

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

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### Abstract

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.

**Keywords:** REDD+, climate change mitigation, UN-REDD, democracy, Nigeria, symbolic representation, local government

### INTRODUCTION

The programme for ‘Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) plus the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries’ (REDD+) is one of the solutions to the global climate change crises (Corbera and Schroeder 2011). Yet, if, and when, REDD+ becomes a global treaty, it may threaten the livelihoods of many

forest dependent people, because, due to required changes in forest use, it is likely to restrict access to public forests (Accra Caucus 2013; Roe et al. 2013). The United Nations Collaborative REDD programme (UN-REDD), a multilateral initiative funding REDD+ ‘readiness’ initiatives in developing countries (CIF et al. 2010), insists that it has developed social safeguards to offset these potential socio-economic costs of REDD+ (UN-REDD 2008). UN-REDD asserts that it is committed to strengthening local democracy as a safeguard against elite capture of REDD+ benefits (UN-REDD 2008), and that its implemented under the principal of securing the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of affected local people (UN-REDD 2013a).

This paper presents findings of research examining UN-REDD commitment to strengthen local democracy as a social safeguard, explaining why this is not happening, and showing how UN-REDD could turn this around. The

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article analysis who represents local people's interests in the UN-REDD international policy board and in its country programmes. The study is carried out through an assessment of the democratic credentials of actors representing local people in the UN-REDD international policy board and in its US\$4 million funded Nigeria REDD+ programme (Nigeria-REDD). It shows that political representation of local people in the UN-REDD is merely symbolic, it is performed to produce the appearance of representation, rather than being substantive or having real representation (*a la* Pitkin 1967).

The study follows the institutional choice and recognition framework to unpack the logic behind policy makers' choices of the institutional arrangements by which their interventions interact with local people (Ribot et al. 2008) 'Choice' refers to decision-making processes where higher-level institutions intervening in forestry 'are choosing powers to transfer and local institutions to transfer them to' (Ribot et al. 2008: 2). Chosen institutions are 'recognised', empowered and legitimated; the type of local institution chosen could foster or undermine local democracy (Ribot et al. 2008). When higher-level forestry institutions work with democratic local institutions such as elected local governments,<sup>1</sup> there is an increased likelihood of congruence between the interest of local people and project outcomes than when they work only with unelected actors (customary authority, NGOs, elites) (Ribot et al. 2008).

The study is also informed by the studying up approach advocated by Nader (1972) for understanding how power and responsibility are exercised, and how our lives are shaped by those who control governing institutions of society. Thus, this study interrogates how high-level policy makers and policymaking institutions influence REDD+ governance in Nigeria. Results from this study complement findings from studies that focus on local-level processes.

This study involved grey and published literature review, and semi-structured interviews. Field research was carried out between July 14–October 15, 2012 and from July 28 to September 25, 2013. It included 125 interviews with members of affected local communities, Nigeria-REDD, UN-REDD and local NGO staff in Cross River State, and in Abuja, Nigeria. There were five group meetings with personnel of local NGOs in Cross River State attended by 30 individuals in all. There was also a one-day field visit to Iko village in Akamkpa Local Government Area, in Cross River State to meet with the village traditional council. Iko's 140 sq. km community forest is part of forest lands set aside for REDD+ pilot projects in Cross River State as part of the Nigeria-REDD country programme. The research also included participant observation while attending a meeting of the Akamkpa Council of Chiefs, to which this researcher was invited for a question and answer session on REDD+.

The second section of this article reviews political representation in environmental governance showing the centrality of symbolic politics in environmental legislation. Section 3 presents the political, environmental and institutional context for REDD+ implementation in

Cross River State, Nigeria. It shows that Nigeria-REDD has multiple decision-making institutions from the global to the sub-national; each level provides opportunities for elite capture of REDD+ benefits. Section 4 examines representation of the local in UN-REDD international policy board and in Nigeria-REDD, showing that this is symbolic. Section 5 discusses why UN-REDD opts for symbolic representation of the local and how this is in response to the demands of national governments and donors to UN-REDD. Section 6 concludes by calling for inclusion of representatives of local authorities in decision-making in UN-REDD and its country programmes as this will substantively strengthen local democracy.

## **POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE**

Political representation is making present in decision-making, the interests of groups who are physically absent (Pitkin 1967; Runciman 2007). Pitkin (1967) identifies three types of representation – descriptive, substantive, and symbolic.<sup>2</sup> Descriptive representation is when representatives are chosen because they share similar socio-economic attributes with the group they are standing for (Pitkin 1967), being considered 'typical of the larger class of persons whom they represent' (Mansbridge 1999:629). The representative does not require the authorisation of the represented as he/she may be appointed by decision makers to stand for the represented without consulting or obtaining the consent of the represented.

Substantive representation is when representatives act for, and are accountable to the represented (Pitkin 1967). 'To act for', as opposed to 'standing for' implies that the representative has been authorised by the represented and are mandated to be responsive to the represented. In this context, the represented are able to evaluate and sanction their representatives (Pitkin 1967). Substantive representation is considered morally superior to descriptive and symbolic representation for the objective checks and balances it places on representatives (Pitkin 1967). Substantive representation is viewed as meeting the requirements of social justice, making it the preferred mechanism behind democratic representation (Mill 1861; Grunebaum 1981; Kateb 1981; Manin et al. 1999; Fraser 2005; Urbinati and Warren 2008; Rehfeld 2011).

In democratic representation, representatives are chosen through elections, are responsive to the represented, and are accountable to their electors (Manin et al. 1999; Rehfeld 2006). Representation is undemocratic when electoral choice, mechanisms for responsiveness and downward accountability are absent. When undemocratic regimes choose to be responsive to the governed, they are considered to be 'good despotism' (Mill 1861: 48), and also as benevolent or benign dictatorships (Wintrobe 1998; Manin et al. 1999). Promoting democracy is a moral imperative of international agencies (McGrew 2002; Verweij and Josling 2003; Scholte 2004; McKeon 2009); and a critical instrument to engage local people in support of REDD+ because it is an inclusive non-violent mechanism for dispute resolution (Dahl 1989; Davenport 2007).

