Democratic representation and climate change governance: 
Lessons from the UN-REDD funded Nigeria-REDD programme

Emmanuel O. Nuesiri

(MPhil. Cambridge; DPhil. Oxford)
Marie-Curie BRAIN Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Potsdam, Germany
and Research Affiliate Cline Center for Democracy, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, USA
Problem statement 1/2

• UN-REDD states that strengthening local democracy would prevent elite capture of REDD+ benefits, this study examined the political representation of local people during the participatory consultative process that led to Nigeria-REDD as an empirical test if UN-REDD operations conforms to its rhetoric.
Problem statement 2/2

• Article 2 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) states that climate change mitigation in addition to stabilizing GHG should “enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner”. This study also seeks to understand if REDD+ enables sustainable economic development?
Political representation as a conceptual framework

- **Descriptive** – persons ‘typical’ of group they are standing for (farmers standing in for farmers)
- **Symbolic** – unelected aspirational persons or institutions standing for a constituency
- **Substantive** – elected persons acting for, responsive and accountable to, a constituency

**Methods**

Complementary

- Influential individuals
  - Essential for groups that have experienced historical marginalization
- Traditional leaders/CSOs/NGOs
  - High visibility and access to political leaders makes these excellent for advocacy
- Mayors/legislators
  - Statutory powers make these important allies for the fair distribution of resources

Representatives should aim for just decision-making that responds to needs of constituents
### Key Findings

**Representation at Nigeria-REDD participatory consultative meetings in Calabar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions and groups</th>
<th>18 Feb 2011</th>
<th>20 Aug 2011</th>
<th>Democratic credentials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross River State Forestry Commission</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Government appointees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local NGOs based in Cross River State</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Symbolic political representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local people (mainly from Ekuri)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Descriptive political representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fourth estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross River State Governor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Higher level substantive democratic representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International NGOs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Symbolic political representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Government appointees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cross River State Government Agencies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Government appointees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Ministry of Environment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Government appointees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National NGOs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Symbolic political representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customary authority</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Symbolic political representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Government Authority</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>Local level substantive political representatives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28-30 October, 2015 Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
Key Findings

Elected local government authority mandated to be responsive / accountable to local people, were not invited to the participatory consultative meetings

Why – response from research participants included:
  • insufficient funds to cover the cost of their participation
  • they are poorly informed and thus irrelevant
  • they are self-serving

These responses have some merit, but study found that subordination of local government authority by the state government makes state agencies like the forestry commission disregard local government authorities so did not bother to invite them to the REDD+ consultative meetings

“UN-REDD cannot force countries to include the local level…strengthening local democratic governance is not the main priority of [UN-REDD] donors”

Research participant interviewed for this study
Conclusions
UN-REDD subscribed to symbolic politics, and this raises concerns as to whether it can protect local people’s socio-economic interests; and whether it can be responsive to Article 2 of the UNFCCC that climate change mitigation initiatives like REDD+ should enable sustainable economic development.

Recommendations
• UN-REDD should carry out its FPIC, PGA and consultative meetings through local government authorities as they are at the heart of local democratic practice; NGOs, customary authority and higher level government agencies should come in as pressure groups ensuring local government authorities are responsive (they would need resources) and accountable to local people.
• Where elected local governments do not exist, the UN-REDD should support initiatives moving local governance arrangements in a democratic direction.