

Concept Note

Breaking the REDD+ Deadlock: Towards India-Specific Guidelines for Carbon Finance in Degradation-Dominated Forests

Date: 11th July 2025

Chair: Mr Ramesh Kumar Pandey, Additional Director General of Forest (Wildlife), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), GoI

Organized by: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

Venue: R K Pachauri Conference Hall (TERI), New Delhi

Background

India's forest landscapes are highly diverse, spanning tropical rainforests, dry deciduous zones, and alpine ecosystems. Unlike many countries where deforestation is the primary concern, forest degradation due to overgrazing, firewood extraction, invasive species, and unsustainable tourism is more prevalent across India's forest cover.

India is actively pursuing REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) strategies. However, the existing international carbon credit methodologies - such as those under Verra, Plan Vivo, and other voluntary standards - are often modeled on deforestation-dominated geographies. These standards currently do not fully recognize India's degradation-centric scenario, government-managed forest ownership, or community-based forest governance models like JFMCs and EDCs.

TERI is working on 10 REDD carbon finance projects across India. However, many of these remain stalled due to lack of contextual alignment in standard requirements related to:

- Activity data representation
- Quantification of degradation drivers
- Land tenure and forest governance

Thus, there is an urgent need to break the deadlock by evolving India-specific operational guidelines within the existing frameworks to unlock the immense carbon finance potential from India's degraded forests.

Objectives

- To deliberate on the key barriers faced by REDD projects in India under current global carbon credit standards.
- To propose context-specific modifications or flexibilities in carbon methodologies, especially related to:
 - Activity data: shifting from national to project-specific datasets, validated via high-resolution RS-GIS data.

- Land tenure: recognizing government-owned forests under JFMC/EDC management for REDD+ eligibility.
 - Quantification of degradation: allowing the use of remote sensing and ML-based analytics for identifying and quantifying degradation drivers.
- To explore ways for integrating community-based forest management into voluntary carbon frameworks like Verra, Plan Vivo, and others.
- To provide a platform for knowledge exchange among stakeholders to develop a working roadmap toward India-compatible REDD implementation.

Agenda (11 July 2025)

Time	Session Details
09:30 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 10:10	Welcome Address – Director General, TERI
10:10 – 10:25	Context Setting – Dr. J.V. Sharma, Senior Director, Land Resources Division, TERI
10:25 – 10:40	Presentation on Challenges in India's REDD+ Landscape – TERI Expert
10:40 – 12:30	Round Table Discussion Chair: Mr Ramesh Kumar Pandey, Additional Director General of Forest (Wildlife), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), GoI Representatives from: • Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE) • Forest Survey of India (FSI) • Verra, Plan Vivo, Gold Standard • World Bank, GIZ, IIRS, South Pole, PWC • State Forest Departments • Independent Validators & Verifiers
12:30 – 12:50	Way Forward and Chair's Concluding Remarks
12:50 – 13:00	Vote of Thanks
13:00 onwards	Lunch & Informal Discussions

Expected Outcomes

1. A consolidated set of India-specific recommendations for REDD/REDD+ methodology adaptation or flexibility under international standards.
2. Proposal to allow project-level activity data and degradation metrics validated via RS-GIS and ML tools.
3. Recognition of community-managed forests under government ownership as eligible REDD areas.
4. Initiation of dialogue with standards bodies for contextual interpretation and methodological revisions.
5. Catalyze progress on REDD projects and similar efforts nationwide to bring carbon benefits to communities.