Symbolic representation is when an agent stands for a group because it is perceived to embody ‘beliefs, attitudes, assumptions’ that is shared by the group it is standing for (Pitkin 1967, 99). Symbolic representatives are appointed (following cultural dictates, executive and legislative order, or citizen action), so are not statutorily mandated to be responsive and accountable to the represented. Symbolic representatives engage in symbolic politics, which is the use of images, objects, and emotive rhetoric to persuade the represented to support policies favoured by the representative, irrespective of whether it is a substantive response to the demands of the represented (Edelman 1985; Wedeen 1998; Bluhdorn 2007).

Matten (2003) asserts that symbolic politics is the preferred response of policy makers when designing environmental regulations; they wish to be seen to be responsive to citizens’ concerns but do not wish to hurt powerful groups like the corporate sector. So, they talk tough while failing to act, articulate policies that do not become law, roll out strong regulations with weak enforcement, and enact legislation that legitimise practices already adopted by industry. Stavins (1998: 73) states that symbolic environmental regulations work because ‘voters have limited information, and so respond to gestures, while remaining relatively unaware of details’. Newig (2007) identifies societal self-deception, when citizens demand for legislation but are unwilling to pay for substantive action, as a signal for symbolic action.

Cass (2012) shows that political leaders also enact symbolic environmental legislation as an instrument of foreign policy. They desire to be viewed as good global citizens while avoiding the cost of substantive action. Similarly, Baker (2007) shows that transnational bodies like the European Union (EU) also subscribes to symbolic environmental politics. She asserts that the EU’s declaratory commitment to sustainable development, a transformational paradigm, is symbolic because EU operational strategies in dealing with environmental problems are informed by ecological modernisation, a paradigm that allows for business as usual.

Other theorists of representation tackle the subject of the representative status of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other non-state actors in governance (see Saward 2006, 2008; Guo and Musso 2007; Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008; Montanaro 2012). Saward (2006, 2008) asserts that political representation is based on claims making—elected and unelected representatives make claims about themselves, their constituency, and their relationship to their constituency. Diverging from other democracy theorists, he maintains that claims made by elected and unelected representatives have equal legitimacy in political deliberations (Saward 2006). He ignores the responsiveness-accountability relations between elected representatives and their constituency, not shared by unelected representatives (Severs 2010), presenting a form of ‘re-representation’ that few theorists would call democratic.

Dryzek and Niemeyer (2008) argue that legitimacy and accountability of unelected representatives such as NGOs could be based on the development discourses that give rise to such representation; they refer to this as discursive representation.

However, discourses draw their power from ideographs (virtue words like ‘rights’, ‘liberty’), catch phrases (like ‘poverty alleviation’) and metaphors with emotional appeal (McGee 1980; Kaufer and Carley 1993). Thus, discursive representation is symbolic representation as its legitimacy is based on its aspirational effects on society (see Lombardo and Meier 2014). This paper therefore considers NGOs, CBOs and customary authority as symbolic representatives. These can be legitimate without being democratic; they can be accepted ‘by’ and ‘in’ society without a statutory mandate to be substantively responsive and accountable to the population as a whole. Note that while Edelman (1985) argues that symbolic politics is primarily used by governments to mislead the public, Brysk (1995) shows that symbolic politics is used by civil society to resist and oppose disagreeable government policies (see also Keck and Sikkink 1999).

Due to power asymmetries in society, some groups are overrepresented in decision making, and others are underrepresented. Furthermore, individual and group interests are varied and differentiated along multiple dimensions including gender, age, race, and wealth status. Thus, no singular type of representation speaks for everyone (Williams 1998; Mansbridge 1999; Urbinati 2000; Young 2000; Dovi 2002, 2009). Consequently, inclusive representation of a group’s interest is more likely when the different types of representatives complement one another (Figure 1) (see Young 2000; Celis et al. 2008; Saward 2010).

This brings us back to the question of who represents local people’s interests at the UN-REDD international policy board and in the design of UN-REDD funded Nigeria-REDD. The UN-REDD is an environmental regulation setting regime, for which local people have limited information, thus, the need for the promised FPIC processes (UN-REDD 2013a). Under this condition, Stavins (1998) explains that government would opt for symbolic rather than substantive regulation. This is because they might not wish to upset business corporations, or citizens may not be willing to shoulder the cost of substantive regulations, or they may opt for a simpler and less complex implementation of substantive policy due to capacity constraints. Would the UN-REDD conform to this profile with respect to its commitment to strengthen local democracy as a social safeguard for local people?

### **CONTEXT FOR REDD+ IMPLEMENTATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

This section reviews the political, environmental and institutional context for REDD+ in the Cross River State. Reference to the Federal Government of Nigeria implies the national level administrative political unit, under which are the states, who are the sub-national administrative units. Then there are the local government authorities – the third tier of government, with whom local people interact on a more regular basis, and are considered the foundational building block for democratic government (see UNSG 2009).

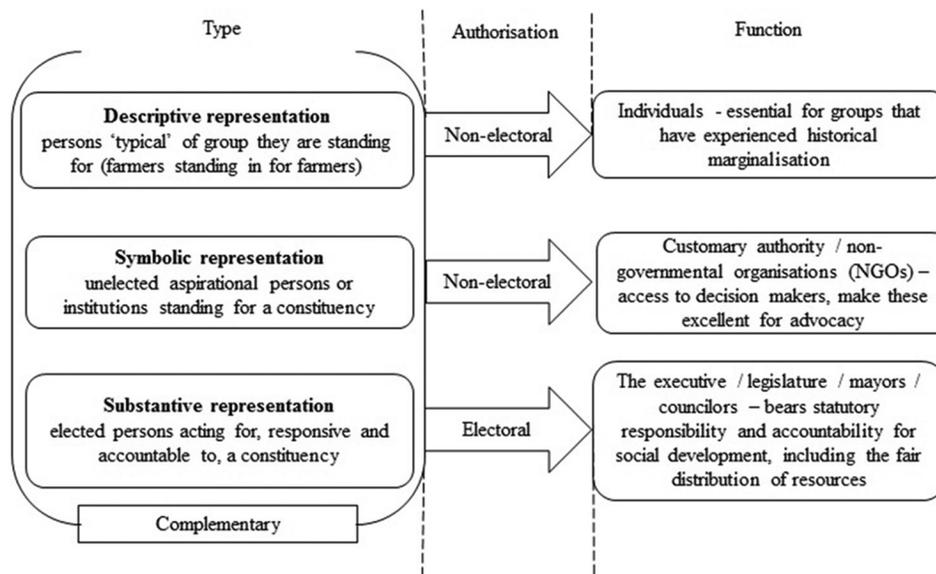


Figure 1

*Inclusive political representation. Source: Author's adaptation based on Pitkin (1967), Young (2000) and Saward (2010)*

### Political Context

Nigeria is a federal republic with 36 states. As stipulated in Nigeria's constitution (FGN 1999) the offices of president, governors of the 36 states, and chairpersons of its 774 local governments are filled through periodic elections. While the states and local governments collect taxes, they also depend on financial allocations from the federal government (Barkan et al. 2001; Adesopo 2011). Local government funds are transferred through the state government account but this is captured by state governors (Osari 2006; Ehigiamusoe and Jumare 2013). If REDD+ financial benefits were to be transferred to local governments through the states, they would likewise be captured by the state governors as is the case with federal allocations.

