage as opposed to commercial farming and illegal timber and fuel-wood harvesting. By framing the drivers in such a manner, these reports place increased blame and responsibility on individuals within forest communities as opposed to larger, commercial scale farmers and timber harvesters. The Nigeriacan Newsletter; a Nigerian Climate Action Network Newsletter, published in February 2011 drives this point home with an article about Nigeria and CRS beginning their work with the UN REDD+ program by focusing on fuel-wood usage as a prime driver of deforestation as well as a national health issue.

The first document of the Programme to call attention to the possible shortcomings of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation as listed by the Preliminary Assessment was a concept note for the initial phase of the PGA Pilot in Nigeria (Concept Note for the Initial Phase of the PGA Pilot in Nigeria, 7/2011). The document called for “governance data for REDD+ is needed to identify the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, to help design appropriate interventions to tackle these drivers, and to assess and review the effects of these interventions” (4). This language denotes a lack of understanding on the part of the Programme at this point about current drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

This critique is further drawn out in a third-party assessment of the national program document conducted by Global Witness in October of 2011. Global Witness’s assessment of the

Nigeria national program document largely critiqued the document for its lack of discussion around the drivers of deforestation in Nigeria, particularly the indirect causes: “Global Witness’ review of the Nigeria’s draft NPD dated March 2011 recommended that it include greater detail in its analysis of the drivers of deforestation/forest degradation, which was limited in that draft to five paragraphs and a short table” (4). Unfortunately, these critiques of the Programme’s drivers of deforestation and forest degradation were largely not acted upon for some time. This is shown in both the UN-REDD PB7 Nigeria Submission Form B (published in May 2012) and the Presentation at the REDD+ University: Governance dimensions in REDD+ (published in March 2012) which list the same direct drivers of deforestation and place emphasis on subsistence agriculture and personal fuelwood usage respectively.

October of 2011 also marketed a departure from the preliminary assessment’s emphasis on subsistence agricultural practices and personal fuelwood usage during a presentation given by Chairman of the CRS Forestry Commission Odigha Odigha at the Oslo Governance Forum in Norway. During his presentation on forest governance in Cross River State, Nigeria, Odigha placed emphasis on illegal logging activities and agricultural activities as the prime driver of deforestation in CRS as opposed to agricultural expansion and fuelwood usage. Odigha made an important distinction in his presentation on fuelwood. He stated that it is the fuelwood trade, as opposed to its usage that drives deforestation and forest degradation. Due to the high demand for fuelwood throughout CRS and Nigeria as a whole, illegal loggers fell trees in forests in order to supply vendors around the state and country with fuelwood for sales. This distinction shifts blame for deforestation from those using fuelwood to those manufacturing it. On agriculture, Odigha spoke about harmful agricultural practices such as pesticide and herbicide usage as opposed to agricultural expansion.

The narrative around the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation continues to evolve through 2012. In April of 2012 Odigha Odigha; then Chairman of the Forestry Commission of Cross River State, gave a presentation on anti-corruption for REDD in Lusaka, Zambia. During this presentation, Odigha pointed to poverty and corruption as main drivers of deforestation pointing to Nigeria's growing poverty and unemployment levels. Odigha listed further challenges to combating deforestation as "wavering political will at the national level to combat corruption," as well as "insufficient involvement of ordinary citizens in the fight against corruption and weak institution to cope with forest law enforcement" (slide 4). Interestingly, Odigha includes individual citizens in his placement of blame, but instead of in an agricultural setting, he does so for allowance of pervasive corruption. In September of 2012, the UN-REDD Nigeria REDD+ Readiness Programme Final Version stated that commercial logging is just as much of a driver as agricultural expansion.

In 2013, the narrative around deforestation and forest degradation expanded again, this time to evaluate the role of the private sector. A presentation titled private sector-related drivers of deforestation in Cross River State, Nigeria took place in January of 2013. The presentation defined "private sector activities" that drive deforestation as "economic activities and establishments that directly or indirectly degrade forest significantly," and noted that "the private sector is a critical stakeholder to engage with for the REDD+ to succeed" (3). The presentation emphasized the private sector's role in deforestation and forest degradation by exploring commercial extraction of fuelwood (including charcoal production), oil bunkering and associated oil spillage, timber and logging activities, and commercial agricultural and large-scale farming. Similar to Odigha's presentation, the presentation noted that commercial fuelwood producers and illegal logging groups cut down vast swathes of forests in order to harvest wood for fuelwood

vendors. The presentation also noted that illegal oil and logging activities are surrounded in bribes. Furthermore, the presentation noted that large-scale agricultural practices for large-scale farms burn large amounts of forest and use chemicals to boost growth, increase harvest, and control weeds while destroying forestscapes. This was the first mention of a deeper assessment being conducted on the role of the private sector and its impact on forested areas.

In 2014 the UN's GEF Small Grants Programme began working in Nigeria. Their brief report once again emphasized agricultural practices of forest dependent communities and their use of fuelwood as main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, but also included poor forest management, poverty, and low capacity and skills of forest communities as drivers (13-15, Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan, 2015). The report also cited a FAO 2010 forest resource assessment on Nigeria and stated that the deforestation rate had increased from 2.7% for 1990-2000 to 4.0% for 2005-2010 (5). Of particular note, the Nigeria Readiness preparation proposal was published in December 2015. They maintain the 3.7% deforestation rate while noting that is amongst the highest in the world. They refer to the drivers of deforestation as multi-fold and multi-layered, and varying depending on region (7). The document once again states that the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in Nigeria can be put into two categories: direct and indirect.

The Nigeria Readiness Preparation Proposal (RPP) document states that direct drivers include agricultural land change which primarily has occurred due to subsistence needs though also for commercial production, removal of timber for fuelwood, infrastructure, and forest fires from annual bush burning (43). This is a similar list to that of the Preliminary Assessment, however commercial agricultural production has been included and fuelwood usage has been replaced with fuelwood harvesting. This change in language is important to note because it

incorporates private sector activities more than previous national program documents. The language surrounding the indirect drivers of deforestation also changed. The document reports them as policy and market failures, governance, demographics, poverty, and macroeconomics (46-48). This is different from both the Preliminary Assessment and other national program documents in that it does not include technological factors and does include factors such as exploitation of forest communities. However, the most interesting take away from this document is how it is honest with itself. While it speaks to the drivers of deforestation in Nigeria and CRS, it admits that the information, mostly provided by the Preliminary Assessment, is not completely accurate: “this analysis gives an old picture (up to 1993/1995), and there is a lack of recent data on the direct drivers of deforestation and forest degradation to update this. It is clear that a more detailed understanding is needed so that the appropriate interventions can be introduced. Recent studies on drivers of deforestation are needed” (44-45).

The Centre for Ecological and Community Development gave a presentation in which they showed photographs of agricultural activities which was published in May 2016. The presentation identified logging, slash and burn practices, and the planting of cocoa and kola nut trees as the largest drivers of forestation and forest degradation in the Nigerian Rainforest. A back report on the analysis of risks and benefits related to REDD+ Cross River State Nigeria came out in December of 2016. The report emphasized the risk of large-scale infrastructure becoming a potentially larger driver of deforestation in CRS.

