REDD+ in India: social costs of climate change mitigation

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IN STORE

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- indigenous rights – history of marginalisation
- continuing marginalisation – the forest rights act
- devouring mineral wealth – and tribal lands
- women – the immediate losers
- corruption
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BACKGROUND

- Deforestation and degradation contribute to 14% of greenhouse gas emissions
- Birth of REDD at CoP13 in Bali: transfers funds to avoid deforestation and grants carbon credits
- REDD+: conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
- UN-REDD launched in 2008 in 29 countries with $51.4 million
- National Action Plan on Climate Change in 2008: National Mission for a Green India
- Enhancing carbon sinks, afforestation of 6 million hectares, revival of degraded forestland
- Implementation through JFM, forest departments
- REDD plan presented at CoP15 in 2009 and accepted by India at CoP16 in 2010
- India joined the Oslo Forest and Climate Conference in May 2010
- $3 billion to be transferred
TENURE AND COMMUNITY RIGHTS

- Vulnerability to mitigation schemes increased when secure tenures are absent
- REDD+ not aimed at securing tenure: exclusion from decision-making
- Advantages of community management (e.g. Ostrom)
- In reality, de facto devolution of control of forests varies from state to state; obscured in oficialese
- Forest dwellers could be given unproductive patches smaller than traditional lands for conservation
- Illegal logging, state support and community rights
INDIGENOUS RIGHTS – HISTORY OF MARGINALISATION

- 80% of forests community owned at the end of 19th cent. Today state owns 80% (Global Forest Coalition, 2009)

- Colonial Forest Act, 1865: forests as state property

- Revised Forest Act, 1878: forests classified as reserved, protected, village

- Only village forests, limited in extent, granted for community ownership

- Colonial Indian Forest Policy 1894: consolidation of state control and denial of rights

- Forest Policy 1952: increase economic revenue from forests, revised in 1988

- 1951-1980: 4.3 million hectares of forests lost

- Wildlife Protection Act 1972: blanket ban on all human activities except tourism

- Joint Forest Management, 1990: inefficiency in governance
CONTINUING MARGINALISATION – THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT

• Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006
• Promised tenure, rights to live, cultivate, extract forest produce, access fish and graze
• Conversion of forestland to revenue villages for mapping, conservation and protection of traditional knowledge
• Panchayat to monitor through Forest Rights Committees
• Drawbacks: Ministry of Tribal Rights, 2010: Only 1.6% of 2.9 million community claims granted
• Access to Minor Forest Produce like mahua, tendu leaves, sal, resins denied. MFPs nationalised in many states
• Chhattisgarh: 60% of forest dept. revenue from tendu (Mahapatra et. al.2010)
• Jharkhand: MFPs form 10-31% of family income
DEVOURING MINERAL WEALTH – AND TRIBAL LANDS

• 1950-1991: Mining displaced 2.6 million, only 25% rehabilitated
• For every 1% to GDP, mining displaces 3-4 more people than other development projects
• An estimated 164,000 hectares diverted for mining (CSE, 2010)
• MoUs with states. E.g. Vedanta and the future of 8000 Dhogria Kondhs
• REDD+ would thus transfer only symbolic rights. Fundamental forest rights would continue to be ignored.
• Situation worsened by armed rebellion and counter attacks
WOMEN – THE IMMEDIATE LOSERS

- Exclusion of women from decision-making in JFM committees – less than 10% membership (Agarwal, B. 2001)
- Women members not allowed to speak or their opinions ignored
- Women’s agency and experience with the forests not utilised for effective patrolling
- REDD restrictions - firewood shortages, consequently more time/energy expended in collection/cooking, leading to adverse health effects, fodder shortages, erosion of livelihoods, fines if caught stealing firewood
- Women traditionally denied land titles – addressed by REDD+?
CORRUPTION

• Big money, big corruption

• Agricultural expansion, illegal logging, demand for biofuel – triggers of corruption

• Lack of effective mapping and estimation of forest densities – fuel corruption

• Corruption in setting of baselines of deforestation and later afforestation

• When projects and national REDD targets need to be integrated, bureaucrats could slip into corruption (Brown, M.L, 2010)

• Restriction on timber production could escalate timber prices, increasing illegal logging and thereby corruption
MACRO-LEVEL ISSUES

- REDD linked to international carbon market and therefore susceptible to speculation and unpredictable funding
- Allows industrialised countries to continue polluting thereby diverting attention away from the real causes of deforestation,
- Prioritises least cost measures which increase the likelihood of environmentally and social damaging activities and push liabilities of failed projects onto local communities, and flood carbon markets thereby reducing the price of carbon and in turn stalling other climate change mitigation programmes (Hall, 2008).
- Leakage, shifting of deforestation from one corner to another
- No sufficient data on degradation
- Plantations included under REDD+
- Additionality issues
- Monitoring, Reporting and Verification costs
CONCLUSION

- REDD+ primarily a project to mitigate change and not to secure tenure or provide livelihoods
- Current institutions have participated in the marginalisation
- Change unlikely due to path-dependence and size of investments
- Stakeholder consultations need to be carried out
- Justice denied, India could become a pawn in the global carbon bargains
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