The capturing of local government financial allocations by the state governor keeps local governments poor and subservient to the state governors (ARD 2001; Diejomaoh and Eboh 2010; Adeyemi 2013). A state level bureaucrat in Calabar, the Cross River State capital city, stated that: *'the governor decides how the federal money gets used and the governor decides who gets the contracts and when to pay...it takes away the power of the local government chairmen'* (Local bureaucrat Calabar 2012). In addition, the state governments through its Local Government Service Commission appoint and dismiss local government bureaucrats. These are thus accountable to the governor and not to the elected local government chairperson (ARD 2001; Barkan et al. 2001; CLGF 2011a). State governors are thus very powerful figures in Nigerian politics and are sometimes referred to as political godfathers.

Onu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2008: 57) note that in Nigeria, political godfatherism is 'behavior in which economically, politically, and socially well-placed individuals... influence political and economic processes' (see Joseph 1987, 1996).

They also maintain that godfatherism is a 'new way of describing political patronage and, by extension, paternalism' (Onu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu 2008: 57). Godfathers in Nigerian politics include public office holders and very wealthy individuals (Ayoade 2008; Animasawun 2013).

In Cross River, candidates who are elected as local government chairperson are often those who are backed by the governor (CrossRiverWatch 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d; TMG 2003, 2007). Thus the governor is considered 'the godfather over all the politicians in Cross River because he controls the budget and security apparatus in the state' (senior civil servant Calabar 2013). The governor is also the godfather because he is able to get the electoral board to skew local results in his favour (Sahara Reporters 2010; Omar 2012).

Why are state governors interested in local government elections? A former local government chairperson states that governors *'cannot rig elections to maintain themselves in power if they don't have firm control of local politics. They need us to be their eyes, ears and muscle to control local politics. All election [local government, governorship, presidential] is won at the local level, so the party leaders always give us millions of naira to do the dirty work at the local level'* (ex-local government chairperson Calabar 2013). Personal political ambition of state governors is thus a key motive behind the subordination of local government authorities (see Gboyega 2003; Oladesu and Salaudeen 2013). Godfather politics conforms to the clientelist and prebendalist politics observed in Nigeria by Joseph (1987, 1996).

Given that elected local governments are the substantive political representatives of local people, their disempowerment by the state government is a disempowerment of the democratic voice of local people (Yilmaz et al. 2008). The Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON) has been pushing for local governments to have control over their finances and

administration (CLGF 2011b; Vanguard 2016). To achieve this, the federal legislators have to amend the constitution; the amendment would need to be approved by the 36 state-level house of assemblies in Nigeria (Akpan and Ekanem 2013). This considerably reduces its likelihood of success though this has not stopped ALGON from trying.

Governors also have authority over land in their state as stipulated in the Nigeria Land Use Act of 1978 (FGN 1978). Local governments can allocate rural land not greater than 5000 ha, but their decisions can be overridden by the governor. While governors do not need the consent of local governments and customary authority, they often consult local chiefs before enclosing public land, thus recognizing chiefs' *de facto* authority over land (USAID 2010). This is because land is the resting place of the ancestors and local chiefs are the mediators between the living and the ancestors (see Alao 2015; Coetzee and Roux 2003). Political leaders in Africa often seek the support of chiefs in order to strengthen their claims of legitimacy. In return, political leaders allow local chiefs retain *de facto* control over distribution, access and use of land especially in rural areas (Schatzberg 2001; Ellis and ter Haar 2004; Kelsall 2008; Nuesiri 2012). Nonetheless, it is state governors who hold *de jure* powers over land in Nigeria, making them key actors in Nigeria-REDD; their powers over local government authority also make them extremely influential figures in local politics in Nigeria.

### Environmental Context

Nigeria joined the global effort against tropical deforestation when it signed on to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) led, and World Bank funded, effort to produce a global Tropical Forests Action Plan (TFAP) (EC-FAO 2003). The TFAP led to the design of a National Forest Action Plan (NFAP) for Nigeria in 1996. The Nigerian NFAP was never implemented as the TFAP, though designed to be executed as a participatory process, was heavily criticised as not consulting with local people but paying strong attention to technocratic and private business interests in forests (Sierra Club 1990; Winterbottom 1995; EC-FAO 2003).

While Nigeria's rainforest has experienced significant commercial timber exploitation from the colonial era to date (Buckle 1959; Oates 1999; von Hellermann 2013), the forests of Cross River were spared because they were considered unprofitable due to their poor-quality timber, remoteness and hilly terrain (see Brandler 1993). Presently, forests cover 40% of Cross River State and this makes up about 50% of Nigeria's primary rainforest estate (Oyebo et al. 2010). The forests of Cross River became part of contemporary forest conservation discourse in 1980 when the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) in partnership with the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) started lobbying the Nigerian government to protect the critically endangered Cross River Gorilla (Harcourt et al. 1989). This led to the creation of the Cross River National Park through a military decree in 1991 (Caldecott and Morakinyo 1996).

WWF initiated an integrated conservation and development project to win local support for the park. However, WWF could not deliver social development for local communities as donors suspended its funding in protest against the killing of the environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa by Nigeria's military government in 1995 (Oates 1999; Ite and Adams 2000). This led to disappointment in local communities, turning them against the park, state and federal governments (Caldecott and Morakinyo 1996; Oates 1999; Ite and Adams 2000). However, a number of laid-off foreign and local staff (and consultants) of WWF went on to set-up forest conservation NGOs (Oyebo et al. 2010). In response to local community anger over the WWF project, the British government's Department for International Development (DFID) funded the Cross River State Community Forestry Project (CRSCFP) from 1999-2002 (Oyebo et al. 2010).

