Flare 2018 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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**Title: What is REDD+ achieving on the ground?**

The Paris Climate Agreement recognizes the importance of the mechanism to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, and enhance carbon stocks (REDD+). Given this importance, REDD+ is included in many countries’ post-2020 climate actions, subnational governments are experimenting with jurisdictional REDD+ programs, and over 400 localized REDD+ projects have been implemented across the tropics. Implementers of these initiatives are applying intervention packages that in customized ways combine information (e.g. environmental education), institutions (e.g. tenure clarification, restrictions of forest access and conversion), and incentives (e.g. payments for environmental services) to achieve better protection of forests. We reviewed the recent scientific literature to understand the outcomes of REDD+ interventions on the ground, in terms of local participation in REDD+, and its carbon and non-carbon goals (e.g. tenure, well-being, biodiversity). We ultimately selected 44 peer-reviewed articles for inclusion in the analysis, compiling information on types of interventions applied, indicators and methods used to measure outcomes, and key findings. Our review highlights a lack of studies that are robust, quantitative, with foci neither geographically nor topically mirroring REDD+ implementation globally. There is far too little carbon outcome measurement to understand its effectiveness; yet what little there is so far paints a moderately encouraging picture. Measurements of well-being outcomes, though more numerous than those of carbon outcomes, do not yet yield an adequate evaluation of REDD+ performance. Welfare effects are small, with mixed sign – but more likely to be positive when incentive components are included. There are not enough studies focused on biodiversity outcomes to draw any firm inferences. As REDD+ moves forward, the conclusion is inescapable that research to date has not yet measured up to its importance in terms of scope, depth, and analytic sophistication. Many studies are arguably “hitching a ride on REDD+” – i.e. are profoundly featuring other questions than REDD+ impacts, but are using REDD+ as a timely hook of wider current societal interest for publishing their results. As tropical countries refine their post-2020 climate action plans, there is an urgent need for reliable evidence on the impacts of REDD+ on the ground to help guide their choices.