

SDC 2018 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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Title: Forest governance and the REDD+ program in Nigeria: Building pathway convergence to eco-livelihood transitions in the Rainforest region of Cross River State



The consequences of environmental quality decline has made forest governance a top priority for decision and policy makers the world over. In Nigeria, the Cross River environment is endowed with vast store of rich biological resources that enhance human development and well-being. However, the current unsustainable rates of resource consumption remain a challenge that defy understanding. In addition, the rapid deforestation and degradation is a catalyst to the environmental challenges that the Sustainable Development Goals presently seek to address. The reality of environmental resources decline makes it imperative to encourage conservation measures that align with global realities. One of such realities in natural resources management is forest governance. In line with the need to promote the sustainability of resource management, the UNREDD programme in Nigeria adopted the participatory governance in resource management. However, the concern in participatory governance is focused on how to effectively streamline governance to capture the set goals and objectives that facilitate positive pro-poor resource management for community people who depend on the resources of the forest. This study adopts the community engagement process to assess the existing governance framework in the three REDD pilots of Esuk Mbah, Iko Esai and Baunchor communities in Nigeria. The analytical approach is used to evaluate the perceptual responses of pilot communities to the factors that act to encourage or discourage local participation in forest governance, the REDD program objective spread and subsequently, stabilization to the transition to a sustainable economy. Using both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the study assesses community response towards ecological resilience through the community- level study. Focus group discussions and interviews are employed to guide data collection processes. Preliminary findings reveal there are technical, socio-economic, infrastructural and political challenges will affect the governance structures within communities and subsequently threaten the acceptance and willingness to safeguard forested environments based on resource accountability for effective forest governance.

Keywords: REDD program, Governance, pilot, local communities, Nigeria