The DFID project assisted in the setting up of 45 community forest groups, succeeded in getting the state to upgrade the forestry department to a forestry commission with the status of a state ministry, and also succeeded in getting the state government to agree to the sharing of timber royalty from forest reserves with adjacent local communities in a 50:50 split (Oyebo et al. 2010). The DFID project expanded the role of the state, NGOs, customary authority and local people in forest management (Abua et al. 2013). However, local government authorities were left out of the forestry capacity building mission of DFID. DFID worked very closely with the Cross River State Forestry Commission, who are accountable to the state government. The state government does not need the consent of local governments, so they are ignored when making land use decisions; and consequently, excluded from the DFID project.

In 2008, the Cross River State governor, advised by forest sector NGOs, banned logging and declared an interest in carbon forestry (Oyebo et al. 2010). The governor was persuaded that the state would earn more from carbon forestry than from logging. An increase in illegal logging resulting from the logging ban and connivance of corrupt officials (see Asiyambi 2016; Lang 2017), led the governor in 2011 to appoint an American who heads Pandrillus, an NGO in Cross River State, to lead the state taskforce created to enforce the ban (Pandrillus 2013). This individual and his team regularly encounter violent conflict with illegal loggers. He carries a firearm at all times and works closely with the state secret service (Una 2012). A member of the taskforce stated that '*since I joined...my life has not been the same...I have to be extra careful who I interact with...when we seize timber in local communities, the people come out to fight us...when we seize timber from Cameroon in the creeks, we also fear for our lives...we may need armed gun boats*' (Timber taskforce member 2012). The call for arms by the taskforce is related to the armed militancy over benefits from petroleum in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, of which Cross River State is part (Olusola 2013). Thus, groups and individuals can readily procure arms and challenge government authority in Cross River State (Inyang and Iroegbu 2016).

The logging ban was made without broad local support, but with a view to secure funding for REDD+. A member of a

forest sector NGOs said *'the log ban cannot be effective...the politicians are involved, those that DFID trained in community forestry are involved... the governor knows he cannot stop this logging...the ban is to please the international community'* (NGO research participant 2012). The logging ban means communities have lost the royalty payments (50% from forest reserves and 70% from community forest) they received from logging revenue collected by the state government (Oyebo et al. 2010; Amalu et al. 2016). Logging revenues came from the many commercial logging companies (foreign and national) that operated in Cross River State (see Asiyambi 2016; Enuoh and Bisong 2015).

As shown earlier in the paper, NGOs and local chiefs have a defined role in forest management in Nigeria. NGOs were included in the Nigeria-REDD readiness preparedness process because they confer international legitimacy to the process, while local chiefs were included because they influence local land use, claim to speak for their villages, and thereby confer local legitimacy to the process. However, local governments in the southern part of the country including Cross River State have little influence on alienation of land for public purposes and no defined role in forest management in Nigeria (EC-FAO 2003).

### **Institutional Context**

Nigeria applied for membership of UN-REDD in December 2009 (Oyebo et al. 2010) and its REDD readiness plan was approved for funding in October 2011 (FME 2011). Nigeria-REDD has a national programme and a state level programme with Cross River State as the pilot. At the national level, the Nigeria-REDD Secretariat is housed in the Department of Climate Change at the Federal Ministry of Environment (henceforth environment ministry). This ministry works closely with the national advisory council on REDD and the national technical REDD committee. The advisory council is a policy making body, while the technical committee is a working group comprising of UN-REDD and Nigeria-REDD personnel. There is the national REDD steering committee which acts as an advisor to both the Department of Climate Change and the Cross-River State Forestry Commission (FME 2011); and the national civil society organisations' REDD forum, a platform for civil society to have a voice in Nigeria-REDD through the Department of Climate Change.

At the state level, the Cross River Climate Change Council appointed by the Cross River State government is responsible for formulating climate change policy. Its directives on forest and climate change are passed on to and acted upon by the forestry commission. The climate change council formulates state policy that is passed on to the state's Technical REDD Committee who translates this into a list of activities passed on to the forestry commission. The forestry commission is also influenced by decisions made at the Nigeria National Technical REDD Committee; commitments agreed to at the Nigeria REDD Programme Steering Committee meetings; inputs from the Climate Change Study Group at the University of Calabar;

concerns from forest sector NGOs; and by the interests of customary authorities to maintain their de facto control over rural land. REDD+ activities to be implemented by the forestry commission is carried out on the ground by its REDD+ team. The institutional structure for Nigeria-REDD at the national and state level excludes local government authority.

Nigeria-REDD was designed with the involvement of UN-REDD. Presently, UN-REDD, which became operational in September 2008, is supporting 56 partner countries. UN-REDD activities are funded by the governments of Denmark, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain and the European Union (UN-REDD 2013b). Its activities are managed by three UN agencies, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the FAO, collectively referred to as the management group (FME 2011). UN-REDD activities are coordinated by its secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland and from UNDP regional centers in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The UNDP is responsible for administration and governance; the UNEP provides technical support on forest conservation and management; the FAO brings in expertise on developing national accounting systems for greenhouse gas inventories (FME 2011). The UN-REDD collaborates with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank. The Nigeria-REDD, thus, is part of a global climate change mitigation network involving multiple powerfully influential institutions. The UNDP Nigeria Country Office (UNDP-NCO) coordinates UN-REDD activities in Nigeria (FME 2011). The multi-level institutional structure in which the Nigeria-REDD operates, from the global to the sub-national, provide multiple levels at which REDD+ benefits could be captured by elites to the detriment of local people (see Adger et al. 2005; Pham et al. 2013).

### **REPRESENTATION OF THE LOCAL IN THE UN-REDD**

I present here an empirical examination of local representation in the UN-REDD policy board and local representation during the design of the UN-REDD funded Nigeria-REDD. I show that customary authority and NGOs are the local authorities chosen to represent the local while elected local government is absent. This reveals a preference for descriptive and symbolic local representatives and avoidance of elected substantive local representatives.