A report on using spatial analysis to explore multiple benefits from REDD+ actions in CRS was published in January of 2017. The report mostly reiterates recent rhetoric surrounding the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation though it elaborates and expands on them. It listed agricultural development as the primary driver of deforestation, however it makes a point

of discussing both subsistence farming techniques such as slash-and-burn and bush fallowing as well as commercial agricultural production for products like palm oil, cocoa, rubber, and pineapple. Similarly, logging, timber extraction, and fuelwood extraction are separated from each other and the users of fuelwood are discussed from an empathetic view point as opposed to receiving blame. Mining and quarrying once again is mentioned as a driver, however its status has been elevated to that of a key driver of forest loss, as has ineffective management of protected areas and community forests.

The report discusses familiar indirect drivers as well such as demographic trends in relation to population growth and economic causes like poverty and clearing forests for short term profit seeking. Technological factors, policy weaknesses, and institutional failures are brought back into the discussion. It is one of the first times however, that traditional factors have been mentioned in the discussion of indirect drivers. The report notes that local communities may hold conflicting beliefs over the appropriate use of forests (26).

Two documents from the Programme that discussed deforestation and forest degradation were published in 2018 (2). These documents by and large paint a more holistic picture of deforestation and forest degradation in Nigeria and CRS. Both the Infobrief Nigeria UN-REDD Strategy which was published in March of 2018 and the Integrated analysis for a REDD+ Strategy in Nigeria with Focus on Cross River State: Report of Private Sector Engagement Status in REDD+ and Recommendations which was published in April of 2018 list agriculture, forestry practices, energy, minerals and quarrying, and infrastructure as direct drivers of deforestation. However, these two documents differ in their analysis of these drivers. In terms of agriculture, the Infobrief points to extensive and unsustainable crop production practices, agro-processing which relies on wood fuel, lack of agricultural intensification incentives, and the use of fire for

land production whereas the Integrated Analysis places emphasis on subsistence agriculture, stating that 87% of households in rural CRS depend on it and that farmers expand their farmlands due to high demand and low crop yields for cash crops.

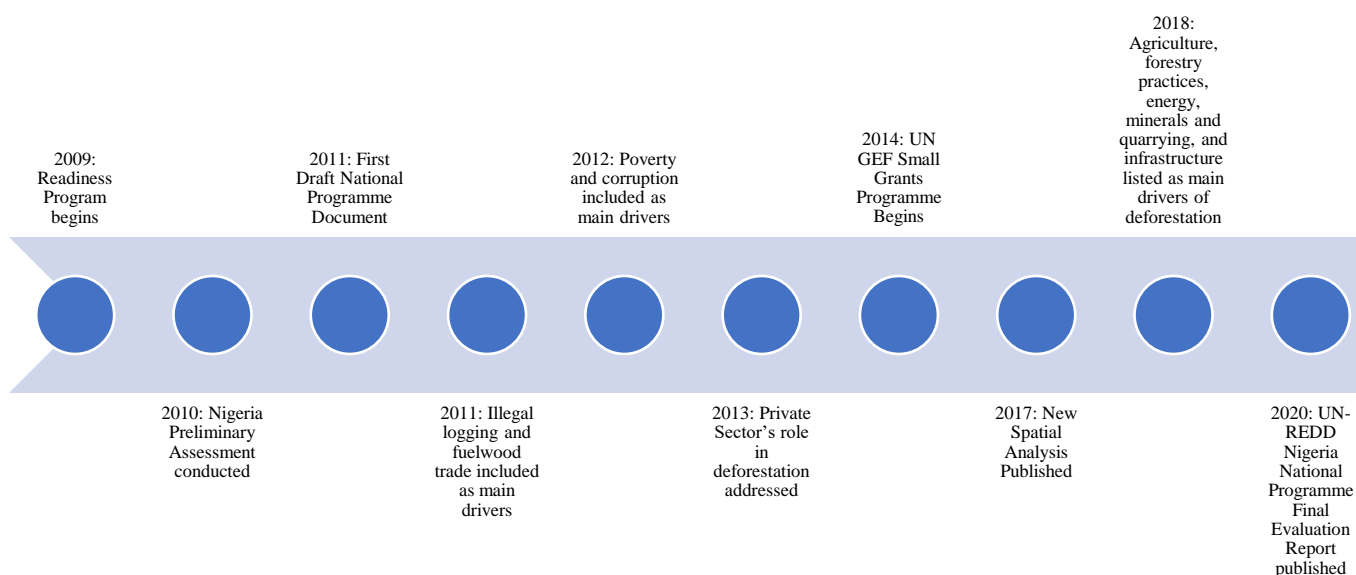
In terms of forestry, the Infobrief discusses uncontrolled harvesting and encroachment of protected areas, overexploitation and unsustainable harvesting, and uncontrolled forest fires. Both documents place emphasis fuelwood and charcoal production as opposed to usage in their discussion of energy. The Integrated Analysis document also lists unsustainable timber harvesting caused by illegal harvesting and timber extraction in CRS. Both documents discuss mineral extraction and quarrying activities and discuss the clearing of forests for mining sites and settlements, harvesting of timber for mining infrastructure, and pollution from mine effluents. Infrastructure development is discussed by both documents in terms of unplanned infrastructure which does not optimize environmental, social, and economic goals. Only the Integrated Analysis mentions the private sector's role in deforestation, but not as a driver of deforestation. Instead, the document states that the private sector has a direct impact on deforestation and forest degradation through agriculture, forestry, and infrastructure developments (12).

The final document to discuss the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation is the UN-REDD Nigeria National Programme Final Evaluation Report which was published in October of 2020. After almost ten years of work in Nigeria and CRS, this document demonstrates an arguably more accurate understanding of the key drivers of deforestation. The document states that both direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation have been established and analyzed in depth (69). The drivers are once again separated into direct and indirect groups. The document lists long-term human exploitation for agricultural development, fuelwood extraction and reliance (approximately two thirds of Nigerians rely on wood as their

primary source of fuel), uncontrolled forest harvesting, illegal logging, mining and quarrying activities, infrastructure development, urbanization, oil spillage, droughts, and soil erosion as direct drivers. This is a much more comprehensive list than has been previously seen in any other document and includes, for the first time, environmental factors such as droughts and soil erosion as direct drivers. The indirect drivers listed in the document include inadequate policy and regulatory measures, lack of adequate extension services, low institutional capacity, and policy conflicts.

