



## Review

# Insights from the ground level? A content analysis review of multi-national REDD+ studies since 2010



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## ABSTRACT

The REDD program (“Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation”) was launched in 2007. Two years later it was modified into REDD+. Since then, numerous sub-national initiatives have implemented REDD+ or REDD+-like mechanisms. Now, shortly before the COP (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties) in Paris 2015 it is timely and necessary to analyze insights and to draw upon lessons learned. This study reviews multi-national REDD+ studies by applying qualitative content analysis using the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework for categorization.

Experiences with the implementation of core REDD+ topics like institutional responsibility and results-based financing are mostly not encouraging. Monitoring systems require further development, and guidance for jurisdictional approaches is lacking. Experiences with reference levels, permanence and leakage have hardly been reported. More general topics like stakeholder participation, tenure clarification and biodiversity co-benefits are in turn more advanced. But these are not necessarily effects of REDD+ components in the projects. The projects obviously offer a platform to advance classical development issues.

We conclude that financial signals from the upcoming COP in Paris are essential to encourage further development and implementation. This supports conclusions in accordance with the UNFCCC session in Bonn 2015 stating that methodologies are now complete and implementation must begin. Additional conclusions are drawn for specific topics of the Warsaw Framework. Authors claim that REDD+ should stimulate and support transformational change.

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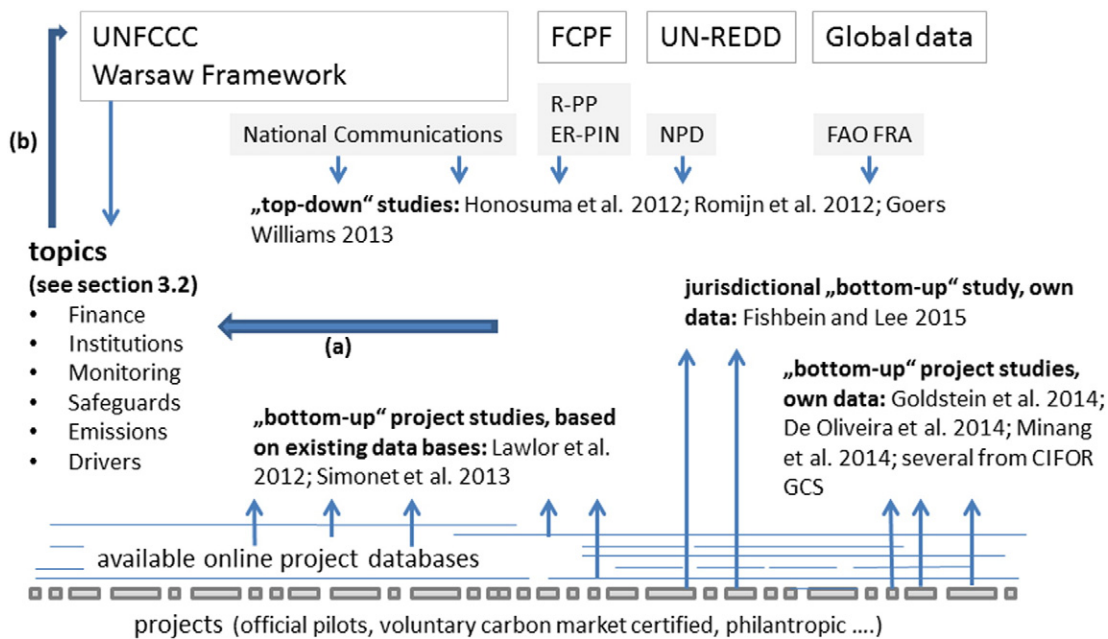
**1. Introduction**

*1.1. Policy context and aims*

Forests play a crucial role in the context of climate change. A total of 12% of total greenhouse gas emissions in the period 2000–2009 were from forests and other forms of land use (IPCC, 2014). On a global level, deforestation is still high. Around 13 million hectares of forests were lost each year in the first decade of the millennium (FAO, 2010), most of these in tropical countries (GFW, 2015). In 2007, the REDD (“Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation”) process was launched in Bali under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2007a). Two years later it was modified into REDD+. The program was designed, developed and promoted as an innovative approach to reduce deforestation based on broad cooperation and shared responsibilities between developing and developed countries. The core idea is that developed countries would financially compensate losses due to avoided deforestation and degradation. These conditional payments would depend on a verified monitoring of

carbon stocks and fluxes by developing countries. REDD+ raised high expectations as it was hoped that it would mobilize billions of dollars to compensate for the opportunity costs of forest conservation.

Eight years later no binding international agreement has yet been reached on how to pay for or reimburse verified net emission reductions or enhanced removals of greenhouse gases. However, in the readiness phases, preparation activities and pilot projects, a wealth of expertise and experiences has become available on different aspects and functionalities of the REDD+ mechanism. In the present analysis we aim to review scientific publications and reports that summarize results from a larger number of such formal and informal REDD+ activities in order to check for ground-level information supporting REDD+ implementation. We also seek information to provide lessons that can be learned for the further development and implementation of the REDD+ process. The results and conclusions aim at supporting policy makers, as expectations for international agreement are high in this pre-conference period of the Conference of the Parties in Paris 2015. In order to verify whether the manifold initiatives on the ground provide compatible perceptions of the political UNFCCC Framework,



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual framework of the review. Top down studies are based on official documents or global data. Bottom-up studies are based on projects or on available project data bases; (a) results from different studies are summarized and structured along the topics of the Warsaw Framework applying qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000, 2014); (b) they serve as input to the policy level. Further explanations in the text, abbreviations explained in caption to Table 1.

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