#### **Local Representation in the UN-REDD Policy Board**

The UN-REDD international policy board is its highest decision-making organ. It meets twice a year (March and October) to assess progress of funded country programmes and examine new applications for funding from member countries (UN-REDD 2009). Other members of the board include representatives of FAO, UNDP, UNEP, donors to

the UN-REDD, and UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The board includes observers from the UNFCCC, one civil society representative from each of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the developed world. The civil society representatives are elected into the board for two years by their peers through an online process managed by the World Bank. The civil society representative for Africa at the time of this study was the Non-Governmental Organizations Coalition for the Environment (NGOCE), from Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Indigenous people's representatives are also elected to the board as observers through the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The policy board has no representatives for local authorities (UN-REDD 2012a). Member countries are represented by government appointees (UN-REDD 2012a); these are chosen in part based on their expertise in forest science, as is the case with the Nigerian representative in the policy board. Having NGOs in the policy board gives it social input legitimacy (see Sadoun 2007), but does not make up for the absence of elected local authorities, as NGOs do not have the same accountability relations to local people as elected representatives. NGOs in the policy board like NGOCE are instead accountable to their NGO peers who voted them into the board. Local authorities on the other hand, especially where they are elected as is the case in Nigeria, are the substantive representatives chosen to act for and be downwardly accountable to local people (Sharpe 1970; Goldsmith 1992; Andrew and Goldsmith 1998). Elected local authorities should have a seat in the UN-REDD policy board; this could be through their global union such as the United Cities and Local Governments.

The UN-REDD acknowledges that REDD+ will have socio-economic costs for forest dependent people, in this regard it states that its 'rights-based and participatory approaches will... ensure the rights of indigenous and forest-dwelling people are protected and the active involvement of local communities and relevant institutions in the design and implementation of REDD plans' (UN-REDD 2008:7). On financial benefits, the UN-REDD favours direct payment to persons with carbon rights, and payments through central to local governments and communities (UN-REDD 2008). As stated earlier, in Nigeria, these types of financial transfers from the central to local government authorities are captured by the state government. To address elite capture of REDD+ benefits to local people, UN-REDD commits to promoting 'strong democratic processes in local institutions' (UN-REDD 2008: 12).

The UN-REDD defines democratic governance as 'democratic processes in which all people have a real voice' and that this requires 'fostering inclusive participation' and 'strengthening accountable and responsive institutions' (UN-REDD 2012b: 9). Based on this UN-REDD rhetoric, working with elected local authorities mandated to be accountable and responsive to local people should be a priority. However, the absence of representatives of local authorities in UN-REDD international policy board would suggest this is not the case.

The UN-REDD commits to working with all institutions (public, private, and customary) from the global to the local with claims on forests set aside for REDD+ (UN-REDD 2012b). This is in line with the 'all-affected should have a voice' principle in democratic theory (Dahl 1989; Goodin 2007). However, the all-affected principle cannot be operationalised without first defining the political relationship among the 'all-affected' (Goodin 2007; Schaffer 2012; Song 2012). UN-REDD defines these institutions as stakeholders, thus subscribing to a political model that McDonald (2008) refers to as stakeholder democracy. While this makes room for the private sector, non-state, and international organisations to be part of decision-making in natural resources governance, it dilutes the rights of citizens to participate in public decisions even if they are not affected. It also marginalises citizens' representatives like local authorities because it places them on the same standing like other stakeholders (NGOs, CBOs and customary authority) (Ribot 2003, 2004). Soma and Vatn (2014) show that when the framing of participatory processes shift from an emphasis on stakeholders to an emphasis on citizens, outcomes shift from favoring private interests to favoring public interests.

This discrepancy between the UN-REDD rhetoric about the need to strengthen local democracy as a safeguard against elite capture, and the absence of democratic local authorities from its policy board, leave the UN-REDD open to the charge of subscribing to symbolic politics with respect to the political representation of local people in UN-REDD. This is perhaps not surprising given that UN-REDD makes clear that its social safeguards are 'a voluntary guiding framework' for its member countries (UN-REDD 2012a: 4).

### **Local Representation during the Design of Nigeria-REDD Proposal**

The beginnings of the Nigeria-REDD programme can be traced to the June 2008 Cross River State Stakeholders Summit on the Environment hosted by the governor, Senator Liyel Imoke (CRS 2008). Part of the agenda at the summit was a discussion on how the state's forest resources could better contribute to revenue generation. Cross River State is seeking new sources of revenue because it lost some of its oil wells when Nigeria ceded the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon in 2008 (Konings 2011), and lost the remainder to neighboring Akwa Ibom State after a long dispute about their location was settled in the courts in Akwa Ibom's favor (AKSG 2012). This translated to a revenue loss of about US\$115 million<sup>3</sup> per year for Cross River State for the period 1999 to 2008 (Olubusoye and Oyedotun 2012).

The 2008 summit recommended that the Cross River State ban logging and take up carbon forestry (CRS 2008; Oyebo et al. 2010). In readiness to develop a carbon forestry programme for Cross River State, "REDD readiness," the governor restructured the Cross River State Forestry Commission, appointing Odigha Odigha, as the chairperson in 2009 (Filou 2010). This was the first time a chairperson for the forestry commission was appointed from the NGO

sector. Odiggha, working with the NGO Coalition for the Environment (NGOCE – a Nigerian NGO on the UN-REDD policy board), which he had created in 1994 (Filou 2010), had won the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in 2003 for his aggressive campaign against uncontrolled logging in Cross River State. Odiggha was well known as a strong advocate for REDD+ in Nigeria.

In October 2009, the governor, Senator Liyel Imoke, and senior staff of the forestry commission attended the Katoomba XV meeting in Ghana (Oyebo et al. 2010). Katoomba is a group set up by Forest Trends, an international NGO, to promote payment for environmental services schemes like REDD+ (Forest Trends et al. 2008). The governor invited experts from Katoomba to come and work with the state forestry commission to draft a REDD project idea note for Cross River State (Oyebo et al. 2010).

In November 2009, Governor Imoke asked the Nigeria ministry of environment to apply to UN-REDD for membership. In December 2009, he and a delegation from the forestry commission attended the UNFCCC conference of parties meeting in Copenhagen (COP 15), where he requested financial support for REDD+ in Nigeria (Oyebo et al. 2010). In January 2010, Katoomba visited REDD+ pilot sites and local communities in Cross River, and produced an REDD project idea note for Nigeria (FME 2011). By March 2010, Nigeria's membership request to UN-REDD was approved and in October 2010, a UN-REDD mission visited Nigeria (FME 2011).