Over the span of the Programme, the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation expand from the preliminary assessment. At the beginning, the direct drivers were limited in their scope and largely placed blame on the activities of individuals such as subsistence agricultural practices and fuelwood usage. The number of direct drivers of deforestation also expanded. In the preliminary assessment, four direct drivers are listed: agricultural practices, unsustainable wood extraction, infrastructure, and forest fires. By the close of the Programme, the direct drivers have both increased in number (10) and have been explored in more detail. Agricultural expansion evolved to list subsistence farming practices as well as large-scale agricultural activities such as pineapple production. The emphasis on fuelwood shifted from usage to extraction by both legal and illegal means and at times was viewed as an equal driver to agricultural practices. Infrastructure largely stayed the same, but came to include a discussion of the private sector's role in its expansion. Forest fires remained a driver, but became tied closer to agricultural practices. Finally, new direct drivers such as mining and quarrying activities, urbanization, oil spillage, droughts, and soil erosion emerged and were included in later documents.

Timeline of Narrative Change



Inventory of Actors

Throughout the Programme's timeline various actors were engaged with at varying times. By actors, the study is referring to UN personnel, members of Nigeria's federal level of government, members of Nigeria's state level of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), members of the private sector, members of academia, the media, community leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), and forest dependent communities. The term civil society organization refers is used as a catch all by the Programme, and therefore this study, to describe all groups/organizations that do not fall under the other groups of people such as women's groups, community farming groups, etc. Over the course of this section of analysis, the study will examine (to the extent to which is possible) when and how these groups were engaged with to determine the amount to which these groups' voices were heard and their thoughts

incorporated into the Programme. This is important because it will show the extent to which the people impacted by the Programme had say in it, thus demonstrating the degree of autonomy they have.

The Programme began with a request sent to the UN-REDD program to engage in REDD+ work by members of Nigeria's federal government, members of CRS's state government, and the CSO Climate Change Network Nigeria (Climate Change Network Nigeria, 2009). The UN-REDD program reviewed the request and approved it thereby agreeing to begin a REDD+ Readiness Program in Nigeria. Following approval for REDD+ work to commence, Nigeria's Ministry of Environment and the Programme conducted a REDD+ Survey in order to determine a preliminary budget of 2 million US dollars for the program and discuss drivers of deforestation in Nigeria. At this stage of the program, the beginning, multiple actors had already been engaged with by the Programme. In addition, the fact that a request was made by Nigerians for REDD+ work to begin highlights the strong foundation of inclusion upon which the Programme began.

In September of 2010, Nigeria's Ministry of Environment conducted a workshop with government stakeholders, CSOs, and forest dependent communities on the importance of community-based development in regards to REDD+ work. The presenters were members of the Convention of Biological Diversity and the National Coordinator of REDD+ in Nigeria. During the presentation, the presenters laid the groundwork for the beginning of the Programme: "The mechanisms through which the views of indigenous and local communities are considered will be via stakeholder consultation visits, field works, participation at NTC meetings, sensitization workshops, etc. from which they will be collated and incorporated into the REDD+ planning and implementation process" (Nigeria: Ministry of Environment CBD and REDD+ Programmes

Presentation at Workshop 9/20/2010-9/23/2010, 2). These were not mere words spoken to gain applause and approval. As demonstrated by the Nigeria Presentation – PB5 in November of 2010, the UN-REDD team followed through and conducted field visits in Nigeria and CRS where they met with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, held workshops, and debriefed with the Federal Minister for Environment as well as the CRS Governor. The presentation to the UN Policy Board was given by Odigha Odigha: the Board Chairman of the CRS Forestry Commission, and Salisu Dahiru: the National REDD+ Coordinator.

From the beginning, the Programme was set up to be carried out through a two-track approach: REDD+ work would be conducted at both the federal level and the state level with a focus on activities at the community level (Communique of the Nigeria National Validation Workshop). This approach was approved during a Nigeria National Validation Workshop held in Abuja, Nigeria in February of 2011. Approximately 100 members were in attendance at the workshop. They consisted of people from and representatives of the following groups: NGOs, CSOs, forest community leaders, academic experts, researchers, senior officials from the federal and state governments, representatives from other Nigerian states, members of the private sector, the media, international development partners, and the UN-REDD mission.

The Draft National Programme Document Nigeria published in March of 2011 further highlights the inclusion of various stakeholders with which the Programme has engaged with up to this point. According to the document, the Programme had thus far engaged with the following stakeholders at the national level: the Federal Ministry of Environment, National Forestry Development Committee, and the National Council on Environment through workshops, meetings, and various discussions. At the state level, the Programme had mostly engaged with the Governor of CRS and CRS Forestry Commission stating that the later had been

instrumental in driving forward the REDD agenda in the state and that the CRS Governor had been instrumental in lobbying the federal government as well as the international community (20). The Draft National Programme Document also identified 45 Forest Management Committees (FMCs) which represent 75 forest communities around CRS and stated that these FMCs are responsible for managing most of the state's community forests (20). They give particular attention to the work of the Ekuri community, which has overseen the conservation of over 33,00 ha of community forest. It is important to note the Programme's awareness of these stakeholders because it shows that these communities are not only acknowledged by the Programme, but that the Programme intends to engage with them direct moving forward: "Notably, a picture is emerging of the need for high investments in coordination and dialogue, including consultation, participation, and stakeholder engagement. These items, although initially costly, are proving highly beneficial" (Draft National Programme Document Nigeria, 30).

One of the main issues that the Program encountered while planning and conducting their work in Nigeria was accountability and transparency. One of the ways the Programme addressed this issue was through Participatory Governance Assessments (PGAs). PGAs were first officially discussed in regards to the Programme during a workshop titled Participatory Governance Assessments for REDD+ - Intro to brainstorming workshop for Nigeria which was held in Lagos in May of 2011. This workshop laid the foundation for who would be responsible for conducting PGAs and why it was important for these groups to be included. Throughout the discussion, emphasis is placed on having country-led and country owned PGAs in order to ensure accountability of the Programme to domestic stakeholders and to provide a strong sense of ownership of the Programme by domestic stakeholders. The workshop called for a variety of

stakeholders including member of academia, state governments, forestry offices, and local communities such as the 45 active forest management committees across CRS to engage in PGA work at various program levels (23). This shows an effort on the part of the Programme to involve multiple stakeholders in both design of and data collection for PGA work that will be conducted by the Programme.

Shortly after the PGA workshop, the Programme released a concept note for the initial phase of the PGA pilot in Nigeria. The concept note was published in July of 2011 and discusses how and why government entities and other stakeholders should have responsibility over conducting PGA work. It states that having various stakeholders participate in PGAs will provide for meaningful accountability to domestic stakeholders, will maintain the credibility of a national REDD+ mechanism, and will provide for strong ownership which will lead to increased likelihood of following up on recommendations which result from PGA work. This is important to note because it shows that the Programme intends to empower Nigerians to self-govern the Programme as opposed to an international third party or the UN-REDD+ program. Whilst still in the planning phase of PGA work, National Coordinator of REDD+ Salisu Dahiru gave a presentation in October of 2011 which emphasized the importance of stakeholder participation stating that it needed to be present from the very beginning of PGA work. Dahiru suggested that the Governance Working Team should consist of representatives from national and state governments, CSOs, forest-dependent communities, national data and fiduciary control agencies, academia, and the media.

