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"Feigning Democracy: Performing Representation in the UN-REDD Funded Nigeria-REDD Programme"

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Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation plus the sustainable management of forest and enhancement of carbon stocks (REDD+) is a global climate change mitigation initiative. The United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD) is training governments in developing countries, including Nigeria, to implement REDD+. To protect local people, UN-REDD has developed social safeguards including a commitment to strengthen local democracy to prevent an elite capture of REDD+ benefits. This study examines local participation and representation in the UN-REDD international policy board and in the national-level design process for the Nigeria-REDD proposal, to see if practices are congruent with the UN-REDD commitment to local democracy. It is based on research in Nigeria in 2012 and 2013, and finds that local representation in the UN-REDD policy board and in Nigeria-REDD is not substantive. Participation is merely symbolic. For example, elected local government authorities, who ostensibly represent rural people, are neither present in the UN-REDD board nor were they invited to the participatory forums that vetted the Nigeria-REDD. They were excluded because they were politically weak. However, UN-REDD approved the Nigeria-REDD proposal without a strategy to include or strengthen elected local governments. The study concludes with recommendations to help the UN-REDD strengthen elected local government authority in Nigeria in support of democratic local representation. (Text from author's abstract)

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