On February 18, 2011, an REDD readiness proposal was presented to a participatory stakeholders' forum in Calabar chaired by Governor Imoke, for review and approval. A similar exercise was held on February 21, 2011 in Abuja, Nigeria's capital and seat of government, with national level actors. The document was submitted to UN-REDD for consideration at its sixth policy board meeting in March 2011 (FME 2011). The board requested revisions in the document (Global Witness 2011; FME 2011), which were effected and a second participatory stakeholders meeting was held in Calabar, in

August 2011 to validate the revised document. The policy board approved the Nigeria-REDD readiness plan at its seventh meeting in October 2011, granting Nigeria the sum of US\$4 million. Table 1 below shows who attended the first and second participatory consultative meetings in Calabar.

The majority of the participants at the first meeting of February 18, 2011, were from the forestry commission, followed by NGOs, and local communities. The 13 participants from local communities included 8 persons from a single community (Ekuri), while the other 5 individuals were from 5 different communities. There were two local chiefs in attendance but no one representing local authorities. The second meeting of 20 August 2011, was attended by fewer participants; of the 30 participants from local communities, 22 were from Ekuri. There was no one representing local authorities. Ekuri is over represented because it has the largest community forest in Cross River State (330 sq. km), and is the most active community forest group out of the 45 registered community forest groups in the state (Oyebo et al. 2010; UNDP 2012).

In Table 1, participants from the forestry commission, local NGOs and select individuals from local communities (rural village dwellers) were prominently in attendance at the participatory consultative meetings. A few chiefs were also in attendance. The select individuals invited to the participatory meetings were invited because the organisers considered them 'typical of the larger class of persons whom they represent', that is rural village dwellers; these serve as descriptive representatives (Mansbridge 1999: 629). Descriptive representatives have no statutory mandate to report back to local communities and no mechanisms through which they could be sanctioned if they choose to stand for personal rather than group interest. Hence, they are in no way democratically representative. In the case of participants from Ekuri, they were members of the Ekuri Initiative, the forest management organisation for Ekuri community forest. When members participate in meetings like those in Table 1, they would often provide feedback to the Ekuri Initiative executive board but not to the village community.

**Table 1**  
*Participants at the Nigeria-REDD participatory consultative meetings*

<b>Institutions and groups</b>	<b>First meeting 18 February 2011</b>	<b>Second meeting 20 August 2011</b>
Cross River State Forestry Commission	26	15
Local NGOs based in Cross River State	23	14
Participants from local communities (mainly Ekuri)	13	30
Media	8	2
Cross River State Governor's Office	6	0
International NGOs	6	1
Academics	6	4
Other Cross River State Government Agencies	5	0
Federal Ministry of Environment	2	0
National NGOs	2	0
Customary authority	2	6
Banks	2	1
Local Government Councils	0	0
Total	101	73

Source: FME (2011)

On the quality of participation of NGOs and community members during deliberations at the Nigeria-REDD consultative meetings, an NGO representative revealed that *'we were informed of the meeting by text by 11pm the night before, we arrive in the morning... not well prepared to comprehensively engage with the UN-REDD people'* (NGO leader Calabar 2012). This was corroborated by another NGO representative who stated that *'we were informed by text at midnight about the meeting...no way for us to pass the message to our local communities, we feel frustrated'* (NGO staff Calabar 2012). A member of the Ekuri delegation further stated that *'the forestry commission told us not to come and wash our dirty linen in public, they just need us to come and sign the document'* (Ekuri community representative 2012). This was also corroborated by the chiefs who attended the consultative meetings. Strong participatory processes effectively capture the voices of local people, and are empowering when local voices make a difference in decision making (Boyce 1993; Kelly and van Vlaenderen 1995; Rowe and Frewer 2004). Based on these criteria and accounts from locals who attended the participatory consultative meetings, it is clear that this was not a robust form of participation.

### WHY EXCLUDE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DESIGN OF NIGERIA-REDD

When asked why local government authorities in Cross River State were excluded from the design of Nigeria-REDD, a REDD team member of the forestry commission said: *'we did not have enough money to invite all [stakeholders]...to be at the participatory meetings in Calabar; when we start the REDD readiness phase we will surely have local government chairpersons join us'* (CRSFC REDD team member 2012). In another interview, a local government chairperson disagreed that money was a limiting factor to their participation in the Nigeria-REDD consultative process by stating that: *'we have imprest [local government discretionary funds] to come to Calabar at any time for official business and meetings that will benefit our people'* (Local Government Chairperson Calabar 2013). A consultant to the forestry commission added that: *'local government chairpersons are often not well informed and even if we invite them they will not show up. They are more interested in how much money they can make from projects than in developing their communities'* (REDD consultant Calabar 2012).

While there is a narrative that elected local government officials are corrupt, this also extends to customary authority, and politicians at state and federal levels. Local government chairpersons interviewed strongly disagree with this consultant. Participant observation at the Akamkpa Council of Chiefs meeting during field research show that customary authorities are also not well informed as a chief in attendance stated that: *'... we are waiting for REDD, it will make us very rich'* (Chief A in Akamkpa Local Government 2012). Thus, the above consultant's criticisms of local authorities also applies to chiefs, but they were duly invited to participate in the design of Nigeria-REDD.

This consultant went on to state that: *'local government officials...are not good administrators...their managerial capacity cannot be compared to elected officials at state or national level'* (REDD consultant Calabar 2012). Local people share this perspective as a resident in Iko village said: *'the governor is fixing local roads in Akamkpa, it is better that he controls the local government allocation...our chairman is only interested in himself'* (Local resident Iko 2012). Earlier in the paper it was shown that local government administration and finances have been captured by state governments. So, their observed unresponsiveness is closely tied to their subordination by the state government.

As shown earlier in the paper, godfather politics mean local public office holders in Nigeria are clients of very powerful politicians or other wealthy patrons known as godfathers (Onu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu 2008). In Cross River, the governor is a key political godfather (Babalola 2014), determining who gets elected as local government chairperson (CrossRiverWatch 2013a). State governors have powers to dismiss local government chairpersons who refuse to follow the governor's dictates replacing them with appointed caretaker committees (Adeyemi 2013; Ehigiamusoe and Jumare 2013). Consequently, elected local government officials are torn between being responsive and accountable to local people and being responsive and accountable to the state governor.