A technical consultation on social and environmental safeguards in Nigeria was held in Abuja in August of 2011 (Nigeria Technical Consultation Report Final, 2011). This technical consultation was attended by 18 individuals representing federal and state governments, federal

and state NGOs, and the UNEP in order to talk about social and environmental safeguards of REDD+ in Nigeria. Of the 18 participants, 1 was from the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 5 were from the Federal Ministry of Environment, 4 were from the CRS Forestry Commission, 2 were from UNEP, 2 were from Women Environment Program, 1 was a consultant, 1 was from Development in Nigeria, 1 from the REDD Unit, and 1 was from CRS Civil Society. These stakeholders discussed and suggested edits to the Programme's social and environmental principles and criteria by which it adheres to (Nigeria Technical Consultation Report Final 2011, 13-17). Of note are changes to the vocabulary of the principles and criteria in order to expand on them and/or make them fit to Nigerian contexts. For example, the group critiqued the use of the term "indigenous peoples" stating that it is not a relevant term in Nigeria and therefore should not be used in subsequent documents (17). Furthermore, the group made a point of expanding the term "vulnerable and marginalized groups" so that it specifically included women, youth, and the disabled (17). This serves as an example of how actual Nigerian stakeholders retained control over the language utilized by the Programme and ensured that at least some of the language that was used was both relevant to and respectful of Nigerian customs and cultures.

In September of 2011 the Programme published its National Programme Document. The NPD was officially signed and approved by the UN Resident Coordinator, the FAO Country Representative, the UNDP Country Director, the UNEP Director Division of Environmental Policy, Nigerian Federal Minister of Environment, and the Governor of CRS. This shows agreement of the program at three levels: UN, National government, and State government. Amongst other things, the NPD notes two workshops that were held in 2011. Each workshop was attended by over 100 stakeholders representing NGOs, CSOs, forest community leaders, academics, federal and state government officials, the private sector, the media, international

development partners, and the UN-REDD mission. One workshop was held in Nigeria's federal capital while the other was held in CRS's capital. This is important to note because it shows an effort by the Programme to hold workshops/discussions with stakeholders in two settings: federal and state which also allows for various voices to be heard. It also shows some consideration was given for travel limitations of stakeholders. Both workshops emphasized active community-participation and engagement, gender equality and social inclusion, and that REDD+ activities and benefits should reach communities equally. This shows a commitment by the Programme to include, rather than exclude, as many people(s) and communities as possible in a fair and equitable way.

Several presentations were given in October and November of 2011 by Salisu Dahiru: National REDD+ Coordinator, and Odigha Odigha: Chairman of the Forestry Commission CRS, Nigeria with Dahiru representing the federal level of the Programme and Odigha representing the state level. These presentations were given at conventions outside of Nigeria in places such as Cape Town, South Africa and Berlin, Germany, and Oslo, Norway in order to educate and collaborate with other people conducting REDD+ work. This shows ownership of the Programme by Nigerians as it is they who are talking about it as opposed to a non-Nigerian UN representative. A presentation given by Odigha at the Oslo Governance Forum in October of 2011 contains a slide of particular note. It shows a document with signatures from representatives of the Iko-Ekpreem, Owai, and Ifumkpa communities stating that they have met and discussed, and agreed to partner with the CRS Forestry Commission in their REDD+ work (Forest Governance in Cross River State, Nigeria Presentation by Odigha at OGF, 9). The document was signed by clan, village, women, and youth leaders as well as three coordinators. This demonstrates direct collaboration and approval of the Programme by forest communities.

In early 2012 the Programme's PGA work began to get more fleshed out. During a presentation on the PGA process in Nigeria, Odigha Odigha discussed expanding the PGA structure to include a Governance Working Group at the Federal level, a Governance Working Group at the state level, and a PGA Research Team. The five members of the federal level group would consist of members of the already existing National Technical REDD+ Committee to ensure coordination and overall planning of the PGA process. The five members of the state level group would consist off members of the CRS Forestry Commission and from the CRS Stakeholders Forum. Finally, the Research Team would consist of five experts from members of the following institutions: Building Nigeria Response to Climate Change, NISER, University of Calabar (Climate Change Working Group), University of IFE, Federal University of Agriculture, Nigerian Youth Climate Coalition, and the National Board of Statistics. It is important to note that members of each of the PGA working groups are all Nigerian nationals and not international NGOs, international financial institutions, or intergovernmental organizations under this framework. This further exemplifies Nigerian ownership of the Programme.

In June of 2012, Odigha Odigha, Sylvanus Abua: CSO representative, and Ochuko Odibo; a special assistant to the Federal Minister of Environment held a two-day PGA workshop in CRS. The workshop consisted of 79 participants representing staff of the CRS Forestry Commission, ministries, departments and Agencies in CRS, CSOs, Forest-dependent communities, academia, and CRS House of Assembly with members of the Climate Change Working Group at the University of Calabar providing facilitation support. Given the opportunity to have their voices heard, those attending the workshop provided culturally relevant strategies to problems surrounding deforestation in forest dependent communities such as re-orienting local communities on the need to return back to the traditional practice of planting a

tree whenever a child is born (Nigeria Cross River State PGA Workshop June 2012, 6). This demonstrates Nigerian ownership of the Programme and strategies it intended to use.

Ownership of the Programme by Nigerians was once again demonstrated in March of 2012 in a program submission form sent by the Federal Ministry of Environment Nigeria and the Forestry Commission of CRS to UN-REDD Policy board members (UN-REDD PB7 Nigeria Submission Form B, 2012). The document outlined how the Programme will be implemented at the national level through the Special Climate Change Unit and via technical support from the Federal Department of Forestry, and at the state level via the Forestry Commission of CRS. Responsibility for technical advice and support across the entire program was designated to the National REDD+ Technical Committee who was set to work in close cooperation with CRS's REDD+ team (4). The document stated that "In view of the weak capacities for REDD+ in the country and the wish of country stakeholders to progress at a good pace, the Programme will recruit a number of national and international professionals to support smooth implementation, provide high technical quality and foster dynamic stakeholder engagement" (4). While the call for international professionals may at first seem to suggest leasing ownership of part of the program, the fact that these professionals were asked for by country stakeholders suggests otherwise. Furthermore, the program submission form also stated that Nigeria requested to pilot UN-REDD+ PGA in order to improve their own governance and that it will be conducted under a country led process (8). This demonstrates clear ownership of this aspect of the Programme by Nigerian stakeholders.

Potential roles for and engagement with members of the private sector emerge later in 2012. A document titled National Programmes Revision Table Septiembre 2012 expressed that the private sector has expressed eagerness for REDD+, but at this time the Programme had not

clearly determined how to incorporate them into its planned actions. Similar to expediting technical support as mentioned above, the Programme plans on consulting with international experts to determine how to engage and incorporate the private sector into the REDD+ program. At this time, they plan on “drawing from UN experience, ...successful NGO-business alliance for forest conservation, and the international banking community” (1).

