

REDD+ Reference Emission Levels and Reference Levels:

A Perplexing Evolution Under the UNFCCC



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It started out simple in Bali...

Bali (2007): “Inviting Parties to submit ... views on how to address outstanding methodological issues including ... *demonstration of reductions in emissions from deforestation, including reference emissions levels ...*”

...then got a little complicated in Poznan...

Poznan (2008): “Recognizes that developing country Parties in establishing **forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels** should do so transparently *taking into account historic data, and adjust for national circumstances...*”

Why was the term bifurcated?

- Some countries worried “emissions” did not include the “plus”
- Other countries concerned about data availability and wanted the ability to use proxies
- Some NGOs (and Bolivia) concerned that “trees are not just sticks of carbon”

...and even more complex in Cancun

Cancun (2010): *Requests* developing country Parties ... to develop ... A national forest reference emission level **and/or** forest reference level or, if appropriate, as an interim measure, **subnational** forest reference emission levels **and/or** forest reference levels ...”

- Why “and/or”? *Accommodates different views on scope.*
- Why so many hours arguing over the “s”? *Increasing recognition of subnational implementation and approaches, skepticism over subnational “crediting”*

What is a REDD+ “REL” or “RL”?

(and why are they important)

Defined by its PURPOSE?

- A baseline to measure changes in emissions/removals from forest-related activities? To understand global changes in GHG concentrations.
- A reference to measure anthropogenic emissions/removals from the forest sector? To create a comparable metric to measure countries' efforts.
- Or, a “compensation baseline” to provide financial payments for verified emissions reductions? To provide “positive incentives”.

Key Policy Challenges/Questions

- What kind of REL/RL is SBSTA negotiating (now and in the future)?
- What is the scope and scale of REDD+ REL/RLs?
 - Can countries have multiple reference levels?
 - One REL/RL for all 5 activities? Or separate?
 - Divided by area, activities, or IPCC categories?
 - What does “subnational” mean?
- What data requirements will be needed to construct REL/RLs?
- Will REL/RLs be a top down (single-undertaking at international level) or bottom up (country determined with international review) process?

Precedents/Linkages to Consider

- Historic baselines
 - Single year (Kyoto Protocol)
 - Trend/average of multiple years (Brazil)
- Projected baselines
 - AWG-LCA, use of “BAU”
 - Kyoto Protocol – Forest management RLs
 - What are the data requirements?
- Linkage to MRV requirements
 - National communications and IPCC GHG inventory guidance