Are customary authority better administrators? A youth leader in Iko village does not think so—this individual feels that both customary authority and local government authority are unresponsive to local people, stating that: *'CERCOPAN helps us a lot...they even pay rents to the traditional council for their research center in our forest but we don't know how the council uses that money'* (Iko youth 2012). The Centre for Education, Research and Conservation of Primates and Nature (CERCOPAN), is an NGO in Calabar with a field site in Iko (CERCOPAN 2013). If customary are also unresponsive at the local level, why were chiefs consulted and local government authority ignored? The advantage that customary authority possesses over local government authority is that political office holders from local to federal level actively seek their support in order to legitimise their rule (see Nuesiri 2014). As a trade-off for their support, political office holders respect chiefs' *de facto* rights over land, and consequently include them in public land use initiatives like Nigeria-REDD.

Local NGOs were invited to be a part of the design process because *'...the leadership of the commission have come from the NGO sector so we have a very good working relationship with NGOs...the people trust the NGOs more than the government'* (Staff forestry commission 2012). In addition, a staff of an NGO providing consultancy services to the forestry commission stated that: *'We represent local communities, they know us, they trust us more than government...all we do, we do for local people...we know the local communities more than anyone else'* (NGO member of REDD design team 2012). Furthermore, the fact that local NGOs like NGOCE are well connected to global forest conservation networks and are able to access financial resources, make them attractive as partners

to the Cross River State government, which is seeking global recognition and resources for its carbon forestry programme.

The view that NGOs represent local people is contested: *NGOs supporting REDD in Calabar are doing it for what they can get out of it...they don't have [a] long-term relationship with the people, they go to the villages when money is involved*' (NGO member opposing REDD 2013). A member of a community organisation added that: *'Na money the NGOs dem want...if government say no more REDD, make we harvest timber, all of them go say yes'* [NGOs are after money, if government says no more REDD, let's do logging, they will agree] (Senior member local CBO 2012). This person is implying that NGOs in Cross River State are government contractors; an example is the NGO appointed by the state to enforce its logging ban. These NGOs are not social movements and are not able to politically influence the state government to be more responsive to local people (see Green and Matthias 1995; Bob 2002; Bendana 2006; Allen 2007; Hearn 2007; Holmen and Jirstrom 2009; Nweje 2014).

What accounts for the exclusion of elected local government in design of Nigeria-REDD? Responses included insufficient funds to cover the cost of their participation, ignorance and incompetence. However, local government chairs have funds for travel to Calabar for official functions and are more informed than customary authority that were part of the design process. The charge of incompetence cannot be dismissed (see Afrobarometer 2008), but it cannot be made without considering that local governments are constrained by the overbearing influence of state governors (Adeyemi 2013; Ehigiamusoe and Jumare 2013). The evidence, thus, leads to the conclusion that local government authority was excluded from the design of Nigeria-REDD because they are politically weak. This makes them priority actors in need of UN-REDD support if it is committed to strengthening local democracy in its country programmes.

Local governments do not have the resources to single-handedly ensure responsive forest governance, but there is evidence that local governments can contribute positively to forest management. Muhumuza and Balkwill (2013: 8) found that 'strong project stewardship by the local government' contributed to 'the success of the Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation Project in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, and Namibia.' In Indonesia, Kimbrough (2014) shows how the mayor of Balikpapan was involved in efforts to protect the local forest, including providing financial support to local initiatives that stopped illegal logging. Gibson and Lehoucq (2003) found that mayors in Guatemala took care of their forests when it was in their political interests to do so, when they had outside funding, and when there was pressure from local actors demanding responsive forest management. (Other examples can be found in Ribot 2004.)

In order to build their capacity to be responsive to local people, the European Union-Micro Projects Programme (EU-MPP) partners with local government authorities in Cross River to identify, design and execute social development projects including construction of classrooms, village water

towers, and health post (Ogar, G pers. comm. 2013; Egot, M pers. comm. 1 2013; CITEC 2017). The EU partners with local governments to enable 'them to become more autonomous and effective in delivering services and increasing their capacity to give voice to citizens in the local policy-making processes' (Olesen et al. 2010: 37). The EU-MPP is a working model that the UN-REDD could learn from.

### **WHY THE SYMBOLIC COMMITMENT OF UN-REDD TO LOCAL DEMOCRACY**

When a UN-REDD personnel contacted for this study was asked why it approved Nigeria-REDD with its design flaw, this individual responded that: *'UN-REDD cannot force countries to include the local level...there's a stakeholder engagement aspect looking to include local marginalise people...this include[s] the free prior and informed consent process and concerns for indigenous people...there is also the participatory governance assessment process...to produce governance data...success depends on how civil society actors would use it to hold government to account and how government would use it to do policy'* (UN-REDD Staff 2012).

The response that countries cannot be forced to include the local level in the design of REDD+ programmes reiterates the UN-REDD position that its social safeguards are voluntary (UN-REDD 2012a), and reveals UN-REDD sensitivities to the sovereign territorial rights of its member governments. Stating that the effectiveness of the UN-REDD governance model is dependent on civil society using it to hold government to account, shows UN-REDD belief that NGOs can fulfil this task. However, NGOs in Nigeria do not have the capacity to hold government to account on behalf of local people (Smith 2010; Fasakin 2011) nor is there any reason to believe that NGOs are themselves accountable to anyone other than their funders.

The uncritical conviction that civil society actors can ensure accountability of government and are sufficient to strengthen democracy reflects anti-government and pro-civil-society thinking that is typical of neoliberalism (Mercer 2002; UN 2004; Sadoun 2007; Chorev 2013). NGOs can strengthen democracy when they are democracy watchdogs, and when they empower citizens to influence government, not when they are replacing local government or when they are acting as consultants and contractors to government (Ribot 2004).

The Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process and the Participatory Governance Assessment (PGA) exercise are to capture local people's opinions as they are able to sincerely express it in participatory settings. They do not strengthen local government in Cross River State to speak for and act on behalf of local people, against other powerful interest groups in the forest sector including the state government. The PGA carried out in Cross River State even failed to identify the subordination of local authorities by the state government as a weakness of local democracy in the state (see UN-REDD 2012c; UN-REDD 2013c).<sup>4</sup>

The UN-REDD personnel also stated: *'...strengthening local democratic governance is not the main priority of [UN-REDD]*

*donors*' (UN-REDD Staff 2012). Donors fund REDD+ because it is a cheaper means of reducing carbon emissions compared to regulating industries (Norwegian Government 2007, 2008; Eliasch 2008; Dyer et al. 2012). REDD+ funds are thus spent mainly on economic and technical issues rather than on social safeguards (Dyer et al. 2012; Roe et al. 2013). Market and technical concerns dominate donors, UN and World Bank discourses on REDD+ showing it to be an ecological modernisation project (Baker 2007; Salleh 2010; Nielsen 2014). REDD+ enables a 'business as usual' economic policy in donor countries. This accounts for the symbolic actions of UN-REDD to its democracy commitment.

## CONCLUSION

This study interrogated the UN-REDD commitment to local democracy by examining who represents local people in the UN-REDD. It examined the membership of the UN-REDD international policy board, and also examined local representation during the design of the UN-REDD funded Nigeria-REDD. The study followed the Ribot et al. (2008) 'institutional choice and recognition' framework in order to understand the motivations behind policy makers' choices of local institutional arrangements and partnerships by which their interventions interact with local people. The research used the 'studying up' approach advocated by Nader (1972) for understanding how power and responsibility are exercised, and how our lives are shaped by those who control governing institutions of society. The study was also informed by the theory of political representation, which holds that representation is inclusive and comprehensive when it is a complement of different types of representations (descriptive, symbolic and substantive) (Bluhdorn 2007; Celis et al. 2008; Saward 2010).

We found that UN-REDD chose NGOs as representatives of local people in its policy board and approved the inclusion of NGOs, while excluding elected local government authority, as representatives of the local during the design of Nigeria-REDD. NGOs are used as symbolic representatives of the local; their ability to stand for local people is based on shared development discourses that links NGO activities with broad-based demands of local people like poverty alleviation. It is predicated on the unsubstantiated assumption that NGOs, because they claim to work for the people, represent the people. Yet, NGOs cannot be held to account for their actions by local people – a fundamental characteristic of democratic representation. Working with NGOs to the exclusion of elected local representatives, does not strengthen local democracy. UN-REDD commitment to local democracy is therefore more symbolic, merely feigning democratic process, than substantive.

The study showed that the actions of UN-REDD are influenced by its shared preferences with the Nigerian government to work with NGOs to the exclusion of local government authority. This choice enables the Nigerian government to continue eroding the authority of local governments, and of democracy, while claiming to be responsive to local people. The study also

showed that UN-REDD subscribes to stakeholder democracy (see Macdonald 2008), a neo-liberal ideology that gives equal weight to the representative claims of elected and non-elected actors in governance (see Saward 2006, 2008). Stakeholder democracy favours private over public interests (Soma and Vatn 2014). It diminishes the role of elected authorities – giving them unequal and subordinate roles. Lastly, the actions of UN-REDD were influenced by its responsiveness to the interests of its donors, who are more concerned with establishing the market and technical mechanisms to make REDD+ operational than in social safeguards.

Given that countries signing up for REDD+ are still in their REDD-readiness phase, the UN-REDD can still initiate action to substantively strengthen local democracy in the countries where it operates. Considering their statutory and inclusive mandate to be responsive and accountable to local people, the UN-REDD should recognise local authorities as their working partner. The European Union works with local governments in Nigeria to build 'their capacity to give voice to citizens in the local policy-making processes' (Olesen et al. 2010: 37). The UN-REDD can learn from this initiative. At a minimum, the UN-REDD should strengthen the relationship between local councilors and their electors, and include these councilors or their freely chosen representatives in all Nigeria-REDD and UN-REDD policy board deliberations.

The UN affirms that 'strong and effective local democratic institutions are an underlying basis for a healthy democracy..., are more accessible for citizens to question local officials..., and can be an arena for attracting new political actors, including women and young people' (UNSG 2009: 8). The local as opposed to the national and sub-national, is the space where inclusive and comprehensive political representation is more likely to happen. To strengthen local democracy, the UN-REDD should not limit its engagement to national and sub-national (state or provincial level) political actors. It should also constructively engage with all local political actors that are part of local governance arrangements in need of democratic capacity building. This would include descriptive representatives (such as persons standing for farmers, women, youths), symbolic representatives (chiefs, NGOs and other advocacy groups) of local people, and elected local officials statutorily responsible and accountable for social development including the fair distribution of resources. The key to making this triple engagement supportive of democratic processes is to make the first two work through and with the third, through and with local elected authority – rather than by generating parallel institutions that replace or circumvent these elected authorities.

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## NOTES

1. Local government constitute the third tier of government in the politico-administrative structure of a country; in some countries, they are known as local councils or counties. While in Nigeria local government chairs and their councilors are elected by local people, this study acknowledges that there are many other countries where they are appointed by executive authority. However, the findings and recommendation of this study would still contribute to strengthen local democratic practice in those local authorities that are appointed rather than elected.
2. Pitkin (1967) actually discussed four types of political representation – formal, descriptive, symbolic and substantive; however, her discussion of formal representation was more of a critique of the limited Weberian understanding of representation as deriving from formal authorisation of an agent by the state to represent a constituency to the state or to represent the state to an audience.
3. This is based on an exchange rate of 160.50 Naira to US\$1 taken from [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) as on September 2013; given that Cross River State Budget for 2013 was US\$943 million (National Mirror 2012), this revenue loss amounts to about 12% of the state budget for 2013, which would amount to a significant loss for any government.
4. A Participatory Governance Assessment (PGA) workshop was carried out in January 2013 in Calabar and it built on a PGA exercise in REDD project communities in Cross River State in November 2012. While the PGA exercise included local government authorities, the PGA reports are silent on the structural constraints on building strong local democracy in Nigeria. In addition, the preliminary assessment report for REDD in Nigeria (Oyobo et al. 2010), while comprehensive on forest resource abundance and management problems in Nigeria, is also silent on the structural constraints on local democratic governance in Nigeria. If these constraints are not addressed, federal and state capture of REDD benefits to local communities probably cannot be avoided.

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