In January of 2013, the Programme held a series of PGA workshops throughout three pilot communities within CRS (Stakeholder Analysis, 2013). The PGA team itself consisted of Nigerians with backgrounds in education, development, and social and environmental sciences. Over the span of a week the PGA team traveled to Esuk Mbah, Iko Esai, and Baunchor. They conducted voluntary focal group discussions, in-depth interviews, and surveys with village leaders, community groups (men, women, and youth groups), religious associations, and other CSO members (Overall preliminary research for the PGA in Nigeria, CRS Level, 2013 & Stakeholder Analysis, 2013). One of the more interesting things of note that came of these meetings with community members was determining how to transfer knowledge to communities in a culturally sensitive manner. Four traditional means were discussed: disseminating information via a town crier, religious meetings, town’s notice boards, community engagement opportunities (Traditional Means of Communication, 2013).

The town crier was seen as a good first step, however it was noted that women are never given the role and that men in the town are the ones who choose the crier. Utilization of religious meetings was encouraged due to the high esteem that leaders in these communities hold. Community engagement opportunities included town council meetings, town hall meetings, youth sessions, women’s groups, and age grades. By utilizing these various means, members of the PGA team hoped to reach as many people as possible in a manner that is familiar with

community leaders that hold authority. This demonstrates an effort at engagement with forest dependent communities by the Nigerian led PGA team in a way that is culturally sensitive. It also demonstrates a desire by the PGA team to empower these communities to conduct this work on their own as opposed to being dictated to.

In November of 2013, the Federal Ministry of Environment and the CRS Forestry Commission held a workshop on the Nigeria safeguards and multiple benefits in regards to REDD+ work occurring in Nigeria. Presentations were given over two days by a variety of actors including Odigha Odigha, representatives of UNEP/UN-REDD, Nigeria Union of Journalists, UNDP, CSOs, and the Cross River State Forestry Commission (Final Nigeria Safeguards & Multiple Benefits workshop report, 2013). The 30 representatives in attendance included members of the National REDD+ Secretariat, several NGOs, forest dependent communities, CRS Forestry commission, and UN-REDD personnel. The presenters worked together with those in attendance to cover and analyze a variety of future actions that the program would undertake. For the purposes of this study, the workshop and joint work conducted during it exemplify the collective effort on the part of Nigerians to shape and direct the work of the Programme.

In a similar manner, a workshop was held between October 30th, and November 12th of 2013. The workshop was organized by the CRS Forestry commission and the Federal Ministry of Environment. The workshop once again had an attendance of 30 people representing the CRS Forestry Commission, UN-REDD personnel, forest dependent communities, academics, NGOs, and the federal government. Unlike the workshop mentioned above, a majority of the representatives hailed from the CRS Forestry commission. Of particular note was that attendees wanted to ensure that the federal government paid close attention to the impact that community activities and seasonal occurrences; i.e. rainy season, may have on implementing REDD+ work

and holding meeting with community members. This is important to note because it demonstrates consideration for community needs and concerns in relation to proposed work.

The spatial analysis conducted during the workshop is the largest thing to come from the workshop. Whereas the Programme's initial summary of the state of deforestation and forest degradation used data from outside sources; primarily satellite imagery, this iteration engaged with members of forest-dependent communities, state governmental actors, and federal governmental actors and utilized their knowledge to form an arguably more accurate picture of the state of deforestation and forest degradation in CRS and Nigeria. This inclusion of local knowledge is reflected in the changing narrative on deforestation and forest degradation as identified in this study's previous analysis section.

In June of 2015, the Programme alongside the CRS REDD+ Secretariat organized and held a workshop on reorganizing Nigeria's REDD+ safeguards working group. The workshop was attended by 34 people total; 12 from the UN-REDD Programme, nine from federal and state government agencies, five from CSOs, three forest-dependent communities, two from institutions, and 3 from the media (Meeting Minutes "Reorganization of the Nigeria REDD+ Safeguards Working Group, 2015). The purpose of the workshop was to restructure the Safeguard's Working Group and in that regard it was partially successful. While they failed to elect a chair for the group, they did determine that the group should be limited to 15 persons and that these persons should represent a variety of stakeholders. In the end, the group of 15 consisted of eight people from government entities, two people from CSOs, one person from the private sector, two people from academia, one person from the media, and one person from a forest dependent community (5). What is of main concern for the purposes of this study, is that various attendee's voices were heard throughout the workshop and that their concerns were

addressed. The meeting notes themselves show that when questions and concerns were raised by attendees, they were addressed and discussed. This demonstrates inclusivity and a collaborative approach in the structuring of part of the Programme: the Safeguards Working Group.

Arguably one of the most important events to occur in regards to inclusion and empowerment of forest dependent communities took place in 2014-2015. For context, CBR+ is a partnership between the UN-REDD Programme and the GEF Small Grants Programme which focuses on issuing grants of up to \$50,000 USD for projects organized by “CSOs, including national and local NGOs, Community-based organizations and grassroots organizations to empower communities and indigenous peoples to engage in REDD+ readiness activities, and develop experiences, lessons, and recommendations at the local level to feed into national REDD+ processes” (Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan, 4). Beginning in December of 2014, Community-Based REDD+ (CBR+) engaged with the Programme and more importantly, forest dependent communities.

Consultations were held with 52 communities in the three pilot sites in CRS. They began by consulting community leaders and holding town hall meetings. In four consultations in Esai, Old and New Ekuri, Esuk Mba, and Baunchor, more than 150 people attended including men, women, and youth. CBR+ then progressed by conducting participatory consultations in order to ensure more effective participation and gather more in-depth information (Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan, 2015). This allowed for opportunities such as in Ekuri/Iko where women in the community were able to express their concerns and ideas such as improved productivity of agriculture which they argued would limit encroachment into forests. Village leaders in Old and New Ekuri expressed that CBR+ projects should be led by NGOs and needed to be community specific in order to suit the specific needs of each community. The leaders expressed that

projects in the past had utilized generic templates which led to less participation due to lack of community specific relevance. The CBR+ team also met with members of academia, CSOs, media, and the private sector between September and December of 2014. Information gathered during consultations was shared with the National REDD+ Secretariat to ensure that the concerns, priorities, and plans of forest dependent communities could be incorporated, if they were not already incorporated, in the Programme.

The CBR+ plan itself was discussed at a CRS REDD+ Stakeholder Forum which occurred in December of 2014. Representatives from forest dependent communities; paramount rulers, clan heads; local, state, and federal government agencies; CSOs; community-based organizations, the media, the private sector, and academia were all in attendance at the forum. After three days of discussions, the CBR+ plan was confirmed as representing the concerns, priorities, and plans of forest dependent communities and the Programme. The Economic Adviser to the CRS Government and Vice Chairman of the State's Planning Commission said this of CBR+ and the CBR+ plan: “[it is an] essential process and tool of the REDD+ Program in Nigeria that we are happy and privileged to be part of to enable us to think through measures that we can practically apply in building and sustaining a green and forest carbon-based economy while correcting the damages we have caused to our environment and to our lives” (Nigeria CBR+ Country Plan 2015, 11).

Previously, these communities had been represented at workshops, trainings, and conferences by a small number of people comparatively speaking to other represented groups in attendance. The addition of CBR+ to the Programme allowed forest dependent communities direct access to apply for financial resources which could be utilized for community specific projects. Indeed, after the CBR+ plan was approved 33 CSOs submitted concept notes to

implement projects in 30 REDD+ pilot communities (UN-REDD PB15 Annex 7 Nigeria National Programme Semi-Annual Progress Report 2015, 2015). In other words, the addition of CBR+ dramatically increased the autonomy of forest dependent communities and their organizations (women's groups, youth organizations, etc.) in regards to their ability to conduct REDD+ type work. This sentiment is reflected in the annual report of 2016 which emphasized that "community-based projects like CBR+ strengthened community and NGOs participation particularly in developing the strategy; it is possible that if commenced earlier, CBR+ has the potential to trigger more widespread participation and generate data for early results in the REDD+ readiness process" (UN-REDD Nigeria Annual Report 2016, 7). As of 2016, CBR+ had approved grants to 12 CSOs for 12 community-based projects (Nigeria NP Final Report, 2018).

In 2016, a meeting was held in order to validate the Safeguard Working Group's Risks and Benefit Analysis of candidate Policies and Measures relevant for REDD+ implementation, plan for final validation of the Risks and Benefits Analysis by the CRS REDD+ Stakeholder Forum, and to discuss future plans for developing Safeguards principles and criteria (Meeting Report for the Validation of the Cross River State REDD+ Risks and Benefits Analysis, 2016). Members of CSOs, academia, state and national REDD+ offices, and state and federal governments were in attendance. There are two important things to note about this meeting. The first is a comment made by attendee Amos Kajang. Kajang criticized both the safeguards themselves and the meeting itself for their lack of community focus. Kajang said "the safeguards have not really addressed community issues and there is little community presence in the meeting" (3). It is a fair criticism and one that could be made of many such meetings and workshops conducted by the Programme. Out of the 34 people present, there were only two community representatives.

The second important thing to note about this meeting is that it marks the first time that all presentations and all but one of the official remarks given at the meeting were done so by women. Furthermore, it was the largest amount of women proportionally of any official meeting with 12 of the 34 attendees identifying as female on the participants list (8). Even the participants list itself was marked with a first in that it actually included a column for participants to denote their gender. The Programme's inclusion, or in some instances lack thereof, will be discussed more in-depth in the following section of this study.

A report on private sector engagement came out in November of 2016 (Integrated Analysis for a REDD+ Strategy in Nigeria with Focus on Cross River State: Report on Private Sector Engagement Status in REDD+ and Recommendations, 2018). This marked the first time a report was conducted to map out possible ways to engage with various members of the private sector by the Programme. The report itself maps private sector actors that have direct connections to deforestation and/or REDD+ funding. Information for the report was gathered through members of the Programme holding meetings with business membership organizations, community-based organizations, NGOs, CSOs, and government entities. The study concluded that not only could engaging with the private sector help provide funding for REDD+ work, but that the private sector itself can have a direct impact on causing deforestation and forest degradation. The study also found that, by and large, members of the private sector had "huge knowledge gaps" in regards to environmental and REDD+ issues (7).

In 2019, three years after the Programme had ended, an information note was published on gender dimensions and the role that women in Nigeria play in regards to forest management. The information note itself contains very relevant information on how women typically are the ones that do most of the ground work and have specific knowledge about community forests. It

goes on to point out how the Programme may be able to support women working in bush mango, afang, palm oil, and fuelwood production while also learning from them. While it is important and beneficial that such a document was published by the Programme, it is only one document amongst many and, as stated earlier, it came out three years after the Programme had ended. This document will be discussed further in the following section of analysis titled Gender Dynamics.

Reflecting upon the conclusion of the program, an evaluation of the Programme in June of 2019 concluded that the Programme itself had done a good job at including and consulting stakeholders from the federal and state governments, donors, NGOs, CSOs, forest dependent community organizations, and community groups. As demonstrated by a chart in the UN-REDD Nigeria National Programme Final Evaluation Report (June 2019), both the number of CSOs actively engaged in different aspects of the program and the number of people actively engaged in advising on the development of the national strategy significantly increased between 2011 and 2014, suggesting that inclusivity increased over the course of the Programme (UN-REDD Nigeria National Programme Final Evaluation Report (June 2019), 39). The PGA working groups that were established by the Programme and their work demonstrate that governance of the Programme was clearly owned by Nigerians and not outside actors. Throughout the duration of the Programme, workshops, meetings, etc. were consistently attended by actors from a wide variety of groups, however the proportionality of these groups was not always equal and/or consistent as demonstrated by the comments of Amos Kajan at a meeting in 2016. However, the utilization of stakeholder forums at various times throughout the Programme allowed for stakeholders to validate, amend, or reject major aspects of the Programme such as the CBR+ plan and the Risks and Benefits Analysis of REDD+ related Policies and Measures in 2015. The CBR+ plan was a major tool which increased inclusivity and autonomy of forest dependent

communities by providing them with a direct line to get funding for community-based projects. The CBR+ plan was especially useful in its ability to ensure broader participation in REDD+ work by women in forest dependent communities who by and large are the ones doing the ground work of forest management in Nigeria. On the whole, this study finds that the Programme did a good job at ensuring many voices were heard from many groups, that their words had direct impact on project and program outcomes and structures, and that there was Nigerian ownership of the Programme and its parts. One of the only major shortcomings in terms of actor inclusion and empowerment was that of gender.

Gender Dynamics:

Understanding the underlying causes for discrepancy in terms of gender representation at major Programme events would require a full analysis on gender dynamics in Nigeria, gender roles in Nigeria, and the gender makeup of the organizations which were represented at various meetings throughout the lifespan of the Programme. This type of analysis is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. However, it is an important aspect of the analysis on the inventory of actors. While the study is unable to explain why these discrepancies in gender representation occurred, it is possible to note a trend of increased participation and inclusion of women in and with the Programme over time.

Inclusion and empowerment of women was written into numerous documents throughout the course of the program and is often specifically brought up as a consideration when conducting REDD+ work. While this language is arguably very important to include in REDD+ documents, it was not always reflected in the make-up of workshop and meeting groups. Women never formed the majority of these groups and rarely if ever comprised half of them. For example, the largest number of women in attendance at a documented workshop occurred at the

validation of CRS REDD+ Risks and Benefits Analysis. This was one of the last workshops of the Programme and only 12 of the 34 attendees identified as women. Therefore, a contradiction appears: while numerous documents made a point of stating REDD+ must be conducted in a manner that empowers disadvantaged groups (specifically women, youth, and the disabled), the number of women in attendance at major events of the Programme suggests otherwise.

It is true that the number of women at such events increased throughout the duration of program, but it was not until towards the end of the program's timeline that the number of women in attendance was almost half of the total of attendees. Furthermore, while the Programme did publish a document addressing gender dynamics and the role women have in forest management, it was the first and only document of the Programme to do so and was published three years after the Programme had finished. However, the Ministry of Women Affairs was consulted and played a role during the creation of the Programme, the PGA Groups made a point of recognizing that women face disadvantages in conducting REDD+ work by recognizing women's empowerment as a driving principle of their work, and the CBR+ plan played a crucial role in increasing the participation of women in REDD+ work by providing easier access to grants and focusing on supporting women led initiatives (UN-REDD Nigeria National Programme Final Evaluation Report June 2019, 31-32). These points demonstrate a trend of increased inclusion and representation of women in the Programme, albeit a slow one.

Findings & Conclusion:

The UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria was often noted in various National Program Documents for its potential to be used as a model for expansion of REDD+ work in Nigeria, West Africa, and the continent as a whole. It is for this reason that the study was conducted by using a political ecology lens: was the UN-REDD+ Programme in Nigeria successful in its ability ensure autonomy of Nigerians over the program at the federal, state, and local level, and should it therefore be considered as a good model for future REDD+ projects. The study finds that a simple yes or no answer to be insufficient. Instead, what emerges are competing answers to the question above. However, this study argues that the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme does demonstrate a positive arc as it does begin to move away from problematic narratives surrounding UN-REDD+ work identified by the academic community.

This study has demonstrated that while the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme began with all-too-common themes surrounding deforestation that has been heavily critiqued by academia, it did in fact evolve away from such common pitfalls as labelling subsistence farming as the primary driver of deforestation, fuelwood usage contributing to largescale deforestation, and ignoring the impact of private sector activities on forests. However, this is not to state that those themes were not present in at least some respects throughout the program and even at its conclusion. Instead of being completely removed, they became nuanced and their value was diminished. This study also found that Nigerians at the federal, state, and local levels largely held autonomy throughout the timeline of the program. The program began upon the request of a coalition of Nigerian stakeholders at federal, state, and local levels; governed and determined itself throughout its timeline by consulting with stakeholders at the federal, state, and local level; and was ultimately enacted by members of federal, state, and local communities. This study

found that a major critique of the program to be its minimal inclusion and representation of women. While efforts were made to include representatives of women's groups and the program often made a point of structuring and framing its work in such a way that suggested the empowerment of women, lists of attendees at various meetings show that women never constituted the majority of attendees or even half of attendees.

As is common in many other REDD+ initiatives, the program in Nigeria started off with a narrative around deforestation and forest degradation caused by subsistence agricultural expansion and practices as a prime driver of deforestation and forest degradation (Brady, 1996, Butler, 1980, Myers 1992, Myers 1993, Phanthanousy, 1994, Schuck et al., 2002, Varma 2003). This point of view was once again taken as the starting point by the REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria despite many in the academic community suggesting that it is in fact larger, macroeconomic agricultural activities that have, by and large, caused the same phenomenon (DeFries et al. 2010, Ferretti-Galon and Bush, 2014, Kissinger et al., 2012, McAlpine et al., 2009, Rudel, 2007, Rudel et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that over the lifespan of the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria, this changed. Instead of a top-down approach, the program utilized a bottom-up approach.

Nigerians asked for REDD+ to be implemented in their country and quickly took ownership of it as this study has shown. The IMF and World Bank did not provide significant funding and therefore did not have significant control over the program. Instead, what emerged was Nigerians utilizing the assistance and tools they asked for. If anything, the number one complaint by the former governor of CRS was that UN REDD+ was happening too slowly to counteract corruption he blamed mostly on neo-liberal macroeconomic entities and activities such as oil extraction. The program in Nigeria prided itself on its bottom-up approach. Local

populations were consulted as the program progressed and the consultations primarily were conducted by Nigerians that had assumed roles in the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria. The inclusion of the small grants CBR+ plan utilized the same rhetoric that has been countered by numerous academics: that subsistence farming is the main cause of deforestation and not commercial, macro-economic activities and entities. This study agrees that this was not an ideal starting place or point of view to say the least, however it was a starting point after which; due to Nigerian ownership of the program and Nigerian's desire to decrease deforestation rates, allowed the program to empower other Nigerians of forest dependent communities. To critique the entire program as a neo-liberal land management tactic would discredit the Nigerian people that formed, shaped, and executed the program after its arguably problematic beginnings (in regards to categorization of the problem and solution).

The study agrees that there were red flags in some of the first official documents that academics well versed in the deforestation debate could point their finger at and claim the entire program was a failure from the start. However, many of these red flags were only found at the beginning of the program. this study also finds that that kind of generalization is simplistic and short sighted. Generalizations such as those focus on only a small part of a much larger thing and do not take the remaining whole into consideration. This is reflected in the difference in rhetoric between the program's beginning and end especially in regards to the nuanced drivers of deforestation. For example, some official documents found towards the beginning of the program list subsistence farming as The primary driver of deforestation and forest degradation. However, the program's final report states that agricultural practices including subsistence farming as well as commercial agricultural practices are one of several primary drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

In response to Skutsch & Turnhout's work which highlights that the onus of solving deforestation and forest degradation is typically placed on local communities, this study shows that while it is present in the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria, it is not alone (Skutsch & Turnhout, 2020). Massive efforts were made by Nigerians at all levels of stakeholders towards solving the problem of deforestation via fixing governance at state and federal levels, addressing corruption, and even target and recognizing the private sector's contribution to deforestation as demonstrated by various UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria documents. By only focusing on the reforestation efforts of local communities, such an analysis would discredit and ignore all of these other efforts made by other Nigerians. Furthermore, it was a combination of local communities, state government entities, and federal government entities that applied for UN REDD+ to assist them in work that they were already doing and hoping to expand. The author of this study agrees that there was some misunderstanding of the problem (in regards to why deforestation was occurring), but this was worked on (perhaps not fully worked out), throughout the course of the program. While it may not have an ideal starting point in terms of identifying the problem, the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria did finish with a much agreed upon set of solutions, all of which were agreed upon through stakeholder forums consisting of various members of society. The only stakeholder that was consistently either not present at these, or barely represented, was the private sector who by the completion of the program was recognized as contributing just as much, if not more, to deforestation and forest degradation in Nigeria.

The REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria utilized methods of determining deforestation rates over a recently small time period using satellite imagery as opposed to speaking with community members about the history of forested lands which may have given

them a much longer period of time to analysis and therefore a deeper understanding of land change in Nigeria (Fairhead and Leach, 1995, Leach and Scoones, 2013). While Fairhead and Leach's argument of a limited time range is valid, it is not fully relevant to this particular study. Yes, the program in Nigeria has the pitfalls and shortcomings of using a shorter timeline determined by satellite imaging and it did not utilize consultations with local populations to determine the "true" history of the forest (was it created by local populations, how long has the forest actually been there, is there more now than there was before satellite imagery existed, etc.), the UN REDD+ methodology does provide a starting point, albeit an arguably lazy and/or possibly inaccurate one. What is important to note however, is that throughout the course of the UN REDD+ Readiness Program in Nigeria, ownership of the Program, and therefore determination of deforestation rates, drivers, etc. was in the hands of Nigerian stakeholders.

This can be seen throughout the evolution of the specifics of the drivers of deforestation which changed as more voices of Nigerian stakeholders (primarily forest management government entities and various stakeholders) were heard and claimed ownership of the program through presentation and even in official UN REDD documents themselves. Furthermore, a second attempt at understanding and categorizing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and documenting land change was conducted later in the program's timeline. It also utilized satellite imagery, but it also utilized information gathered through consultations with local communities. Finally, throughout the program's timeline, various documents stated that further consultations needed to take place in order to create an official and proper understanding of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation as well as land change in Nigeria. This study agrees that the method used at the conception of the program was not ideal, but it did provide

something of a starting point for the Nigerians who requested assistance via REDD+ to start receiving it.

The general critique of this study on some of the existing academic literature concerning the UN REDD+ initiative, is that it by and large concerns itself with the starting point of REDD+ programs in such ways as how deforestation rates are determined, who is blamed for deforestation, who is determined to be responsible for the solution, what words are used at the outset. This way of thinking fails to recognize that these can and do change as a program evolves such was the case with the UN REDD+ Readiness Program in Nigeria. Many of the major academic criticisms towards REDD+ are blatantly apparent in the beginning of the program in Nigeria. However, by reviewing the entire duration of the program, it becomes apparent that these changed mostly due to Nigerian ownership of the program which allowed for Nigerian input to alter these narratives. At its conclusion, this study finds that Nigerians utilized the UN REDD+ program to assist themselves in achieving their own goals ultimately altering narratives around deforestation causes and solutions. While the program was not perfect; it still held subsistence farming as an equal driver to commercial agricultural practices, it is a step in the right direction and to critique it as a UN REDD+ initiatives led by western, global north actors would be both unfair and inaccurate.

The main critic of the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria; Emmanuel Nuesiri, argued that local populations were not substantively represented in the program due to the lack of inclusion of local government representatives (Nuesiri, 2016, 2017, & 2018). Nuesiri uses this point to declare the program a failure in regards to representing local populations and even makes the claim that by doing so, the Readiness Programme in Nigeria fails to promote a democratic approach to REDD+ work. This study disagrees with Nuesiri's findings for the

following reasons: local populations were represented at numerous points throughout the program albeit not always by local government officials, local populations were given direct access to the UN's CBD+ initiative which consulted local leaders and populations to understand their needs/wants, and that his critique may be irrelevant due to the program's two-prong approach (state and federal). Fundamentally, this study disagrees with Nuesiri's notion of who can represent a local community and takes a more inclusive view on the matter. Furthermore, Nuesiri argues that the Readiness Programme failed to empower local communities by failing to empower local government officials. This view completely ignores major aspects of the Program such as the CBD+ initiative that took place in 2015 which allowed for local CSOs and NGOs to receive funding for projects of their own design. It also ignores multiple stakeholder forums where local communities were represented and whose voices helped shape the Programme throughout its duration. Finally, Nuesiri's critique also completely ignores consultation work done with local government officials, local community leaders, and community organizations. This study considers those consultations, and the previously mentioned forums and CBD+ work to be crucial factors in insuring inclusion and empowerment of local populations.

Finally, the UN REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria's approach did not necessarily require the inclusion of local government officials. The two-pronged approach of the program focused on major policy changes at the federal level and direct action at the state level. It makes logical sense with such a structure to ensure federal and state representation over local government representation. Furthermore, the UN REDD+ Readiness team, state government officials, and local people state in interviews with Nuesiri that the trust state officials and local NGOs over local government officials. Finally, Nuesiri himself recognizes what he refers to as godfather politics: "local public office holders in Nigeria are clients of very powerful politicians

or other wealthy patrons,” as being the status-quo in Nigerian politics (Nuesiri, 2017, pg. 392). By this logic, local government officials are inherently corrupt and furthermore will more or less act in accordance with what the state official, or “godfather” tells them to do. This therefore means that they are not truly representative of the communities they hold office for and makes them an irrelevant actor as they will simply be an echo chamber for whatever their “godfather” says. If anything, not including local officials provided more space for the voices of local populations and NGOs to be heard and put into the program therefore increasing the democratic process as opposed to decreasing it as Nuesiri suggests.

This study finds that the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria by and large was successful, by its completion, in its inclusion of a diverse set of actors and adapted itself to incorporate Nigerian knowledge in regards to the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. The Programme was started in response to a request made by, and not on the behalf of, a coalition of Nigerian actors representative of governmental, private, and community organizations which demonstrated Nigerian ownership of the program from its commencement. Throughout the duration of the Programme, governmental, CSO, and NGOs actors maintained ownership and were responsible for plotting its course. Over time, and specifically with the inclusion of CBR+ in 2014-2015, Programme expanded to allow for increased inclusion and empowerment of forest dependent communities and women.

The Programme’s understanding of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation expanded and become increasingly nuanced as more voices of Nigerians were heard. A prime example of this is the Programme’s shifting narrative around fuelwood as a driver of deforestation. At the onset, the Programme viewed fuelwood usage as a primary driver of

deforestation. At its completion, fuelwood usage was no longer listed a primary driver of deforestation. Instead, after increasing their knowledge on the subject, fuelwood production was paired with illegal logging thus demonstrating an understanding of Nigerian specific deforestation. The restructuring of the Programme's understanding of the drivers of deforestation came about largely through changing its methods of gathering information. At the beginning, drivers of deforestation were determined largely through satellite image analysis coupled with generalizations about developing countries. In 2015, a new study was completed outlining the drivers of deforestation in Nigeria. This study once again utilized satellite imagery, but also included information and knowledge that had been learned throughout consultations with Nigerian stakeholders.

The shortcomings that do emerge from the Programme in terms of inclusivity are its lack of inclusion of private sector actors and its struggle to have increased representation of women at its meetings, workshops, etc. The private sector had minimal representation at the few events where a representative was present. It was not until the end of the program that several documents were published which specifically discussed engaging with the private sector. In regards to gender inclusion, the Programme had a complicated timeline. While the Ministry of Women Affairs was consulted during the conception phase of the Programme, participation lists from events demonstrate low turnout and therefore low representation of Nigerian women. However, empowerment of women was consistently written into various documents and was a principle by which REDD+ work should be conducted and was explicitly included as a guiding principle of the PGA working groups. As the Programme progressed, the number of women in attendance at official events did increase.

In conclusion, this study finds that the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria demonstrates evolution in the realm of reforestation efforts and should therefore be considered as one of the better options of existing models of this kind of reforestation work. The program in Nigeria was not without fault, but the positive aspects of the work conducted between 2009 and 2015 should not be ignored. As the UN-REDD+ initiative has already spread to many other West African countries, the author of this study hopes that future analyses will be conducted which may show a continuation of the evolution demonstrated by the UN-REDD+ Readiness Programme in Nigeria.

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